HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND | ÀRAINNEACHD EACHDRAIDHEIL ALBA

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Taken into State care:	1949 (Ownership)
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CASTLE OF PARK



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CASTLE OF PARK

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SYNOPSIS

Castle of Park (also Park Hay or Park House) is prominently situated on a hill ¾ miles west of, and overlooking, the village of Glenluce. The L-plan tower house, dated 1590 and built for Thomas Hay of Park and his spouse Janet MacDowall, stands four storeys and an attic high. It was abandoned as a noble residence c. 1830, but after coming into state care in 1949 it was fully conserved externally by Ministry of Works. In 1992-3 it was restored and converted internally by the Landmark Trust for use as high-quality rented holiday accommodation. It is managed and let by the Landmark Trust as holiday accommodation; for further information see Landmark Trust website.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical overview

- **1560** – Thomas Hay is appointed commendator of **Glenluce**, shortly before Parliament passes the Act of Reformation. Hay joins the Reformed Kirk but continues in residence at the abbey.
- **1572** – Thomas Hay is granted the lands of The Park by the Earl of Cassilis, who had acquired them and other former abbey estates at the Reformation. Thomas is by now married, probably to a daughter of Kennedy of Bargany, and they have a son, also Thomas.
- **1590** – Thomas Hay, junior, begins building the tower house as a residence for himself and his wife, Janet MacDowall. Stone from Glenluce Abbey is reputedly used in its construction. It is completed by 1598.
- **1683** – The Hays of Park are created baronets of Nova Scotia, a settler colonisation scheme established by King James VI and I.[1]
- **Late 18th century** – two wings are added to the east side of the tower house, at the north-east and south-east corners.
- **Circa 1830** – The Hays relocate to Dunragit House, 3 miles to the west. The tower is subsequently used to house farm labourers.
- **1861** – The Portpatrick Railway Company build an 8-span masonry viaduct immediately beside the tower house.
- **1875** – The Hay family sells its Park estate.

[1] For more information on the connection between the Properties in Care of Scottish Ministers and the British Empire download the full report from HES website: Surveying and Analysing Connections between Properties in Care and the British Empire, c.1600–1997

- 1949 – The tower house comes into state care.
- 1951 – The Ministry of Public Building and Works demolish the various Georgian additions.
- 1992 – Following a major programme of conservation, Historic Environment Scotland grants a long lease of the tower house to the Landmark Trust, who restore and furnish the tower's interior for use as high-quality rented holiday accommodation.

Archaeological overview

The level plateau of ground immediately surrounding the tower house has never been archaeologically investigated, but by analogy with Jacobean tower houses elsewhere Castle of Park will have been surrounded by a barmkin (a courtyard and ancillary buildings (for example, bakehouse, stables)), all enclosed by a perimeter wall of middling strength. Beyond the barmkin would have been gardens and orchards. Although nothing is visible today, other than traces of a walled garden to the south of the tower house, remains of them may well survive as archaeological features below the present ground surface.

By the same token, the later additions to the tower – including most notably the two wings attached to the north-east and south-east corners - added at some date in the later 18th century but completely demolished by MOPBW soon after the property came into state care, should also survive as archaeological features below ground level. It would be interesting to discover to what use these were put.

The interior of the tower house received minimal archaeological attention following its passing into state care. In the early 1970s the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments carried out small-scale clearance work. In the ground-floor kitchen were discovered the remains of the hearth, including a well-preserved iron swee (a horizontal bar of iron working on a vertical pivot fixed at the side of a fire, for hanging chains, hooks, pots etc) with a stone drip-tray below it and a well-tarred smoking board in the lum directly above the arched fireplace. In the hall the floor was found to have been covered with sandstone paving.

It is doubtful if anything further of antiquarian interest remains to be found internally.

Architectural/Artistic overview

The tower house, standing complete and roofed, is the near-perfect model of a typical Jacobean tower house. Four storeys and a garret high, it is built on the L-plan, with the projecting smaller tower, or jamb, at the south-east corner of the main longitudinal block housing the broad spiral stair giving

access to all four floors. Altogether, it has a very lofty and striking appearance.

Castle of Park shows no evidence of having been remodelled from an existing structure (as seems to have been the case at, for example, Drumcoltran Tower). The date and builder are proclaimed over the entrance doorway, on a lintel inscribed with the date 1590 and the words:

> BLISSIT [BE] THE NA[ME] OF [THE] LORD THIS
> VERK VAS BEGVN T[H]E F[IR]ST DAY O[F] MARCH
> 1590 BE THOMAS HAY OF PARK AND
> JONET MAKDOVEL HIS SPOVS

Otherwise the architectural detail of the exterior is somewhat plain. In the inner angle of the L-plan, a bowed stair turret carried on continuous corbelling rises from the third floor to the attic. The roofscape has original crow-stepped gables and plain coped chimney-stacks. Some of the attic windows may have originally had gableted or pedimented dormers but are now plain.

The interior is largely original to the 1590s, although the fixtures, fittings and décor are mostly of 1992-3. The barrel-vaulted ground floor is subdivided into three compartments – two storage cellars and a kitchen, all reached by a service corridor running north/south along the east side. The southern cellar has a small service stair rising up in the south-west corner to the first floor, so making this the wine cellar. The first floor is occupied mostly by the hall, with its huge moulded rectangular fireplace in the east wall. A small closet in the north-east corner has an unusual deep-splayed rectangular window in its north wall, which may have been a later insertion. A tight turnpike stair in the north-west corner (reinstated in wood in 1992-3) provided service access to the upper floors. The two rooms on each of the upper two floors had fireplaces and stool closets. The roof structure is basically original.

Most of the interior fixtures, fittings and décor date from the Landmark Trust's 1992-3 'make-over', supervised by Stewart Tod & Partners, architects. A particular highlight are the painted ceiling boards in the second floor, decorated with stylised fruit, by Jennifer Packer.

Whilst the Jacobean tower house itself stands remarkably intact, the two ranges of buildings attached to its north side and south-east corner in the 18th-century were demolished by MOPBW in 1951. This is much to be regretted for, judging by photographic evidence (see RCAHMS) and the sketches of them published in MacGibbon & Ross, these formed a valuable and attractive component of the ensemble. It is presumed they were demolished as being 'excrescencies', as was the antiquarian fashion of that time. What is missing now from Castle of Park in the way of added wings is still apparent at Carsluith Castle, where a similar addition to the 16th-century tower, of two flanking wings, was made around the same time.

Social overview

Ever since the 1990s, Castle of Park has usefully served as unusual, attractive and comfortable rented holiday accommodation. The building has no other social use, although it has occasionally opened to the public during 'Doors Open Day', and is sometimes part of Landmark Trust's "50 for free" initiative, which offers free holiday accommodation to charities and groups who might not usually be able to afford it.

Spiritual overview

Castle of Park currently plays no known spiritual role. However, it is said to be haunted by two ghosts – one a monk (who was murdered here by being walled up in one of the rooms) and the other a 'green lady' (who became pregnant whilst working here and hanged herself).

Aesthetic overview

The tower house sits on a good raised location, which despite the presence of adjacent forestry, makes it a prominent feature, seen from miles around. The presence of the nearby impressive railway viaduct over the Water of Luce (disused since the 1960s) adds to the drama of its situation.

Regrettably, none of the tower house's former additions (original barmkin and gardens or Georgian wings) remains (in contrast to the situation at **Carsluith Castle**, for example).

The views out from the tower house, particularly to north and east from the top storey, up the water of Luce to the hills, are most attractive.

WHAT ARE THE MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING OF THE PROPERTY?

- What was the original layout of the surrounding barmkin, gardens, orchards, etc? Only archaeological excavation can now provide answers.
- How did the construction of the 18th-century ranges affect the use of the original tower? Here too archaeological excavation may offer clues, as perhaps would a detailed analysis of the surviving wings at **Carsluith Castle**.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key points

- Castle of Park is the near-perfect model of a typical Jacobean tower house. Unlike some other ostensibly late 16th-century towers that on closer inspection prove to be remodellings of older structures (for example, **Carsluith Castle**), Castle of Park is all of one build.
- Castle of Park has found a new, and perfectly satisfying, role as unusual, high quality rented holiday accommodation, where the 'ancient' and the 'modern' sit harmoniously side by side.

ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

- *Other locally related places*: Dunragit House; **Glenluce Abbey**
- *Some other Gallovidian Jacobean tower houses*: Barholm Castle; **Carsluith Castle**; Castle of St John, Stranraer; **Drumcoltran Tower**; Dunskey Castle; **MacLellan's Castle**; Old Place of Mochrum; Rusko Tower; Sorbie Tower
- *Some other 16th-century tower houses in Historic Scotland's care*: **Carnasserie Castle**; **Claypotts**; **Corgarff Castle**; **Craignethan Castle**; **Elcho Castle**; **Glenbuchat Castle**; **Greenknowe Tower**

KEYWORDS

tower house; barmkin; Jacobean; Hay family; Glenluce Abbey; Dunragit

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