



LORDS AND LAIRDS

Scotland was transformed both politically and physically in the 12th and 13th centuries. King David I encouraged Anglo-Norman and Flemish immigrants to settle in southern and eastern Scotland, thereby establishing the feudal system of landholding by which land was held in return for military service to the king. At the same time, burghs or towns were established, often around the new castles, to manage trade, and European orders of monks founded new monasteries with their own estates. The parish system was introduced and many new churches were built for the lay population. A symbol of the power and wealth of the new aristocracy was its fortified residences, and Scotland's first castles were built in the 12th century.



This artist's reconstruction shows a motte-and-bailey. The main gateway leads into the bailey with its domestic houses, workshops and storehouses. Steps lead up to the timber tower on top of the motte.

A very distinctive form of earthwork castle known as a motte was introduced by the Anglo-Normans. A large mound was created, often by sculpting a natural knoll, and soil dug from a ditch around the base of the knoll was heaped up to form a rampart. A timber hall or tower was built on the summit of the motte, reached either by a 'flying bridge' of



The outline of this moated site is clearly visible from the air. The bank and water-filled moat gave protection to a lordly residence within. The buildings would have been of timber, and their traces could be revealed by excavation. © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk

timber or by a cobbled path running round the mound. Sometimes a bailey, or lower enclosure, was included within the defences, where domestic outbuildings and livestock could be protected. Other forms of earthwork castle include ringworks and moated sites, in which timber buildings were enclosed by earthworks and timber palisades, in the case of moats using water as an additional element in their defence. There are about 300 earthwork castles in Scotland, many in the north-east and south-west where a tradition of political independence required the king and his feudal lords to assert their power by means of military campaigns, using such sites as their bases. In the far north and west, where Scandinavian rule held good long after the end of the Viking Age and where stone was the best available building material, small stone keeps were built as early as the 12th century. The following century saw the construction of some of mainland Scotland's greatest stone castles. These were castles of enclosure, where a massive curtain wall, punctuated by huge



At Duffus Castle in Moray the original timber tower on the motte was replaced by a stone castle in the 14th century, and the site remained a fortress-residence for another three hundred years.

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towers, encircled and protected the residential buildings, chapel, bakehouse, stables and storerooms. Smaller castles of this type had enclosed rectangular courtyards in which domestic buildings were ranged against the curtain wall.

In some cases, the timber halls in earthwork castles were replaced in stone in the 13th and 14th centuries. In the west of Scotland and in the treeless Hebrides, hall-houses were built in stone from the beginning, sometimes on small islands in lochs that needed little in the way of defensive enclosure. These hall houses were at least two storeys high, probably with kitchens and storerooms on the ground floor and private chambers above.



The great tower house at Threave was built in the 14th century, and the following century saw the addition of artillery defences encircling it. A typical gunloop pierces the angle-tower. © Crown copyright: Historic Scotland

The onset of the Wars of Independence in 1296 marked the beginning of a period in which castles were to be a vital element in Scotland's defence against England. Many suffered sieges and attacks that left them ruinous. The 14th century saw the growing use of gunpowder and hand-guns, and by the end of the century much larger cannon were available, as well as massive siege-weapons capable of firing heavy stone shot that could demolish even thick stone walls. Adoption of artillery had an effect on the design and modification of stone castles: the high thick walls of castles were punctuated by gunloops to provide a more active form of defence, and walls were thickened and sometimes reduced in height to defend against the new heavy cannon.



A typical example of a late 16th-century fortified farmhouse in the Borders. There are traces of other farm buildings and fields around it.

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A new fashion in castle architecture emerged in the late 14th century: the tower house. This was to remain the predominant form of fortified residence for the next few centuries. The earliest were simple rectangular blocks, in which rooms were set one above the other, linked by a spiral stair, and entered at first-floor level. By the late 15th century, entrances were sited at ground level, and an L-shaped plan became common, thereby increasing accommodation space, which could be more private. Others were Z-shaped with towers at opposite corners of the main block.

Tower-houses were added to existing castles, and they were also built on new sites with their own barmkins or walled enclosures, which contained additional buildings such as a hall, stables and storerooms.

The need for great fortress-residences had passed by the early 17th century, when Scotland was at peace with England and the same monarch, King James VI and I, ruled both kingdoms. Many of the great castles continued to be lived in, but were increasingly remodelled to improve comfort and elegance. Wealthy families embellished their tower houses for display with fine architectural details such as corbelled turrets and armorial panels, but defence was not entirely forgotten. Windows were larger but they were covered by iron grilles, and inside the great oak door at the entrance there was still an iron gate or yett.

It is the towers and curtain walls that survive best today, but around them and within them are the buried traces of timber domestic buildings and sometimes evidence of earlier castles on the same site, and the structures themselves may contain evidence of their development and alteration over the years. The outlines of formal gardens and fishponds are sometimes visible on aerial photographs, and there may be the ruined shell of a dovecot.

During the late 16th and 17th centuries, the lesser gentry of southern Scotland adopted their own form of fortified house, which was not as grand as the tower house but was nonetheless symbolic of their social status. Known as bastle houses, these were thick-walled two-storey

farmhouses solidly built of stone. The ground floor had a strongly barred door and sometimes a stone vaulted ceiling rather than timber joists.

The ground floor was used as a stable and storeroom, while the family lived on the floor above with a separate entrance reached by an external forestair. Windows on the ground floor were small, often no more than slits to give ventilation, but those on the upper floor were larger to provide light. This type of stronghouse was also found in towns.













An illustration of Old Auchentroig laird's house, Stirling. © Crown Copyright: RCAHMS. Licensor www.rcahms.gov.uk

The laird's house was common in the 17th and 18th centuries throughout the countryside and towns of Scotland, and such buildings belonged to landowners of small estates. These houses were two or three storeys in height, and the larger examples had wings or were built around a courtyard. Most of these houses had entrances on the ground floor, but some of the earliest had the main living accommodation on the first floor, reached by an external stair, similar to early tower houses.

Tower houses and laird's houses were the focal point of their estates, and their owners managed quite extensive tracts of farmland and forest. There were usually lesser buildings around the towers, along with stock enclosures and areas of ridge-and-furrow cultivation.

TIME-LINE

End of the last Ice Age Wildlife colonises land Mesolithic hunting settlers		12,500	
		8500	Flint scatters Shell mounds, rock shelters
Neolithic farming settlers		4000	Chambered tombs and houses Cupmarked rocks
		3000	Stone circles, henges, and standing stones
Metal technology (gold, copper)		2000	Burial mounds and short cists Hut-circles
Climate deteriorating Fortifications begin		1000	Burnt mounds Hillforts
Iron-working technology		500	Crannogs
		200	Duns, brochs, wheelhouses, and earth-houses
		BC ▲	
		▼ AD	
Roman army in Scotland		79	
Waning of Roman influence		200	Roman camps, forts and roads, Antonine Wall
		400	
Introduction of Christianity Picts, Gaels, Britons and Anglians		600	Long cist graves
Start of the Viking Age		800	Early Christian and Pictish carved stones, chapels
Emergence of Scottish nation		1000	Pagan Viking graves and settlements
		1100	
First burghs		1200	Stone-built churches
		1500	Mottes, abbeys, stone-built castles
Reformation of the Church		1600	Tower-houses
Agricultural improvements & Industrial Revolution		1800	Deserted villages and farms
		1900	Coal mines and heavy industries
Two World Wars		2000	Gun batteries and airfields

FRONT COVER PHOTOGRAPH:

Fortified residences such as tower houses were not as isolated as they can appear in today's landscape. They were accompanied by smaller domestic buildings that rarely survive: the stables, barns and dwellings that were essential to estate management and the life of a small community.

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The following leaflets are available from Historic Scotland:

Scheduled ancient monuments: a guide for owners, occupiers and land managers

Managing Scotland's archaeological heritage

Grants for Ancient Monuments: a guide to grants available for the preservation, maintenance and management of ancient monuments

Archaeology on farm and croft (produced jointly with Archaeology Scotland)

Scotland's listed buildings: a guide for owners and occupiers

The carved stones of Scotland: a guide to helping in their protection

Metal detecting - yes or no? Metal detecting, scheduled ancient monuments and the law

A leaflet on *Treasure Trove in Scotland* is available from the National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh

A number of *Historic Scotland Technical Advice Notes*, on topics such as the use of lime mortars, the conservation of thatching and stonecleaning are available. Catalogue from and orders to:

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