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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CLAYPOTTS CASTLE



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

CLAYPOTTS CASTLE

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1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

Claypotts Castle is a small scale Z-plan tower-house built in the later 16th century for John Strachan, a minor landowner. Originally the castle is likely to have formed the centrepiece of a small farming estate with associated outhouses and offices set within some form of enclosure, and possibly some garden or amenity ground. Its modern setting however is far different, as it is now surrounded by an estate of modern houses of post 1970s date.

Due to its location within the City of Dundee, Claypotts is potentially accessible to a large population. However the site is restricted, facilities are limited and parking is a potential issue. There is open access to view the exterior and currently (2018) the interior can be seen by arrangement with the key-keeper.

1.2 Statement of significance

Claypotts is an outstanding example of a Scottish Jacobean tower house and is significant on several counts.

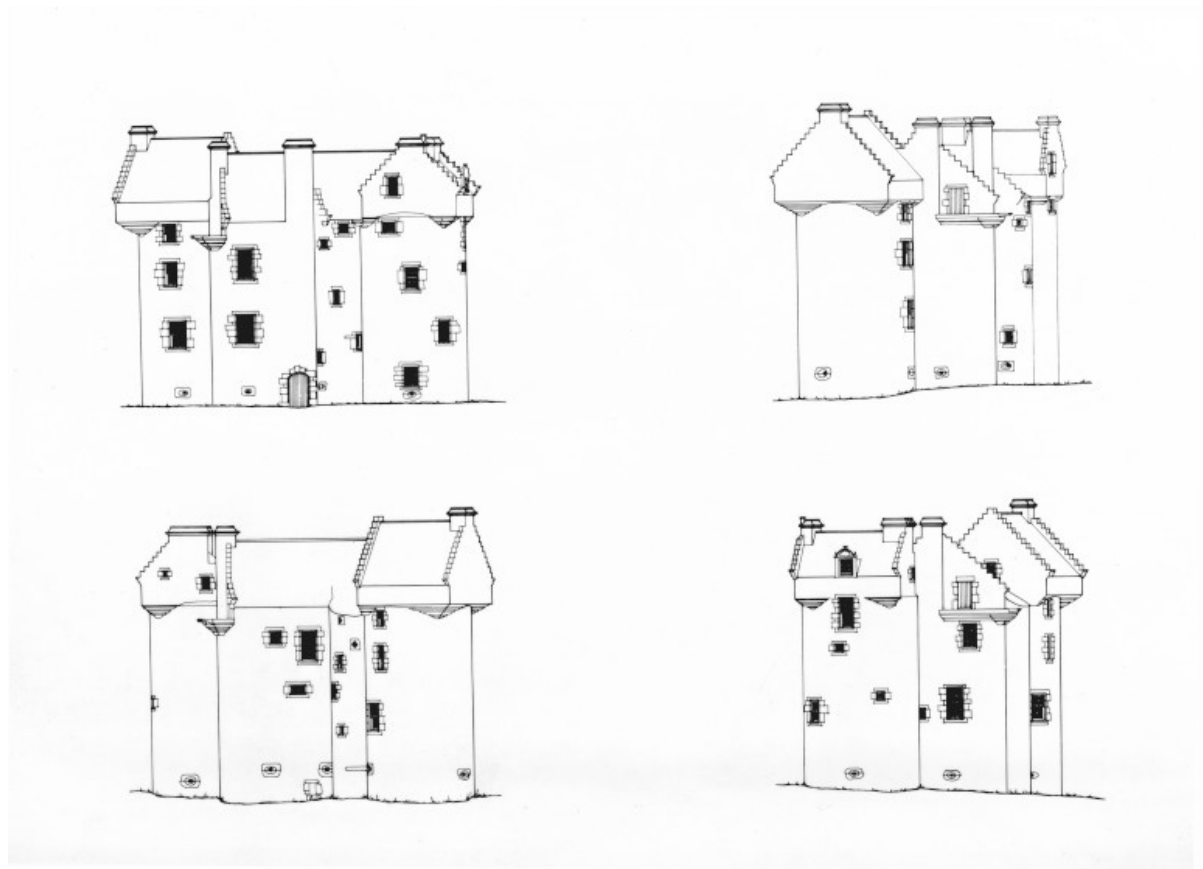
- Claypotts is important architecturally and demonstrates a fully developed Z-plan layout. It incorporates within its compact ground-plan many of the features which characterise much larger and grander examples of the type. Additionally its striking elevations, defined by the motif of corbelling-out square garrets atop the two round towers give Claypotts its unique appearance.
- Claypotts provides evidence of past ways of life, particularly of the Strachan family in the late 16th century. The near complete and roofed state of the castle provides a good setting in which to interpret the lifestyle and ambitions of the lesser gentry, and the replica furniture on display, also helps in this regard. Claypotts as built by the Strachans is very much the new house of a new family on the lower end of the 'noble' scale and who had largely 'made it' through their own abilities rather than by lineage or inheritance.
- Underpinning both of the above aspects is the castle's relative completeness and lack of alteration. While there have been some losses of decorative detail at the roofline (see section 3 & 7) the fact that the castle has remained roofed and in relatively good order means that its original design intent and aesthetic can be appreciated today. Survival of some original timbers, and the roof in particular, is an important archaeological resource with some potential for dendrochronological study.
- A later owner of Claypotts was a man of great historical significance, the Jacobite commander John Graham of Claverhouse, 1st Viscount Dundee (1648-1689). He is traditionally associated with the site

though scholarly opinion is skeptical¹ that he personally made much use of the place. A recent review posits some evidence of stronger connection, though this is not conclusive (see Appendix 3 for full discussion).

There is reasonable documentary evidence which allows an understanding of the late 16th century economy and lands which supported the castle, and sheds some light on the lives of the servants and tenants who lived there. This is an important opportunity to tell the story of castle-life “in the round”, and to people the site with named individuals, not only lairds and ladies but ploughmen and servants.

The major loss at Claypotts, at least above the ground, is probably that of the now non-extant associated ancillary buildings and structures -. However, there is good potential for archaeological study to provide a more complete picture in this regard. The setting is undeniably compromised, though the idiosyncratic appearance of Claypotts means it retains a strong sense of place.

The above short statement encapsulates our current understanding of the main significances of this site. A broader overview of the cultural and natural heritage values of the place is given below.



Drawing of the four sides of Claypotts Castle

¹ Sanford Terry, p. 73, Apled, pp. 104-05.

2 Assessment of values

2.1 Background

The lands of Claypotts were granted to Lindores Abbey by King Alexander II in the 1240s. The place-name, which is unlikely to be older than the twelfth century, means exactly what it suggests, and hints that this had previously been the location of an early pottery factory, locating kilns and industrial waste away from the burgh of Dundee and close to the clay soil which would supply the raw materials (a place of the same name just outside Perth continued to be a site of ceramic manufacture until the nineteenth century). However, the deep, heavy soil also responded well to cultivation under the heavy mouldboard plough, and it is likely that the acquisition of the land by the monks of Lindores marked its shift from industry to agriculture. In the sixteenth century, the land was capable of growing at least a small area of wheat, the most commercially valuable grain in a country where barley and oats were the staple crops. This is a strong indicator that Claypotts was regarded as a first-class area of ground, one of the favoured locations where wheat cultivation was practical.

Description

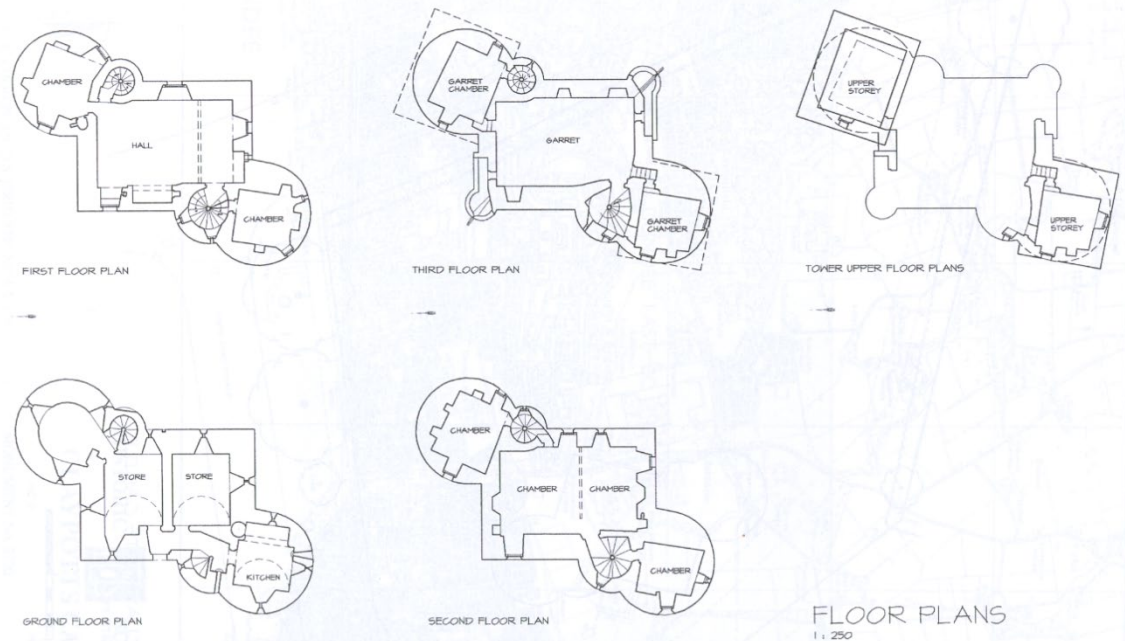
Claypotts Castle is a small scale Z-plan tower-house; it was built in the second half of the 16th century for John Strachan, a minor landowner, on land which his family had held for at least several decades as tenants of Lindores Abbey, Fife. The building and lands passed to the Graham family in 1601, who retained it until John Graham of Claverhouse's forfeiture following the 1689 Jacobite Rising. Claypotts was abandoned as a dwelling in the later 1800s and came into State care in 1926.

The castle is four storeys high including the attic. On plan it comprises a rectangular central block with round towers at diagonally opposite corners. At attic level the round towers are corbelled out to give a square-plan garret room, giving Claypotts its unique appearance.

Originally the castle formed the centrepiece of a small farming estate. While little is known for sure about its historic setting it would be expected to be associated with outhouses and offices, and set within some form of enclosure, and possibly some garden or amenity ground. Its modern setting, however, is far different, as it is now surrounded by an estate of modern houses, largely of 1970s date.

Developmental sequence

Current understanding of the development and dating of Claypotts is not exact and the following account summarises what is believed to be its main phases of development.



Floor plans of Claypotts Castle

Phase 1: Foundation, later 16th century

The 'Z-plan' design of Claypotts is consistent with a foundation date in the mid-to-late sixteenth century. The conventional understanding is that the castle was constructed over a period of twenty years or so, based on the dates of 1569 and 1588 which appear on inscribed stones at the top of the two towers². However, this assumes that the datestones are records of building campaigns: this assumption has been queried by more recent scholarship, and these stones may instead commemorate significant dates in the biography of the tower's proprietor John Strachan. What can be said with reasonable confidence is that substantial building work must have been undertaken by 1569, and that the castle was more-or-less complete in its present form by 1588, when the second date-stone was put in place.

A number of pieces of evidence were advanced by M.R. Apted in support of the theory that the upper parts of the north tower represent a later build. Most notably, the character of the masonry of the north tower changes above first floor level, suggesting a distinct pause in construction. In addition, the uppermost chamber within it is accessed only by removable wooden steps, as if by afterthought, in contrast with the more sophisticated and well-planned staircase passage leading to its counterpart in the south tower.³ Furthermore, the Jacobean cartographer Timothy Pont included a *vignette* of Claypotts in his map of the Dundee area. This depicts the castle with towers of unequal height and so may record the part-completed

² The dates appear on carved skewputs at the base of the caphouse gables; they are discussed by MacGibbon and Ross ii. 213, and Apted, p. 107.

³ Apted, p. 107.

building before the completion of the north tower *circa* 1588.⁴ It seems clear that the Z-plan layout was intended from the outset, since the gunloops in the basement are offset at both ends of the house to allow sufficient space for the towers and to provide flanking fire across them,⁵ but it is not currently known whether the heightening of the north tower merely completed the original design, or represents a variation on what was first intended⁶. Further study of the roof timbers may yield some additional evidence.

Although Claypotts is a compact building, the interiors are impressively spacious and well-proportioned. The great hall on the first floor has a surprising grandeur that proclaims the Strachans' status as lairds and members of an ancient noble family, and the upper floor seems to have formed a sophisticated suite of public rooms, with a gallery in the main space, from where access could be gained to viewing balconies on the wall-walks and smaller chambers at the top of the towers.

Phase 2: alterations and modifications, 17th century

The Strachan family remained in possession of Claypotts until 1601 after which it passed to the Graham family. At some point in the 17th century Claypotts was altered both externally and internally to align with prevailing fashions and tastes. While we are not certain about the exact date of the changes, it is likely that they were undertaken by the Grahams rather than the Strachan lairds.

The main changes were:

- the demolition of the battlements/balconies,
- the removal of all but one of the dormer windows,
- the insertion of closets for chamber pots and the removal of the older type of latrine which had a guardrobe chute,
- the rebuilding of windows to enlarged proportions to take timber sash windows,
- the redecoration of the second floor.

Our current understanding does not allow us to determine whether these changes were all one project, or of different dates. The sequencing of the changes and possible attribution is discussed more fully in Appendix 3.

The most obvious change to the exterior was to the roofline. There is clear evidence that the upper floor originally boasted a large number of dormer windows. Their window sills remain visible on the wallhead, and the

⁴ Apted, p. 108.

⁵ Apted, p. 107.

⁶ Charles McKean (The Scottish Chateau pp 117 – 119) believed that the original intention was for a symmetrical pair of tall, cylindrical towers under conical roofs, a plan that was revised to form the present square caphouses when fashions changed; but if the plan was altered, the result remains sophisticated and architecturally well-informed - the caphouses which crown the completed building follow the same pattern as a prestigious prototype at Drochil Castle.

alterations to the roof structure necessitated by their removal is clearly recognisable inside the building. Only the dormer on the south tower survives today and can give an idea of their general form. The surviving window sills indicate the detail of decoration was different from the surviving south dormer. At the north and south gables of the top floor of the main block, doorways gave access to a wallwalk or balcony which would have originally been enclosed by a battlemented parapet, the height of which can be gauged by the level at which the ashlar dressing on the adjacent chimney stack begins. These parapets have been drastically reduced in height and levelled off, though some of their supporting corbelling remains.

Additionally there was the rebuilding of window openings and the removal of iron grilles protecting the windows (both would diminish its 'military' flavour). The windows' wider proportions and lack of grooves for glazing bands show that they were designed for modern sash windows, which would indicate a date after 1670.

Phase 3: decline followed by "rescue" and State care; 18th century to present

It appears that Claypotts remained substantially unaltered in terms of its exterior features and its main internal layout from the 17th century.

It seems to have remained in use providing living accommodation until the mid-19th century, when it housed farm servants. As might be expected, it was not by that stage in the best of repair. McGibbon & Ross (1887-92) note it as being in generally reasonable condition, roofed though used only as storage, with the internal floors in poor condition.

Claypotts was taken into guardianship in 1926. Records indicate a series of fairly minor repairs initially, with existing timbers treated with preservative and loose plaster sprayed with consolidant. In 1983-84 the roof was re-covered re-using approximately 40% of the existing flagstones, and has been strengthened internally by a modern frame, while leaving the original timber structure intact.



<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1202678>

Claypotts Castle before repairs

2.2 Evidential values

Its good state of preservation and lack of alteration makes Claypotts an excellent evidential resource. Specifically among castle sites managed by Historic Environment Scotland (HES), the fact of its being roofed, retaining early timbers and some wall surfaces, adds greatly to this aspect. Additionally there is sufficient documentary evidence to allow good levels of interpretation of the structure and some of the key figures associated with it.

Site and surroundings

As the ground level appears to have been raised/built up over time, there is good potential for surviving evidence of lost structures and archaeological deposits. Some understanding of the original extent of the Claypotts estate is possible from documentary sources which also illuminate the economic resources of the estate and its agricultural produce.

The building itself

The castle's essential plan and layout appears little altered (bar the 17th century modifications discussed above) and is believed not to have undergone any major re-building in the way that many castles were "restored" in the 19th and later centuries. Comparatively speaking, there is a good survival of interior features of early date which would benefit from further study and which would help to build up a picture of the development of the various interior styles and fixtures over the centuries. For instance wall surface finishes, though patchy, are capable of study and interpretation, and some fragments of wall painting survive (especially within the first floor of the north tower). Probably the most outstanding

feature is the survival of timbers, both structural in roofs and floors/ceilings, but also in e.g. the aumbry door and the stool closet.

The roof in particular retains much original/early fabric especially over the main range where adzed oak rafters remain. A number of the floor beams have tooled slots and notches in them, which serve no obvious function here, and have presumably been re-used second-hand from another structure. Expert analysis may render these features more intelligible. Also of note are the roof “slates” which are in fact small flagstones rather than sheets of slate, employing a traditional technique once typical of the area.⁷

Therefore, there is excellent potential to gather further evidence by close analysis and dendrochronological study of the timber resource within the castle; it would of course be ideal if this were undertaken in the context of a full archaeological standing building analysis. This would undoubtedly refine our understanding of dating and sequencing of original and later building phases and allow for accurate reconstruction of the building through time.

Claypotts also presents an important example of the domestic “workings” of Scottish tower houses, as the relative neglect of the building in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries left it free of “upgrading”, and allowed it to retain an unusual number of its original architectural details. This is perhaps most obvious in the kitchen in the basement of the south tower, which contains its original hearth, with an elegant arched opening and a small oven at one end (often described as a ‘bread oven’, but perhaps primarily used for more sophisticated fare such as pies), a small basin with an outflow allowing its contents to be drained away through the wall, and a position for a water barrel just outside its door, tucked beneath the spiral stairs and fed by captured rainwater carried through the wall by a stone sluice. The hall on the first floor contains traces of the screens which once separated the hall from a serving alcove, a vast hearth with a salt box built into one side, and a wall-cupboard or aumbry in one of the window recesses, retaining part of its original woodwork.

The basic arrangement of fireplaces, window embrasures and cupboards throughout the building is not thought to have been significantly modified. The fireplace in the great hall now appears much taller than originally intended; the lintel has been removed, so the fireplace rises to the level of the relieving arch.⁸ The various iterations of toilet provision also provide a good example of developments in this very necessary area, and the survival of the complete stool closet is rare.

Documentary resources

There are a number of documents held in publicly available archives which can help illuminate the lives and concerns of the people of Claypotts. This is a valuable resource to help “people” this building and its history and is

⁷ MacGibbon and Ross, ii. 210.

⁸ Apted, p. 107.

discussed in more detail at Section 2.3 and in Appendix 2. There is potential for more documentary evidence to come to light in the future.

2.3 Historical values

The main historical values of Claypotts derive from its connection with the Strachan family, and therefore its ability to demonstrate the interests and way of life of a middling gentry family in the years around the Reformation. A second major theme is how the place evolved in the 17th century, which demonstrates changes in domestic lifestyle and in architectural fashion⁹ and is principally associated with the Graham lairdship at Claypotts. Good survival of on-site physical evidence and documentary evidence held elsewhere (see 2.2 above) greatly enhances Claypotts ability to tell these stories.

Association with the Strachan family and 16th century life

The best-documented historical associations of Claypotts are with its builders, the Strachan family, who were associated with the lands of Claypotts from at least 1511 until 1601. Three skewputs on crow-stepped gables bear the dates 1569, 1588 and the Strachan arms (three cinquefoils on a stripe across the top of a blank shield) flanked by the initials I.S. (for John Strachan). There is a fair amount of documentary evidence relating to the Strachan family, which allows a good understanding of the relative wealth and social standing of the family. Their close connection with the catholic church, (several family members were priests) adds another dimension, particularly given that their occupation coincided with the unfolding of the Reformation.

In 1511, the brothers Gilbert and John Strachan were pardoned for leading a band of horse-rustlers.¹⁰ Gilbert was a priest, while his brother John is styled 'in le Claypottis', denoting that he was in some way possessor of part or all of the land without holding a hereditary feudal title to it (which would have made him 'of' rather than merely 'in' Claypotts; a socially significant distinction). Probably he was renting the lands from Lindores Abbey on a short lease of a few years' length, or occupying them under an informal arrangement based on long usage. Being styled 'in' rather than 'of' Claypotts suggests that, at this stage, Strachan might have actively participated in the work of the land.

Nonetheless, other evidence shows that the Strachans at Claypotts also had the capacity to assert themselves as men of note – not least the fact that the brothers were able to secure a pardon for their rustling activity. Sixteenth-century documents indicate something of the networks which facilitated such actions. The family were regarded as part of an extended kindred of Strachans in the local area, allies and cousins of the lairds of nearby Carmyllie and Balhousie, whose heraldry they imitated, although

⁹ These architectural elements are dealt with more fully in Section 2.4 of this document.

¹⁰ *Registrum Secreti Sigili Regum Scottorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, ed. M. Livingstone, D. Hay Fleming, J. Beveridge and G. Donaldson (8 vols. 1908-1984) vol.2, No. 2213.

their exact place in the genealogy is unclear. Their mother's side of the family is better-documented: she was a daughter of Sir Gilbert Seton, laird of Parbroath Castle in Fife, a prestigious match for a family who seem to have been only tenants. From her kindred they acquired an important additional source of power and prestige in the 1520s, when Gilbert Strachan became parson of Fettercairn in succession to his uncle Dr. David Seton; a priest and lawyer of singularly imposing appearance and strong personality.¹¹ The parsonage of Fettercairn would pass down in turn to a Strachan nephew, only passing from the family's control in the 1570s.

A recognised coat-of-arms, a family network, good marriages, and ecclesiastical younger sons were all things which helped the Strachans enhance their status. From around 1550, they are generally acknowledged as the Strachans 'of' Claypotts, a key shift of terminology which shows that they had come to be perceived as lairds, hereditary feudal proprietors rather than mere tenants. By 1601, this hereditary status was being taken for granted in the title deeds, which assign them the conventional obligation whereby each incoming laird had to pay the equivalent of a year's rent when he inherited. It was in this context that the construction of the tower house took place, a clear assertion of the family's status as lairds and gentlemen.

Documents of 1594, give a clear image of a prosperous little estate around the castle, with ten bolls of wheat (suggesting a field of around ten acres; impressive for this crop in Scotland in this period), plus oats and peas, eighteen oxen which would have served for beef as well as ploughing, plus two cows for milk, four ploughmen to see to the land and cattle, a flock of sheep tended by a single shepherd, two horses whose needs were perhaps attended to by the family themselves, and a staff of three household servants. At some half-remembered time, the original rent had been 13½ merks (£9 Scots) and twelve chickens; by 1601, and perhaps rather earlier, two rent rises and a £1 payment in lieu of the chickens raised the total to a cash payment of £12.12/8d. Like everyone on Lindores lands, the Strachans were subject to the Abbot's rights of feudal justice rather than royal law-enforcement; a status symbolised by a requirement to attend the three "head courts" held at Lindores every year, and they owed military service equating to a mere quarter of a 'horse with a servant on foot', probably part of the baggage train rather than a mounted infantryman.

The Strachans also set out to enlarge their territory, making Claypotts the centre of a group of other lands, in which they now had tenants of their own. In 1556, they gained lands at Skryne, and by 1594, they also had holdings at Pitskerrie, Kingcaldrum and Tarquhappie. The total revenue of the whole estate seems to have been around £400 Scots, further reduced by annual rent payments to approximately £300 (or around £25 in English currency). While it is generally difficult to assess lairds' incomes in Scotland in this period, this was a relatively modest sum, around 1% of the income of a great nobleman and perhaps twice that of a successful craftsman, and it

¹¹ Apted, p. 101 n. 3; Seton, i. 287.

may have been heavily encroached upon by debts. Nonetheless, the Strachans had transformed themselves from tenants to lairds, with a castle and lordship and a revenue that was, at the very least, respectable.

In its wider historical context, the elevation of Claypotts to the centre of a lairdship represents the successful negotiation of a major shift in the organisation of monastic estates in the sixteenth century. Land that was previously tenanted on short-term leases now tended to be granted out on a permanent or semi-permanent feudal basis. As noted above, Claypotts itself came from Lindores Abbey, while Skryne and Pitskerrie were the lands of other monasteries at Arbroath and Balmerino. The Reformation consolidated this process: the traditional Catholic networks connected to the monasteries granted out their territories in feudal parcels to sympathetic laymen to prevent the expropriation by Protestant reformers, while incoming Protestant “commendators” aimed to push forward reform by simply secularising the monastic lordships.

A chance surviving letter¹² shows another dimension to this process, and suggests that the Strachans stood on the Catholic side – the parson of Fettercairn had moved to Claypotts, perhaps in hiding, and at least one of his kinsmen at Carmyllie was concealing sacred vestments and chalices to prevent their theft and destruction by the Protestants.

At the end of the sixteenth century, the Strachans seem to have encountered a family crisis. A dispute for control of Claypotts evidently broke out between the new laird and his stepmother, and within a few years, the family had quit the lands. The sources are frustratingly opaque about the reason: perhaps the dispute was the reason, or perhaps debt or religious issues played a role – or perhaps the young laird, John Strachan, simply opted to invoke another perquisite of the status his forebears had secured – the ability to sell his lands for cash, move elsewhere, and do something else with the proceeds.

Association with the Graham family and 17th century life

A new laird acquired Claypotts in 1601, named William Graham: the younger brother of the prominent laird of Fintry, he was himself already the proprietor of neighbouring Ballunie, and soon to be knighted as Sir William Graham of Claypotts. In some respect, the new laird was similar to his predecessor – a member of a group of interrelated families in the area, led by cousin lairds and united by a shared surname. But the Graham kindred, with their splendid castle at Mains and their royal ancestors, were in many ways more prominent than the Strachans. Sir William’s father had been a Catholic resistance leader of international prominence, executed in 1592, his uncle was an officer of the elite Scottish Company in the French army, his brother was the leader of the local Graham faction, and his own knighthood marks him out in turn as a man of higher rank than any of the local Strachans.

¹² Printed in A. Jervise, *Epitaphs and Inscriptions from Burial Grounds in the North-East of Scotland* (Edinburgh 1875), p. 252

Appendix 3 discusses the Graham Lairdship in more detail. The narrative is not entirely clear and the castle seems to have passed between various members of the Claverhouse branch of the family. The 17th century was of course a time of great political upheaval with the Claverhouse Grahams aligned with catholic and Jacobite interests.

Following Apted's interpretation, it is generally asserted that from around the 1620s Claypotts ceased to be an "owner-occupied" house and was instead a tenanted property, however no direct evidence is advanced to support this proposition. Sir William Graham of Claverhouse (acquired Claypotts in 1620) does not seem to have had another seat of any great architectural distinction, so it is possible that he used Claypotts as his main residence until he acquired the Castle of Glen in 1640. Even after that date, the fact that the Claverhouse family had two castles did not mean that they only occupied one: if a family had a 'spare' residence, standard contemporary practice was for the eldest son to move in when he married.

John Graham of Claverhouse, 1st Viscount Dundee (Bonnie Dundee) inherited the castle at the age of four in 1653, but after leaving Scotland to pursue a military career in his youth, he only registered formal possession of the lands in 1678. He is undoubtedly the most famous owner of Claypotts, though to date, historians have stressed the lack of any evidence that he ever lived here, in contrast with the three other properties that he is known to have used near Dundee.¹³ There is some evidence that work was undertaken at Claypotts during his ownership and this is discussed more fully in Appendix 3.

After the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689, the Claverhouse lands were forfeit and passed to the Douglas family who retained it up to the transfer to State care. This period has been less studied and should be regarded as a gap in understanding.

Ability to demonstrate particular past ways of life

Because it retains much of its original layout and some internal features, Claypotts can provide a good example of the private and social spaces within which the domestic life of a middle-ranking laird of the 16th century lived. While there are other castles of similar date which can provide similar evidence, they remain a relatively rare and diminishing resource. Castles which are still roofed and in use may retain similar evidence, but this is likely to be hidden beneath later layers of fixtures and fittings, and therefore not immediately accessible. Claypotts is of particular interest because of its compact nature, the relative completeness of survival and the fact that it relates to the lesser gentry, rather than the grander houses of higher-status families.

¹³ Sanford Terry, pp. 73, 76. A residence at Claverhouse itself is mentioned in 1682, he acquired Dudhope Castle in 1683 to provide himself with a spacious mansion befitting a public figure, and the castle at Glen acquired by his grandfather became his primary family home after his marriage in 1684.

The building's toilet provision is relatively unusual. There are only two toilets, and both are closed-stool closets, which only made their appearance in Scottish castles from the 1580s (eg, the north range at Crichton Castle). There is, however, a toilet chute visible at the base of the east wall of the main block, indicating an original latrine in the main apartment on the second floor, and perhaps another one in the first-floor hall.

There is some documentary evidence which allows an understanding of how the 16th century castle functioned as an economic and social unit, the lands and activities that supported it, and the servants and tenants who peopled it. Testaments allow named individuals to be identified and some of their circumstances understood. This is a very valuable part of Claypotts' ability to tell a rounded story of castle life beyond the usual themes of high-status life. Further detail is given in Appendix 2 – The People of Claypotts.

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

Claypotts is undoubtedly an architectural “gem” highlighted in many surveys of Scottish architecture, largely because of its very singular elevations and the variety of cylindrical and rectangular masses of which it is composed. It is important for this singularity and also that in its very compact Z-plan footprint it incorporates many of the features expected in larger and more ambitious castles.

Plan and elevations

The Z-plan was a prestigious design concept: in the 1570s it was selected for the Regent Morton's palatial retreat at Drochil Castle in the Borders, which is generally accepted as a self-conscious Scottish imitation of the grand chateaux of the French Renaissance.¹⁴ There are a number of Z-plan castles in the Perth/Angus area, with Powrie and Ferryport¹⁵ being the closest, while Castle Menzies is comparable in terms of layout, though on a much grander scale.

The Claypotts “Z” is an intriguing mix of circular and square elements and intersections; the paired stair towers¹⁶ rise from top to bottom as subsidiary cylinders to the main round towers. As discussed at 2.1.2 it seems likely that this final form was realized in stages, rather than a single build. The

¹⁴ MacGibbon and Ross ii. 221-26; Simpson, pp. 70-80. McKean, p. 114, convincingly relates the origins of the Z-plan itself to French Renaissance architecture, as what is effectively the same design is used for the *corps de logis* at chateaux such as Montpoupon, with a stair turret and residential tower at diagonally opposite corners.

¹⁵ MacGibbon and Ross iv. 347-54, v. 271-2.

¹⁶ It is possible that the northern stair tower was originally of smaller dimensions (1560s) and that the present tower is part of the 1580s work undertaken when the northern tower was finished to full height. The junction of the stair and the north round tower is fairly awkward and may indicate an alteration (Apted); additionally the field of fire of the gunloop in the kitchen fireplace is partly blocked by the north stair tower, necessitating a groove being cut out of the latter.

end result however is of a coherent design and a sophisticated and playful piece of architecture.

Externally, Claypotts is recognisably a 'castle', with towers and turrets, featuring numerous gunloops at ground level and shot holes dotted about elsewhere. Its fortified appearance was originally emphasised by iron grilles on the windows and battlemented parapets on the gables of the main block. However, like most sixteenth-century Scottish 'castles', its character is definitely more residential than seriously fortified.

Claypotts as we see it today does differ somewhat in terms of its appearance, finish and setting from what must have been the original design intent. The loss of the dormers and battlemented balconies have resulted in a plainer roofline; the original wall finish was probably a harl against which dressed stone of corbels, dormers and heraldic panel would have stood out in contrast; it is now bare rubble. These changes relate to detail and decoration rather than to the massing and general composition of elevations and groundplan and the major design elements remain largely intact today.

Interior

Part of the interest of Claypotts is that it follows the layout of larger and more prestigious houses in terms of accommodation and room sequence, all within its quite small footprint. The 17th century alterations fall in with this character, presenting quite grand suites of rooms within this small castle.

The ground floor has vaulted kitchen and cellars, and also an entrance passage/lobby to the main (south) stair. Paired spiral stairs at diagonally opposite corners rise from the junction of the round towers and the main block. The north stair is interpreted as the more "private" family stair, that to South the public/guest stair.

A lofty great hall on the first floor with the "high" end to the north; a large chamber in the north tower leading off the hall, possibly a chamber of dias/withdrawing room. Above the hall, two large rooms each with a fireplace, possibly intended to function as a suite including the main bedchamber. The chambers in the South tower are likely to be guest bed chambers, with one of the upper rooms possibly functioning as a chapel.

The top floor is an important space, the main room probably more gallery than garret. It is generously proportioned and originally (before the removal of the dormers) well lit, each gable opening out onto a balcony (suitably dressed with battlemented parapets). In this scenario, probably with a timber vaulted ceiling, no doubt painted, the cap-house rooms can be interpreted as studies or closets (rather than servants rooms). 16th century Claypotts therefore provided a high degree of sophistication in the range of apartments and separation of private and public space.

A further strand to the architectural interest at Claypotts lies in the alterations presumed to have been undertaken in the 17th century. The

motivation for the doughting of dormer heads and parapets which removed much of the “show” from the exterior (and light from the interior) is not certain but can be understood against a general pattern of removal/downplaying of the overtly castellated features of 16th century houses over the course of the 17th century. It may be that the dormer heads contained either Strachan-specific or other (perhaps religious) motifs unwelcome in later periods, or simply a response to changing fashion.

The internal aspects, such as blocking of latrine chutes and installation of stool closets, introduction of sash windows are progressive. It is acknowledged that our understanding of the sequencing of these alterations, and indeed their motivation, is not conclusive, and these aspects are discussed more fully in Appendix 3.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

As described above, the present day aesthetic and setting of Claypotts has changed greatly. However, Claypotts remains an unusual and appealing tower house, thanks to its idiosyncratic elevations. Claypotts can be glimpsed from the A92 and its immediate surroundings – closely hemmed by modern bungalow development and set in a small area of mown grass – cannot be considered historically appropriate or sympathetic. However it does have an unmistakable “sense of place” and the castle makes a visually robust enough statement to capture the attention of most observers.

Internally the paired staircases allow a looping route through the castle which can leave visitors a little disorientated. It certainly seems a more extensive house than appears from the outside. The top floor garret, up among the old roof timbers with views out to the Firth of Tay, is a highlight for many visitors.

Historic setting

Little visible evidence survives for the original setting for Claypotts. Scottish mansions of this period were typically placed in a formal setting involving a courtyard and subordinate buildings, and were increasingly likely to boast at least a small layout of walled gardens. As the example of Powrie shows, a tower could even be accompanied by additional residential ranges of impressive architectural quality. The evidence that does exist regarding Claypotts is largely documentary. A document of 1594 refers to a barn and yard, but the Roy military map of circa 1750 does not distinguish the castle from the adjacent cottages, and suggests that there was then little trace of any formal setting around the tower.

A subsequent estate plan of 1770¹⁷ confirms the absence of a barmkin at this date, and reveals further details of the setting - the main road then passed to the south of the tower, and there was a small roadside building at the junction where you now turn in to park beside the castle, while a little

¹⁷ NRS RHP22224/2

way beyond the castle to the north stood two more buildings and some garden plots.

2.6 Natural heritage values

At the time of writing¹⁸, the site has no noted special natural heritage values. A visit in 2018 did not indicate that the site is in-use as a bat roost, however the castle has many features suitable for roosting bats. Further investigation would be required before carrying out any conservation or other works which could disturb bats.

2.7 Contemporary/use values

Claypotts is accessible to view externally all year round; the number of visitors is not known. However, due to its being illustrated in several guides and histories of Scottish architecture it is well known to students and those with an interest in Scottish castles. Visits to the interior can be arranged by contacting Arbroath Abbey in advance during our standard opening hours on 01241 878 756. They then contact the key keeping organization who facilitate access to the property on behalf of HES. Lack of parking space is a limiting factor in attracting greater visitor numbers.

There is a close association with the local primary school which uses an image of the castle as its “badge” and are clearly proud of the connection. Pupils visit the castle and there are follow-up activities and projects; some take part in Junior Guides schemes. Because the castle is roofed and has recognizable rooms, it is relatively easy to interpret to a young audience than many more ruinous sites. There are some good stories to tell of real people associated with the house, and also well-known folktales and ghost stories.

Because of the association with the school, Claypotts is identified with this part of Dundee, but it is not known if this is recognised outwith the immediate area.

Claypotts is associated with several folktales and ghost stories, some persisting to this day. A H Millar¹⁹ (1923) recounts the two main ones: there is a tale that one Marion Ogilvy leapt from the south tower to her death when her lover, Cardinal Beaton did not arrive as planned from St Andrews on 29 May 1546 (i.e. long before the castle existed!); her sorrowing ghost visiting the castle on this anniversary. This story is retold with relish by the Claypotts Primary School pupils! Secondly, there were longstanding beliefs that Bonnie Dundee/Bloody Claverhouse held pacts with the devil and witches sabbaths in the castle at Halloween.

3 Major gaps in understanding

¹⁸ October 2018

¹⁹A H Millar, Haunted Dundee, 1923

<https://archive.org/stream/haunteddundeemill#page/n129/search/Claypotts>

- What form did the original (ie, 1560s) tower house take, particularly in the upper storeys?
- What is the dendrochronological potential of the site, both to contribute to the Scottish chronology of timbers and specifically to inform our understanding of the structure, and the historic context.
- What is the extent of survival of historic internal finishes and fixtures and how well do we understand these?
- What form did the entire castle (its outbuildings, yards and perimeter walls) take, and how did it develop over the centuries? The limited archaeological work undertaken suggests that the potential is high
- What were the real reasons for the complex and rapid changes of ownership between the 1590s and the 1640s, and how was the castle used when it was subsequently owned by “Bonnie Dundee”?
- What more can be found out about the post-Graham period and the early interventions of State care?

4 **Associated properties**

Broughty Castle; Dudhope Castle (also owned by “Bonnie Dundee”); Powrie Castle

5 **Keywords**

Tower-house; Z-plan; Timber roof; skewputt; heraldic panel; painted decoration; gunloop; Strachan; Graham

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Canmore ID 33397

Site Number NO43SE 16

NGR NO 45279 31956

Scheduled Monument Description:

<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90075>

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Appendix 1 – Timeline

- c.1190 Earl David of Huntingdon and the Garioch, younger brother of William I, founds the Tironensian abbey of Lindores, Fife.
- 1247 Earl David's nephew, Alexander II, confirms the lands of Claypotts, together with those of Craigie, Milton and Balnaw, as being in the possession of Lindores Abbey.
- 1365 David II confirms the grant.
- Early 1500s The lands of Claypotts are being tenanted by 'John Strathachin in le Claypottis', possibly a cadet branch of the Strachans of Angus and Thornton, in the Mearns.
- 1511 John Strachan and his brother Gilbert (a priest) are at the head of a posse of cattle rustlers, but manage to be pardoned for the crime.
- 1569 This date, on a skewput on the gable of Claypotts' south tower, indicates that the present building is by then well advanced. The builder is probably John Strachan's eldest son, also John, who in **1570** witnesses a charter given at Claypotts by his younger brother James, a canon of Aberdeen Cathedral.
- c.1585 Timothy Pont depicts 'Claypotts' on his map of Angus. He appears to show a central block with two towers of unequal height.
- 1588 A skewput on the gable of the north tower indicates that further building work is in progress.
- 1593 John Strachan dies and is succeeded by his son, Gilbert.
- 1594 Gilbert Strachan dies and is succeeded by his son, John, then only a minor. His mother, Elizabeth Maxwell, of Tealing, attempts to exclude her son's lawful curators from Claypotts but is fined and ordered to give up the castle.

- 1601 Claypotts is purchased by Sir William Graham of Ballunie, already in possession of Gotterston, Warrieston and Ballunie, immediately north and west of Claypotts. Sir William is subsequently known as 'of Claypotts'.
- 1616 Sir William Graham transfers Claypotts to his son David, who in **1620** sells it to Sir William Graham of Claverhouse.
- 1642 Sir William Graham of Claverhouse dies, and Claypotts passes, in turn, to his son George, his grandson William, and finally to his great-grandson John Graham of Claverhouse, Viscount Dundee, whose remarkable life as a soldier, statesman and loyal Stuart supporter forms part of the nation's history. Despite a tradition associating his name with Claypotts, it is unlikely that 'Bonnie Dundee' ever visited the castle, let alone lived there, for he was brought up in Glen Ogilvy, and later resided at Dudhope Castle, in Dundee).
- 1689 Following Viscount Dundee's death after the battle of Killiecrankie, his estates, including Claypotts, are declared forfeit and revert to the Crown.
- 1694 The Crown grant Claypotts and other estates forfeited by Viscount Dundee to the 2nd Marquis of Douglas.
- 1847 Claypotts is being lived in by farm labourers.
- 1926 The 13th Earl of Home, a descendant of the 2nd Marquis of Douglas, entrusts Claypotts into state care.
- Early 1960s Derelict farm buildings to the west of Claypotts are demolished and replaced by the present housing scheme. Road alterations also result in the loss of part of the castle grounds fronting onto Claypotts Road at the NE corner of the site. The Misses Batchelor, owners of the farm, gift a parcel of extra land in the NW corner of the site, to help safeguard the castle's amenity.
- Mid 1980s The roof is deemed unsafe and the castle closed whilst remedial works are undertaken.

Appendix 2 – The people of Claypotts

The following notes identify some of the “ordinary” people associated with Claypotts Castle, largely in the 16th and 17th-century. They fall into three main groups:

1. Notes relevant to the late 16th-century life of the castle around 1594/5, including a greater understanding of the land and produce which supported the estate
2. Notes relevant to the 17th-century estate under the Graham lairds

3. Notes regarding a specific episode in 1689 when a troop of English dragoons and Horse plundered oats and other goods from the castle.

1. Late 16th-century life at Claypotts

The question of how the lairdship of Claypotts was organised and what sort of population was associated with the castle is an important one, but the evidence is complex, and the answer is not entirely straightforward.

The clearest indication of the inner workings of the lairdship comes in two parallel documents from the end of the sixteenth century; the will of the laird John Strachan, drawn up in April 1593 (Apted pp. 14-16), and that of his son and successor as laird, Gilbert Strachan, written in early 1594 (NAS GD45/16/811). Taken together, these texts offer a snapshot of Claypotts in a chronologically narrow period in the 1590s, and they complement each other by revealing two separate views of a number of aspects of the working of the estate, and thus the stereoscopic combination of the two documents clarifies details that would not have been obvious from a single text.

The unpublished 1594 will (NAS GD45/16/811) enumerates what seems to be a largely complete list of the people associated with the property, only partially summarised by Apted. The text lists wages in cash paid to one man, George Tailzeour, and three women, Jonet Wilkie, Moll Feyntoun and Barbara Stewart, all of whom were presumably servants at Claypotts Castle, plus payments of oats in place of cash to five men involved in working the lands of Claypotts - four ploughmen, Patrick Abbot, John Mathow, Jamie Donaldsoun and Henry Watsoun, and a shepherd called Gavin or Gawain Duncane. The fact that the same four ploughmen were named in the 1593 will as "tenants in Claypotts" confirms that they were all resident on the immediate property rather than the other more distant components of the lairdship. We can be less sure about the shepherd, as neither text provides an explicit location for him and his flock of sheep.

The fees for the servants appear to fall across the typical range for the period - the fact that Moll Feyntoun is specifically said to be owed £6.13/4d for "ye space of ane zeir" suggest that the others were paid at the more conventional six-month period, and that the stated sums of £4 for George, £3 for Jonet Wilkie, and 40/- (i.e. £2) for Barbara Stewart, should be doubled to £8, £6 and £4 respectively. Apted indicates that Jonet Wilkie had appeared in an earlier Claypotts document of 1581, and the fact that she is named first among the female personnel is an indication of her long service.

These four were presumably resident within the castle; the disproportionate number of female servants was typical of households, both urban and rural, in Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, and they would likely receive their food and accommodation, and perhaps material for their clothes, free of charge. Many female servants seem to have been girls in their teens, saving their wage to make up a dowry, or simply to start a small business. What is less clear is what their precise roles in the household would be, but like their fellow servants in all strata of society, from young courtiers at

Holyrood to craftsmen's apprentices in provincial burghs, they would likely turn their hand to whatever was required - brewing and clothes-making seem to feature strongly in the records for female servants, and a manservant might carry a letter or fetch a drink from the cellar, though the class could also include more professional men such as a secretary or a tutor for the laird's children. Beyond their exact duties, their presence as a retinue would provide a show of status for the Strachans.

The hands' role is more self-explanatory - the shepherd watched the laird's flock of sheep, while the four ploughmen probably acted as a team with a single heavy plough, and are also likely to have been responsible for the herd of over two dozen cattle which provided the motive force for the plough as well as beef and milk; their payments were owed yearly, and were valued at the consistent rate of one boll of oats to five merks cash (£3.6/8d), with the shepherd receiving the highest remuneration at three bolls, equivalent to £10. Patrick Abbot, the first-named of the ploughmen, is identified as the "hynd" or leader of the group, the skilled man who steered the plough and generally supervised the management of the property, and received two bolls, equated to £6.13/4 (ten merks); the others all have one and a half bolls (expressed as "six firlots", i.e. six quarter-bolls), equal to £5. The assessed values of the oats are rather higher than the market price of £2.13/4d (four merks) given in the same document, and there is a possibility that they would invest their payments by growing their own small plots of oats - this would raise the ordinary ploughman's theoretical income to around £12, Patrick Abbot's to £16, and that of the shepherd Gawin Duncan to £24 - his larger basic payment perhaps reflecting the fact that he was less readily able to multiply the return by himself.

The 16th-century estate: extent and produce

The organization of the lairdship can also be seen in great detail in these two documents. There was a surprisingly large quantity of wheat by sixteenth-century Scottish standards, eight or ten bolls, but unsurprisingly, the main crop was oats, with fifty bolls growing in April 1593 - used for the staple diet of late-medieval and early-modern Scotland in the form of porridge and bannocks, but also exported in significant quantities; the same source lists fourteen bolls of barley, which would probably be used for making beer, and four bolls of peas. In early 1594, the wheat was already in the field, but at this early time of year the other grains were still stored in the "barn and barnyard" - compared with what was documented the previous year, there were twenty more bolls of oats, four of barley and two of peas, though I am not sure if these larger quantities represent supplies for the household, or a reserve that could be sold either to merchants or neighbours.

This would probably be grown in the usual pattern found in Scotland in this period, with an "infield" close to the castle which would probably be divided between oats and barley, and where the cattle would be grazed over winter to manure the ground and allow year-on-year arable cultivation, plus a larger "outfield", half of which would be under grass for pasture and the other half a ploughed field, where the remaining oats and barley plus the oats and the peas would be alternated on different plots in a basic crop-rotation cycle. The

peas were recognized as returning nutrients to the soil, and in addition seaweed might also be used as fertilisers (quicklime, which later became important in this role, may not have been used in Scotland before 1600), but except in a few areas where very large quantities of seaweed were available, the most important technique was that the pasture and ploughed outfield would be swapped around every few years so that that the manure from the grazing animals and the resting of the ground from cultivation would renew the quality.

The stock of the estate is enumerated in both years - there was a herd of over two dozen cattle, the bulk of them being mature male oxen who would provide the plough-team for Patrick Abbot and his three associates, plus around half-a-dozen younger male "stirks" - the balance of female cows falls from five in 1593 to just two in 1594, though the ploughmen might also have been given their own milking cows as part of their contract, additional to those inventorised in the document. There appear to be more complex fluctuations in the size of the flock of sheep, with around eighty in April 1593, and a quarter less in early 1594, but this in part reflects the fact that the second document was written before the lambing season in the spring, and due to a changing age profile in the flock, the number of expectant ewes is much higher in the second year. In addition, there were two "workhorses", probably packhorses to carry goods to and from market on a packsaddle rather than carthorses or ploughhorses, and we can infer that the laird also had a riding horse, though this is not explicitly enumerated in either document (the count of two horses is said in both texts to be "by the airschipe", i.e. excluding the "best horse" paid to the Abbot of Lindores as a "heriot" or "heirship" payment when each new laird inherits).

At a rough estimate of one boll per acre, the area of arable attached to Claypotts Castle can be estimated at approximately eighty acres, while the fact that at least half the property would be outfield would suggest at least forty acres of additional property under pasture, and this is supported by the approximate area needed to support over two dozen cattle, at a ratio of roughly one animal per acre, plus the horses and possibly the sheep as well.

Gilbert Strachan's will also lists the revenues due to him from the three other units of property which made up his lairdship. One property, Skryne, was leased to a group of four men for an annual rent totalling £10 (fifteen merks) in cash, thirty-one bolls of oatmeal (in contrast to the simple "oats" itemised at Claypotts, this was milled and ready to make into porridge or bannocks), seventeen bolls of barley and eight bolls of wheat, plus forty-eight capons. Another property at was rented by a woman named Jonet Kid for the relatively modest payment of twelve bolls of oatmeal, two of barley, and six-and-a-half oven-ready "poultry fowls", while another at Tarquhappie was leased for a cash rent of £10 to a male tenant. In addition to these, both wills indicate a reasonably large annual payment from the Guthries, a prominent family of local lairds, which have the look of service payments on a loan debt.

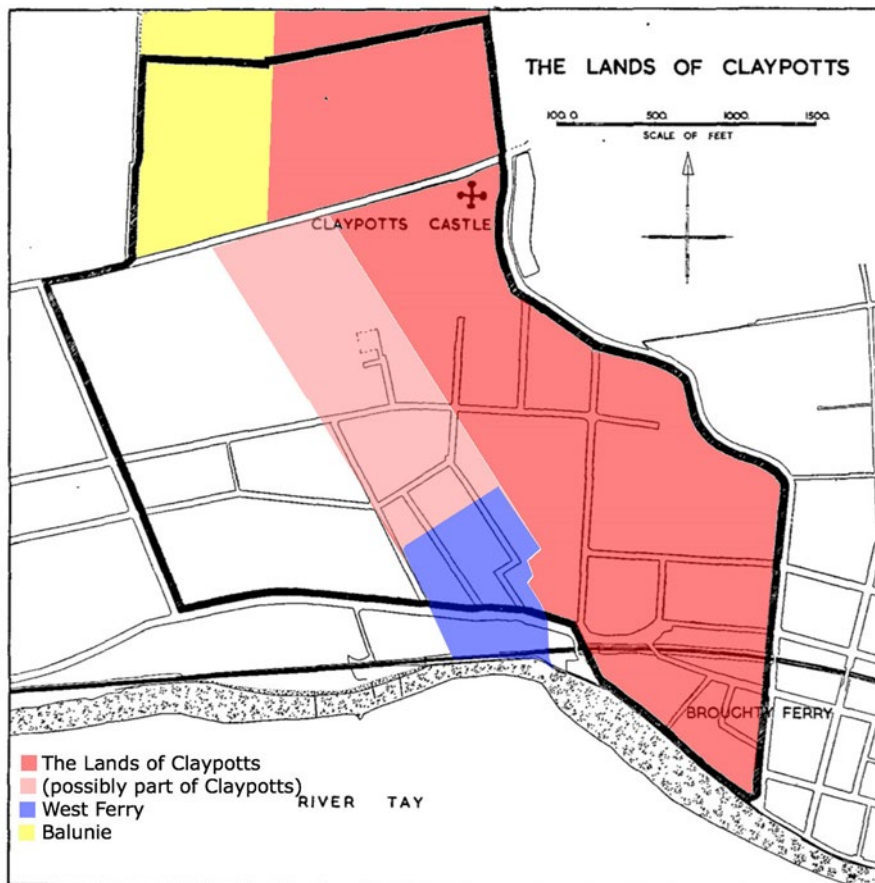


Fig. 1. The lands of Claypotts.

To place this in context, the area of the Claypotts property can be reconstructed from later evidence (see plan above). The course of the Dighty Burn and the winding lane down to the ferry (now Claypotts Road) must have formed the boundaries to the north and east, as they did in the later period. On the south, the property was associated, from at least the fifteenth century, with a small coastal settlement known as Ferrytown, in the area of the modern Douglas Terrace, discussed in more detail below. To the west, there were three separate feudal properties - another coastal village called West Ferry and the lairdships of Gotterstone and Balunie. The boundaries with West Ferry and Balunie are clearly demarcated on an estate map of 1770 - that with West Ferry is still followed by property boundaries behind the houses to the east of the modern Grove Road, while that with Balunie stretched north-north-east from the Arbroath Road to the Dighty across the middle of today's Claypotts Park; the intervening march with Gotterstone must have lain along one of the two field boundaries which ran in parallel between these more clearly demarcated units. Note that the boundaries which feature on the modern interpretative map appear to be inaccurate, and probably involve a fair degree of guesswork (this is the black line on the above map, which is adapted by superimposing coloured blocs based on the 1770 plan and early OS maps from the 1850s) - in particular, the western boundary, placed on the modern Fairfield Road, runs diagonally across the field boundaries shown in the old maps, and seems to be much too far west, enclosing the eighteenth-century locations of the Gotterstone steading and the Cotts of Gotterstone fermtoun.

Based on these criteria, the total area of the Claypotts property would appear to have been no more than 140 acres, and perhaps nearer to 120 acres. In either case, when taken in conjunction with the evidence from the documents of the 1590s, this implies that the laird was farming the entire property, or at least the preponderance of the land, as a single unit - there is no space for any significant quantity of additional peasant smallholdings, units which are often thought to have formed a key component of the Scottish agricultural landscape and the associated system of lairdship and economic authority in this period. In John Strachan's will, the same four ploughmen documented in 1594 were recorded as "tenants in Claypotts", revealing that men who would normally be interpreted as representatives of a class of smallholding peasants are in fact a group of hired ploughmen led by the hynd, and at Skryne likewise, the four "tenants" should probably be thought of as a team of ploughing contractors led by a hynd rather than individual with separate smallholdings. The likelihood is that both properties were worked as single units, essentially "farms" in the modern sense, and that the quartets of "tenants" were teams of ploughmen rather than individual smallholders leasing subdivisions of the property.

This analysis of the way that the property was worked raises questions about another conventional assumption, that there would be a small village or "fermtoun" of crofts near the castle. The ploughmen and shepherd may indeed have had a handful of cottages, but they could equally have lived within the castle - dining in the hall with the family, and possibly bedding down there as well, in the traditional manner of feudal retainers. There is certainly scant evidence for any substantial settlement. The earliest detailed visual depiction of the Claypotts lairdship, the estate map of 1770, shows no conventional "fermtoun". Instead, there is a small group of buildings centred on the castle, likely to be precursors of the steading seen on later maps and in old photographs, and perhaps equally successors of the "barn and barnyard" which the will of Gilbert Strachan refers to in 1594. Within these later arrangements, the castle continued to provide the accommodation for the labourers who worked the estate for the proprietor. While often seen as implying a sharp reduction in the status of the building, this may in fact have perpetuated an important part of the castle's role in earlier centuries - the difference was that the laird was no longer resident.

One puzzle in the documents of the 1590s is the absence of any mention of the coastal settlement at Ferrytown. The shores of the bay to the west of Broughty Castle were subdivided between several different feudal proprietors, each with rights of salmon and herring fishing, and probably of carrying paying passengers to cross the Tay. Since at least the fifteenth century a section to the south of Claypotts had been attached to the property, and known by the name of Ferrytown, which implies the presence of a little fishing village. The lack of any references in the 1590s may indicate that the Strachan lairdship had little if any real presence here. However, we know from subsequent documents that the later Graham lairds acquired Ferrytown and the associated fishing rights, and there is an alternative explanation for the lack of any reference in the Strachan period - the practice at adjacent West

Ferry and at Broughty Castle round the bay to the eastwards was for the feudal superior to lease the fishing rights, usually to a small consortium of local residents, in exchange for a relatively modest cash fee each year (amounting to £40 yearly at West Ferry in the 1650s), and if this lease was paid up at the time both documents were written, there would be no outstanding debt or profits to be recorded. The lairds of Claypotts may, however, have claimed a perquisite documented in the adjacent settlement of West Ferry - a low fixed price for the portion of the local catch which they bought for their own use.

Ferrytown is little more than a name before the second half of the eighteenth century, but the place must have been very like the adjacent property of West Ferry, which is better-documented in the earlier period - a row of cottages between the coast road and the sea, perhaps with an inn or two among them, with open boats for fishing pulled up on the foreshore in front of them, and some small fields laid out behind. One noticeable distinction between the two areas becomes visible in 1770 - the four "pendicles" or small fields documented at Ferrytown are significantly larger than the individual "acres" at adjacent West Ferry - of a suitable size, in fact, to cultivate the quantity of oats given as salary to the four ploughmen and the shepherd in the 1590s. As an alternative to the possibility that these men lived as adjuncts of the household at Claypotts, therefore, there is a possibility that the team of ploughmen were not resident at the castle or anywhere nearby, but instead in the fishing village, integrated into a larger community alongside the fishing families and other residents.

2. The Graham lairdship in the 17th-century

From a cursory survey, much less appears to be knowable about the lairdship in the Graham period after 1601. The new laird had previously inherited a very small property at Balunie, and had recently acquired the adjacent lands of Gotterstone and Milton, so the addition of Claypotts created a large, territorially unified lairdship, and gave that new territory a suitably baronial focus at the castle. This enlarged bloc proved durable, and is depicted on an estate map of 1770 (NRS RHP22224/2), but the documents only offer intermittent glimpses into the community - for example, a tenant in Gotterstone in the 1620s had a brother who was a Dundee merchant, and a nephew who was a university-educated parish minister, showing that the family was of reasonably high status.

3. 1689; the incident of the English Dragoons

In September 1689, "English dragoons and Horse" removed a quantity of oats, approximately seventy sheaves, from the lands of Claypotts. This took place against the backdrop of the civil war of 1689-1691, fought between the Jacobite and Williamite factions - the Jacobites had originally been commanded by the owner of the Claypotts property, James Graham of Claverhouse, 1st Viscount Dundee, but he had been shot and killed while leading his men to victory at the Battle of Killiecrankie on 27th July 1689, and the new Williamite government had declared his estates confiscated. One unintended result was that documents recording subsequent plundering by Williamite troops ended up being preserved in government archives

(Edinburgh NAS E58/4/8 - cf. E58/4/5 and E58/4/7 which also complain of "English dragoons", and E58/4/6 which speaks simply of "the souldiers").

The soldiers in question evidently came from the four English mounted regiments which contributed to the Williamite army - Lord Colchester's Horse and Colonel Berkeley's Dragoons had been based in Scotland for some time and elements of both regiments had previously been garrisoned in Dundee. General Lanier's Horse and Colonel Heyford's Dragoons were more recent arrivals, and at the time of the incident were involved in a skirmishing campaign with the retreating Jacobites in the area to the north of Dundee.

In the English army, much of the practical distinction between these two types of mounted soldier had largely disappeared - they were dressed similarly in a red coat and a broad black hat with the brim turned up, typically armed with a long sword for close combat and a short musket which could be handled in the saddle, and all now rode on large black horses which required a daily supply of oats rather than the grass-grazing diet of the more robust Scottish "light horse", a fact which goes a long way to explain their activities around Dundee.

The main distinction between the two types was now in their uniform - troopers of horse were dressed in a fine scarlet coat worn over a white waistcoat, riding breeches and tall leather jackboots, while the dragoons wore a simpler and cheaper uniform with a plain red coat, buttoned up to hide the lack of waistcoat, and short boots. Some dragoons may have still been armed with a long infantry musket slung across their back, and an axe at their belt in place of a sword, but this is by no means clear.

We also know that the incident was witnessed by several residents of the area, a prominent local laird, David Hunter of Burnside, and tenants from three nearby properties, Francis Graham in Linlathen, John Pattillo in Balmossie Mill and William Patillo in Balmossie. All four put their signatures to the document recording the soldiers' actions ("Hunter", as chief of his family, signs only by his surname).

Last but not least, the document reveals something of the situation on the property - naming a tenant called Alexander Ffyfe, from whom the bulk of the oats were taken, and two of his "servants", William Watson and William Smythe, each of whom lost a much smaller quantity of just four sheaves. These proportionally small totals suggest the payments in oats which were made to the ploughmen and shepherd in the 1590s, a practice which certainly continued widely in Scotland well after the end of the seventeenth century, and allows us to identify these two men as hands similar to their precursors a century earlier.

William Watson may perhaps have been a descendant of Henry Watson, who had been among the ploughmen in 1590s, nearly a century earlier, raising the possibility of long-term continuity in the population of the property.

The far greater quantity assigned to Alexander Ffyfe, and his identity as tenant "in" Claypotts suggest that he may perhaps be a higher status individual. He could have been a laird's son, or an urban professional from Dundee such as a merchant or a lawyer. But it is equally possible that he may have also taken on the practical role earlier played by the "hind".

Appendix 3 – Discussion of the development of Claypotts and the 17th-century changes

The Graham family at Claypotts and interpretation of the 17th-century changes

Most scholarly attention has focussed on the 16th century work at Claypotts, associated with the Strachan family. The 17th century alterations undertaken by the Grahams has been less discussed. The following observations were pulled together by Arkady Hodge as part of his research into the history and development of Claypotts, which inform the Statement of Significance. These highlight documentary and physical evidence and develop a tentative interpretation of the possible sequencing and rationale for some of the 17th century work. This interpretation is presented as an appendix to the Statement because it includes a degree of speculation, but is thought helpful in positing an alternative theory to the previously held view that Graham of Claverhouse had little influence upon Claypotts. It begins with an account of the 17th century lairds and then examines the architectural changes in more detail.

The Graham lairds

A new laird acquired Claypotts in 1601, named William Graham, the younger brother of the prominent laird of Fintry. He was himself already the proprietor of the small estate of Ballunie and also acquired the adjacent lands of Gotterstone and Milton. This put Claypotts as the suitably baronial focus of a substantial unified lairdship; he was knighted as Sir William Graham of Claypotts. The newly enlarged landholding proved durable, and is depicted on an estate map of 1770 (NRS RHP22224/2). In some respect, the new laird was similar to the predecessor Strachans – a member of a group of interrelated families in the area, led by cousin lairds and united by a shared surname. But the Graham kindred, with their splendid castle at Mains and their royal ancestors, were in many ways more prominent than the Strachans. Sir William's father had been a Catholic resistance leader of international prominence, executed in 1592, his uncle was an officer of the elite Scottish Company in the French army, his brother was the leader of the local Graham faction, and his own knighthood marks him out, in turn, as a man of higher rank than any of the local Strachans.

In 1620, however, Sir William's son David sold the castle and lairdship of Claypotts for 12,000 merks Scots (£1,000 in English money) to their kinsman, another Sir William Graham – the laird of Claverhouse, head of one of the junior lines in the local Graham network. David Graham was fleeing the country, having been outlawed – perhaps connected with the family's Catholic sympathies. In a convoluted legal arrangement, the sale allowed him to lend 5,000 merks back to his cousin Claverhouse, which Claverhouse then put up

as bail for David. David Graham returned to Scotland by 1624, but although he still thought of the estate he had sold as “my lands of Claypotts”,²⁰ there is no evidence that he or his descendants retained any association with the place.

Following Apted’s interpretation, it is generally asserted that from around this date Claypotts ceased to be an “owner-occupied” house and was instead a tenanted property, however no direct evidence is advanced to support this proposition. Sir William Graham of Claverhouse does not seem to have had another seat of any great architectural distinction, so it is possible that he used Claypotts as his main residence until he acquired the castle of Glen in 1640. Even after that date, the fact that the Claverhouse family had two castles did not mean that they only occupied one: if a family had a ‘spare’ residence, standard contemporary practice was for the eldest son to move in when he married. Claypotts may therefore have continued as the residence of Sir William’s son George Graham, before perhaps passing in turn to his son William Graham in the 1640s.

A puzzle is now presented by a man styled James Graham of Claypotts. It does not seem that he was a member of the Claverhouse branch, and although some genealogical sources treat him as a younger brother of the outlawed David Graham, proof here is lacking. Yet he was clearly regarded as a gentleman. During the Civil War he was named as one of the local notables who joined the Royalist forces under the Marquis of Montrose, the fact that he was styled ‘of Claypotts’ shows that he was regarded as the laird, and he married well, to a daughter of the laird of Tealing. All in all, it seems credible that he occupied the castle, which had recently become available when William Graham of Claverhouse, still a young bachelor, succeeded his father and moved to Glen. However, when charged with treason by their Covenanter opponents, James Graham’s successful defence was based on the assertion that he was simply a landless “labourer of the ground and has no heritage nor means”. Ostensibly, with nothing which could be seized and redistributed by the opposing faction, “James Graham in Claypotts” was accordingly released and confined to dwell within four miles of “his house in Claypotts”.²¹ It is possible that his elusive status, a *de facto* laird whose status was acquired without any of the usual legal formalities, relates to the legal procedures designed to prevent Catholics from inheriting lands in early modern Scotland. These rules were often flouted, but scrupulous men hesitated to swear the false oaths required, and in 1647, James Graham had evidently fallen foul of the Covenanter religious authorities, perhaps for refusing to attend the Protestant parish church. After this, he drops again from the records, and the documentary focus switches back to the Claverhouse line.

The next member of this lineage, John Graham of Claverhouse, 1st Viscount Dundee (Bonnie Dundee) is undoubtedly the most famous owner of

²⁰ Lomas, p. 208.

²¹ *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*, ed. K.M. Brown et al. (St Andrews, 2007-2015), 1645/1/156. <http://www.rps.ac.uk/mss/1645/1/156> [accessed 21 September 2015].

Claypotts. He inherited the castle at the age of four in 1653, but after leaving Scotland to pursue a military career in his youth, he only registered formal possession of the lands in 1678. To date, historians have stressed the lack of any evidence that he ever lived here (in contrast with the three other properties he is known to have used near Dundee),²² though it may be that at least some of the 17th century alterations were at his behest, see below.

After the Battle of Killiecrankie in 1689, the Claverhouse lands were forfeit and passed to the Douglas family up to the transfer to State care.

Architectural evidence

Examination of the building fabric makes clear that there were a number of minor modernizing alterations at Claypotts in the seventeenth century. These include the demolition of the battlements, the removal of all but one of the dormer windows, the insertion of closets for chamber pots and the removal of the older type of latrine which had a guardrobe chute. The redecoration of the second floor also likely dates to this period, as does the rebuilding of window openings, whose wider proportions and lack of grooves for glazing bands show that they were designed for modern sash windows - this is the most significant change, both structurally and stylistically, and the one that has been discussed least in the literature.

These changes all broadly correspond with seventeenth-century fashions, but they may be of more than one date. The removal of battlements is a detail that was characteristic with the demilitarised architectural ethos adopted by James VI & I after the Union of the Crown in 1603, and could thus be associated with the early Graham lairds, who had connections to the royal court in this period. Most of the other seventeenth-century features could belong to the same date - the royal apartments in Edinburgh Castle, as rebuilt in 1617, had partition walls and chamber-pot closets, and the suppression of the dormers would be intelligible at the same date if they contained Strachan-specific heraldic details that was not appropriate for Graham lairds.

However, the sash window was only introduced in Scotland around 1670, and can thus be no earlier than the time of "Bonnie Dundee". Moreover, the modification of the windows at this date would fit with a project which he is known to have embarked upon in all four of the castles he owned around Dundee; completion work and the settling of outstanding debts took place after the Williamite government confiscated his estates, and the relevant bills are thus preserved in government archives (NAS E58/4/35, E58/4/36, E58/4/40, E58/4/42, E58/4/43). This project involved new window glass (which at this date would imply fashionable sash windows) and small areas of new roofing slate which suggest the suppression of dormers. The only work explicitly recorded at Claypotts is the "pointing" of the walls, but that could simply mean that the work was largely completed before the confiscation, and

²² Sanford Terry, pp. 73, 76. A residence at Claverhouse itself is mentioned in 1682, he acquired Dudhope Castle in 1683 to provide himself with a spacious mansion befitting a public figure, and the castle at Glen acquired by his grandfather became his primary family home after his marriage in 1684.

there is no specific reason that any of the other changes would *have* to be any earlier.

In particular, there seems to be a logical correlation between the insertion of a wide sash window on the second floor, the suppression of an adjacent latrine closet previously serving a wardrobe chute, and the addition of a chamber-pot closet in the outer room on the same floor. This would suggest that all the internal changes were of the same date, and the documentary evidence would credibly add the suppression of the dormers to the project.

A very tentative suggestion can be made for the reasons behind these changes - Claverhouse may have modified the castle with a view to providing a *pied-à-terre* for his patron the Duke of York, later King James VII, if he visited the area during his term as regent of Scotland (1679-1682). For the occasions when the Duke took the ferry across the Forth to visit Lord Balcarres, who was a close friend of Bonnie Dundee and the second-in-command of his regiment, he had a similar two-room suite in a grand townhouse in Elie (the "Muckle Yett", of which now only the door survives). The arrangements at Claypotts can be seen as providing similar facilities if he arrived at Broughty or at Ferryport in the same way.

The provision of such a "state apartment" was a feature of seventeenth-century noblemen's mansions, and the implementation of the concept on a compact scale at Claypotts would give the little castle high social aspirations - making Claypotts into a house literally fit for a king. If this interpretation is correct, then the conversion of the second floor into a state apartment would suggest that the similarly modernised room offering off the "high" end of the hall on the first floor, which was perhaps a "chamber of dais" or drawing room in the earlier period, is likely to have been repurposed as Bonnie Dundee's own bedroom.