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SCOTLAND

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Last Reviewed:	2012 (2025 update to include Empire connections)

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# LAUDERDALE AISLE, ST MARY'S CHURCH



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.



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Cover image: Detail of the Lauderdale Aisle. This marble and alabaster effigy of the Earl of Lauderdale sits within St Mary's Church, Haddington.

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# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

## LAUDERDALE AISLE, ST MARY'S CHURCH

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## SYNOPSIS

The Lauderdale Aisle is a burial aisle occupying the former sacristy of the medieval burgh church of St. Mary's, Haddington. The church itself was substantially rebuilt from the 15th century, but after an English attack in 1548, the roofs of the choirs and transepts were stripped off, and the sections left derelict. The sacristy was converted into a burial aisle in the later 16th century by the Maitlands of Thirlestane family, and its most important feature is the Lauderdale Monument, a marble and alabaster monumental tomb probably erected by John Maitland, 1st Duke of Lauderdale (1616-1682), circa 1675 to the memory of his parents and grandparents. Lauderdale was a signatory to the Royal charter founding the Royal English Merchant Adventurers Company Trading to Africa (later the Royal African Company) which had a monopoly on the trading of ivory, gold and enslaved people along the west coast of Africa. He was closely tied to early colonial trade and profits derived from that may have enabled his foundation of the monument.<sup>1</sup>

NOTE: The built structure of the Lauderdale Aisle and the Lauderdale Monument alone are in state care. The remainder of the contents, including the stone altar and furnishings and the coffins in the burial vault beneath the Aisle, are the property of the Lauderdale Aisle Trust.

## CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

### Historical overview

- circa 1139 – St. Mary's Church, Haddington's burgh kirk, is granted by David I to **St. Andrews Cathedral-Priory**.
- 1460s – The church is substantially reconstructed, following an agreement made with the chapter of **St Andrews Cathedral-Priory**, in whose diocese Haddington lies, and who are responsible for the fabric of the choir, including the sacristy on its north side.
- circa 1540 – the church is formally constituted a college under a president ('the college Kirk of Haddington' is first mentioned in 1537).
- 1548/9 – during the siege of Haddington, St. Mary's is badly damaged by English artillery, resulting in the loss of the roof and vaults of the choir.
- post-1560 – following the Protestant Reformation, the roofless choir is left as a ruin and the nave alone restored for parochial use. The

<sup>1</sup> [Surveying and Analysing Connections between Properties in Care and the British Empire, c.1600-1997](#)

redundant sacristy is adopted by John Maitland, 1st Lord Maitland of Thirlestane, as his family's burial vault. 'Thirlestane', as he is generally known, the younger brother of William Maitland of Lethington (now Lennoxlove), serves successively as secretary of state and chancellor of Scotland under James VI. He married Jean, daughter of James, 4th Lord Fleming.

- 1595 - John, 1st Lord Maitland, dies and is laid to rest in the burial vault. He is succeeded by his eldest son, also John, who marries Isabel Seton, daughter of the 1st earl of Dunfermline.
- 1624 - John, 2nd Lord Maitland of Thirlestane, is created 1st Earl of Lauderdale.
- 1638 - Countess Isabel dies and is interred in the family burial vault.
- 1645 - John, 1st Earl of Lauderdale, dies and is also laid to rest in the family burial vault.
- 1683 - John, 2nd Earl and 1st Duke of Lauderdale (created 1672), is laid to rest in the burial vault. Lauderdale is Charles II's commissioner in Scotland and effectively vice-regent of Scotland. 'Red John' Maitland is the man who put the 'L' (Lauderdale) into CABAL, the five closest advisers to Charles II (the others are Clifford, Arlington, Burlington and Ashley). He dies in disgrace at Tunbridge Wells in 1682 and his burial at Haddington is attended by 2,000 horsemen.
- 1879 - the choir is entrusted into state care.
- 1948 - the burial vault is badly affected when the River Tyne floods.
- 1964 - the Lauderdale Aisle is entrusted into state care.
- 1971-3 - the choir is re-roofed and brought back into use by Ian G. Lindsay and Partners, and ceases to be in state care. The Lauderdale Aisle continues in state care.
- 1978 - the newly constituted Lauderdale Aisle Trust refurbishes the contents of the Aisle.
- 2010 - Lady Caroline Maitland, daughter of the 17th Earl of Lauderdale, is laid to rest in the burial vault.

## Archaeological overview

- The sacristy-cum-burial vault seems never to have been archaeologically investigated.
- In 1974, following the restoration of the choir, the coffins in the burial vault beneath the Lauderdale Aisle were examined by David Caldwell, of the National Museum of Antiquities, during works to

reduce damage from water penetration (the River Tyne at this point is particularly prone to flooding). Seventeen coffins were recorded, dating from the 17th to the 19th century. These included the 1st Duke of Lauderdale's coffin, which was opened and examined. (NOTE: the coffins are not in state care but remain the property of the earls of Lauderdale.)

## Architectural/Artistic overview

- The Lauderdale Aisle, created from the medieval sacristy, projects from the north side of the church choir two bays from the east end. Externally, the three-light east window under a gable and the plain blocked door belong to the conversion into a burial aisle in the later 16th century. The roof was originally higher, as the marks on the buttresses show.
- Internally, stone corbels projecting from the east and west walls indicate the former existence of an upper floor, possibly used as a treasury. The other significant historic feature is the 17th-century Lauderdale Monument against the north wall.
- The Lauderdale Monument displays four alabaster recumbent effigies - of the 1st Lord Maitland of Thirlestane and the 1st Earl of Lauderdale, and their respective wives. They lie under twin arches with three advanced Corinthian columns surmounted by tall consoles that support a thin cornice and broken pediment. Within the arches are busts, with inscribed black tablets beneath. The four effigies are portrayed as sleeping figures, without life and detached from the viewer, who has to read the lengthy texts on black panels to understand their achievements and virtues in life. Overall, the monument is quite monochromatic. This contrasts with the polychrome and interactive sculptures visible in other Scottish monumental funerary architecture, such as the proto-Baroque monument to Sir George Hay, chancellor of Scotland (died 1635), in the family burial aisle at Kinnoull, Perthshire.
- With its extensive use of marble, near full-size recumbent effigies and extensive heraldic display, the monument marks the evolution of monumental sculpture from the monuments of the 16th century, with their heavy use of attributional symbolism and polychrome local stones, towards the Baroque monuments of the later 17th century, with their sculptural display and emphasis on noble material, particularly marble.
- The Lauderdale Monument is traditionally believed to have been erected by John Maitland, 1st Earl of Lauderdale, in the 1630s. However, the inscribed panel in the bottom right of the Monument indicates that the monument, though possibly inspired by the 1st Earl,

was actually erected by his son, also John, who was created 1st Duke of Lauderdale in 1672. The designer is not known but may have been Nicholas Stone, of London. The Duke of Lauderdale had Thirlestane Castle, near Lauder, comprehensively rebuilt around the same time.

- NOTE: None of the other fixtures or furnishings (for example, the stone altar) in the Lauderdale Aisle is the property of Historic Scotland.

### Social overview

- St. Mary's Church is a prominent landmark close to the centre of the bustling market town of Haddington, much used as a concert venue in addition to its role as a parish church for the Church of Scotland. The Lauderdale Aisle, whilst important in itself, and of course of especial importance to the Lauderdale family, is of comparatively minor significance in the overall scheme of things.
- The Lauderdale Aisle is normally open to visitors to St. Mary's during the church's opening hours. It is doubtful if any of the secular uses associated with the church extend into the aisle.

### Spiritual overview

- In medieval times, the Lauderdale Aisle served as the sacristy of the burgh church, where the sacred vessels and priests' vestments were securely stored. As such its use came to an end following the Protestant Reformation of 1560.
- In the aftermath of the Reformation, the sacristy was adopted by the Maitland family as their mausoleum; the Maitlands lived at Lethington (now Lennoxlove), south of Haddington.
- The Lauderdale Monument, modelled after Laudian prototypes in England, perhaps shows the liturgical and ecclesiological preferences of its patron, which were at odds with much of Calvinist Scotland. (William Laud, Archbishop of Canterbury under Charles I, was an unswerving Anglo-Catholic in his practise and doctrine who aroused the opposition of the Puritans, Levellers, Anabaptists and other Low-Church elements that fought against their king during the English Civil War.) Social and living status was intimately combined with the display of a funerary monument, which the Reformation had partly robbed of its purgatorial role – that is, the summoning of prayers to relieve a departed soul of time in Purgatory, or indeed the judgement Hell. The Lauderdale Monument served a socio-religious role of politicising the dead and celebrating the descendants of the departed.

- Today, the Lauderdale Aisle is physically an integral part of St. Mary's Church, although somewhat hidden away. It is thus attached to the dominant religious building of Haddington, and relatively close to the communion table. However, it does not consciously or physically form part of the modern spiritual experience of the congregation.
- The Aisle itself is occasionally used for spiritual purposes, both by the Lauderdale family and by visitors seeking solace and privacy. The Lauderdale Aisle Trust, established in 1978 to administer the spiritual use of the chapel, encourages an ecumenical use of the Aisle.
- Though physically associated with the Church of Scotland, the Lauderdale Aisle's historical context and architectural separation mean that it lies outwith the normal spiritual experiences and uses of the congregation of St. Mary's.

### Aesthetic overview

- The Lauderdale Monument is impressive and complex, and draws the viewer in by dint of its literary content. That the effigies lie flat perhaps diminishes one's experience of the persons represented. Prone effigies were less common at that date than erect ones, and thus the Lauderdale Monument is aesthetically unusual.
- Externally, the Lauderdale Aisle is physically part of St. Mary's Church. This impressive medieval church, the longest burgh kirk built in Scotland, is set a short distance out of the town centre. With the River Tyne for company and surrounded by a large, attractive graveyard dotted about with monuments and gravestones amid the lush green grass, overall, St. Mary's is in a most pleasant location.

### What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

Would research into the Lauderdale family's documents furnish more evidence for the history of the sacristy/burial aisle, and particularly the date when the Lauderdale Monument was actually erected?

## ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### Key points

- The Lauderdale Monument is one of the finest and best-preserved funerary monuments of its kind and date to survive in Scotland. The presence of four recumbent effigies is unique.

- The Lauderdale Monument provides a valuable insight into the religious and aesthetic tastes of an important political figure in the Scotland of the 1630s, prior to the Covenanting wars, displaying an Anglophile taste at odds with the religious practises of much of the Scottish populace.

## ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

*Other related sites of the earls of Lauderdale* - Lennoxlove House; Thirlestane Castle; Ham House (Surrey).

*Other late 16th- / 17th-century funerary monuments with effigies* - George Home, earl of Dunbar (Dunbar Parish Church); William Bruce of Symbister (Crail Churchyard, Fife); Thomas Crawford of Jordanhill (Kilbirnie Churchyard, Ayrshire); David Murray, Viscount Stormont (Scone Chapel, Perthshire); George Bruce of Carnock (Culross Abbey Church); George Hay, earl of Kinnoull (Kinnoull Church, Perthshire); Archbishop James Sharp of St. Andrews (Holy Trinity Church, St. Andrews).

## KEYWORDS

sacristy, choir, burial aisle, monumental tomb, effigy, Maitland, Lauderdale

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