



HISTORIC  
ENVIRONMENT  
SCOTLAND

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EACHDRAIDHEIL  
ALBA

Property in Care (PIC) ID:	PIC118
Designations:	Scheduled Monument (SM90083)
Taken into State care:	1949 (Ownership)
Last Reviewed:	2020

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

# CRAIGNETHAN CASTLE



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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland  
Longmore House  
Salisbury Place  
Edinburgh  
EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600  
[www.historicenvironment.scot](http://www.historicenvironment.scot)

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# HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

### CRAIGNETHAN CASTLE

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# I. SUMMARY

## 1.1 Introduction

Craignethan Castle is strikingly situated on a spur formed by the deeply eroded beds of the River Nethan and the Craignethan Burn, around 1 mile from their confluence with the River Clyde, and 5.5 miles west-north-west of Lanark.

The majority of the structure dates to the 1530s and is associated with a powerful branch of the Hamilton family. In its primary phase it formed the personal residence of Sir James Hamilton of Finnart (c.1496-1540) who was probably its designer.

The castle comprises a roofless tower house set within two rectangular courtyards, separated by an expansive dry ditch. Both courtyards are enclosed by a stone perimeter wall with towers at each corner. In 1579, on orders of the Privy Council, the castle's defences were deliberately and systematically destroyed to render it inoperable as a fortified site, though the tower house remained complete.

In 1665 an L-shaped house was built in the south-west corner of the outer court, for the noted Covenanter Andrew Hay.

The site is now a Scheduled monument (SM90083)<sup>1</sup>, and was taken into State care in 1949 (PIC118).

The castle operates ticketed entry during seasonal opening hours<sup>2</sup>, and attracted more than 5,300 visitors in 2018/2019. Information is provided via interpretation panels, and an Official Souvenir Guidebook is available to purchase at the on-site visitor centre. The site includes irregular ground surfaces and a range of steps and staircases. It is accessed via a c.110m path of tarmac and gravel, from a level carpark<sup>3</sup>.

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<sup>1</sup> Designation description accessible at:

<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90083>

<sup>2</sup> For more information, please see: [www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/craignethan-castle/](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/craignethan-castle/)

<sup>3</sup> The approach is 85m on tarmac at a downward incline of 1:4, then 25m on level bound gravel. For detailed access information, please see: [www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=792edbb6-5c20-40cd-9460-a5b600ecfd11](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/archives-and-research/publications/publication/?publicationId=792edbb6-5c20-40cd-9460-a5b600ecfd11)

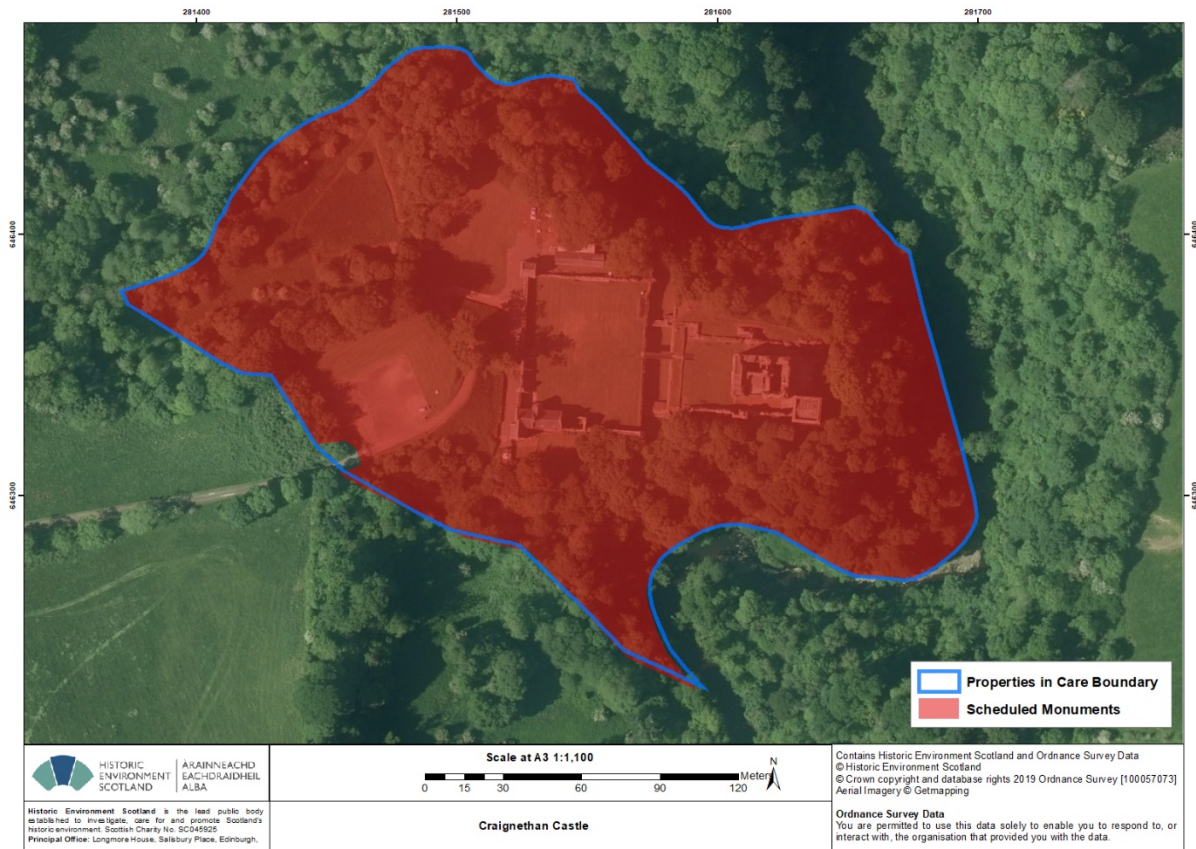


Figure 1: Craignethan Castle Scheduled area and Property in Care (PIC) boundary. For illustrative purposes only.

## 1.2 Statement of Significance

Craignethan Castle is of outstanding importance both on architectural grounds and for its associations with important historical figures. It is relatively unusual in having a short period of occupation (for the main castle) as it was constructed c.1532 and deliberately part-destroyed in 1579 with minimal alteration thereafter. The central tower house stands complete to the wallhead, and the inner and outer courtyards make the site extremely impressive all within a tranquil wooded setting.

Some key aspects of Craignethan's significance are outlined below:

- It has been subject to various interpretations which have presented it as either a sort of fortified bolt-hole or a luxury chateau for which the elaborate artillery provision might be seen as a demonstration show-piece. It is therefore an important site in shaping the narrative of Scottish architectural history from the 1970s and 1980s when the view emerged of a more sophisticated Scotland fully abreast of European Renaissance ideas.

- The near-symmetrical complex of courtyards and towers make Craignethan an exceptionally striking and visually impressive site. The formality of these rectangular elements and their hierarchical arrangement, building up to the residence itself, is key to the castle's character and indicates a concern for strict formality and hierarchy in the use of space.
- It is one of the most important sites in Britain for appreciating the development of early artillery fortification. Although experimental (and ultimately unsuccessful) it nevertheless exhibits innovation both in its planning and detailed form. Its west-facing artillery works, in particular, show an appreciation of the need for 'defence in depth'. The caponier is the earliest extant example in Britain of this innovative Italianate gun defence.
- The castle's tower house is one of the most extraordinary and innovative structures to have been built in Renaissance Scotland. It exhibits a strong symmetry and a conscious use of proportions, with key features such as its double-pile arrangement and the placing of the principal chamber, the hall, on the ground floor.
- The castle is intimately associated with Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, one of the most extraordinary people of his time, one of James V's closest confidantes and his Master of Works. The castle is also closely associated with the 2nd and 3rd Earls of Arran and the rise and fall of the powerful Hamilton dynasty.
- A further aspect of great interest are the detailed demolition instructions issued in 1579 by the Scottish Privy Council to 'cast down' the castle. Verified by archaeological fieldwork as having been carried out to the letter, these allow a degree of certainty about what features existed at that time. They also provide insight into which elements the Crown regarded as particularly threatening: flattening the 'inner barmkin' (the west rampart) and its associated towers, and filling in the great ditch were clearly the priorities in their plan to demilitarise the stronghold.
- The aesthetic of the castle in its setting seems to have been a major consideration in its location. The castle appears hidden with dramatic views glimpsed on approach through the wooded gorge. The immediate siting occupying a steep-sided promontory but with rising ground to the west appears at odds with defensive or strategic intent, and is interpreted as characteristic of Craignethan as a place of retreat and leisure.

- The castle is attractively set within dense semi-natural woodland. The majority of the property in State care is within the Nethan Gorge SSSI, which is designated as part of the Clyde Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC).

The above paragraphs outline the key significances of Cragneithan Castle. The following sections offer more detailed descriptions and analysis of the site.



*Figure 2: Oblique aerial view of Cragneithan Castle, taken from the south-east. Note steep path leading down from visitor car park. © Crown Copyright: HES.*

## 2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

### 2.1 Background

#### 2.1.1 Early (pre-1530) history

##### 2.1.11 Place-name

The Clyde Valley was the heart of the Cumbric-speaking kingdom of Strathclyde, which was absorbed into the Gaelic-speaking kingdom of Alba or Scotland in 1018. The name 'Cragneithan' may be regarded as entirely Cumbric. As Prof. Elsie Watson pointed out, 'the river Nethan in



Lanarkshire, twelfth century Neithan, is for an early *Nectona*, “pure one”<sup>4</sup>. *Craig* is Welsh for ‘rock’, so the first element is at least as likely to be Cumbric *craig* as Gaelic *creag*, especially if the castle rock was the district’s main defensive site prior to 1018. Gaelic place-names survive in the area of hills between Craignethan and Lesmahagow (which is itself Gaelic), such as Auchenheath, Auchtygemmel, Auchtyfardle, Boreland and Corramore. However, the Gaelic language was certainly long gone from the district by the time the present Craignethan Castle was constructed in the 16th century.

The castle is recorded on the 1596 Pont map as Kraignethan castel<sup>5</sup>.

### 2.1.12 Castle site and landholding names

The historical name of the castle varied as ‘Nathan’, ‘Craignethan’ or ‘Draffen’. The landholding was known as ‘Strahills and Craignethan’ or ‘Fence and Craignethan’. It is unclear if an earlier stronghold, Draffan Castle, dating perhaps to the 13th century, existed and if it stood on this site<sup>6</sup>. Thus far no physical evidence of this fortification has been found. A mansion called ‘Draffen Hill’ was apparently the centre of an earlier land holding called ‘Draffen and Cander’ and this was probably the site of the Draffen Farm on the higher ground or hill to the south-west. Finnart’s charters state that Craignethan had been part of the Draffen estate.

## 2.1.2 Description

Craignethan Castle is situated in a striking, and somewhat inaccessible, position on a spur formed by the deeply eroded beds of the River Nethan and the Craignethan Burn, 1 mile from their confluence with the River Clyde and 5.5 miles west-north-west of Lanark in Upper Clydesdale.

The castle was built in the 16th century and is associated with several members of the powerful Hamilton family, most particularly James Hamilton of Finnart (illegitimate son of the 1st Earl of Arran), and the 2nd and 3rd Earls of Arran. It comprises a tower house set within inner and outer courts.

### 2.1.21 The tower house

The central tower house is perhaps miscalled a “tower” as it rises to only three stories and the visual emphasis is horizontal rather than vertical. This is because on plan it follows a double-pile layout with a central spine wall

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<sup>4</sup> Watson, *Celtic Place-Names*, p. 210.

<sup>5</sup> Pont Map view accessible at:

<https://maps.nls.uk/pont/view/?id=pont34#zoom=6&lat=3773&lon=2572&layers=BT>

<sup>6</sup> Simpson 1963, 42

(also containing flues): it is therefore broader on plan than most contemporary tower houses.

The tower house measures c.16m north/south by 21.2m east/west, with ashlar-like walls c.2.5m thick. It stands to a height of c.10.6m (to the bottom of the parapet). The parapet rises from a double row of corbels, arranged in chequer pattern, with bartizans at each angle and in the middle of the west front. The west elevation contains the main entrance – a centrally placed arched doorway with armorial panel over. Apart from the door, the west is blank save for a pair of small horizontally-proportioned windows each side of the door, and one off-set to the right at high level.

The door leads into a transverse passage, from which opens a stair at each end (one leading down to the basement and another up to the higher floors and parapet), a hall, and a serving hatch to the kitchen. The hall is set at ground floor level, which was particularly unusual for residences in Scotland at this date. It is barrel-vaulted and measures 9.37m east/west by 6.25m north/south by 7.4m high. It has a narrow gallery on its west side, originally entered from a stair in the south-west angle of the building. A low stone bench is incorporated into the wall and the dais end is lit by a generously proportioned window. The fireplace only survives as a fragment on the north (central spine) wall of the hall next to a door leading to the lord's private suite. There are two chambers one above the other, both with garderobes and a private stair between them.

The kitchen, contains the remains of a great fireplace in the eastern wall, and a blocked hatch in the floor which would have allowed supplies to be lifted up from the cellar beneath. Although the kitchen is effectively on the ground floor, it is not accessible from the other ground floor rooms, except the serving hatch in the transverse passage. Instead, it is now only entered via a separate stair from the basement, but it is considered likely that alterations made in the early 20th century removed another access route; potentially from the now largely disappeared room above. Access to the kitchen, however, remains little understood.

The upper floors of the tower house are accessed via a stair in the north-west angle of the building, which opens into a timber-floored room above the kitchen. Above is an attic storey with four rooms. The basement is accessed via a stair on the south-west angle of the tower house. It comprises four storage vaults, with a fifth, smaller vault towards the south-east, which contains a well, and may also have been used as a prison.

### **2.1.22 The inner court**

The inner court surrounds the tower house and is defined by a high rectangular perimeter wall. There are towers at the four corners and smaller towers in the middle of the north and south walls, the former a gatehouse tower.

Two entrance gates were originally present through the courtyard wall: one through the south front, which was blocked up and succeeded by the entrance in the gate tower in the middle of the north wall. Two double-gated traverse walls were also present, running north/south between the tower house and the north and south courtyard walls, set back slightly from the west front of the tower house. These were demolished c.1579.

The two towers of the eastern court wall are not well understood, though when complete, they and the linking east range buildings provided considerable space for accommodation and ancillary functions. The north-east tower is now ruinous, but recent excavation suggests that there were two distinct phases of use within the basement of this tower. It was initially used as a kitchen (the large fireplace on the east wall of the room was typical of those in the kitchens of important households), and later to house some other domestic, or perhaps industrial function. There were two entrances into the north-east tower at first floor level: one from the west and another at the east end of the south wall, where a spiral stair had led to the floor(s) above. A short passageway led to a single chamber of private accommodation.

The south-east tower is the best preserved, with a basement, a high vaulted chamber and a roof with access to high-level gun loops. Though called the 'kitchen tower', it is possible that the chamber was originally designed by Finnart as his chapel. We know from documents that this chapel was quite lavishly fitted out and must have been a space of some distinction. Joining the two towers was an east range. Recent investigations suggest that this range was never built above basement level. It is possible that there was also a south range; there is some evidence for this (blocked windows in the curtain wall have been uncovered) but this is not certain and other evidence may have been removed by later developments.

### **2.1.23 The outer court**

The outer court adjoins to the west and is separated from the inner court by a deep, wide, stone-faced ditch which contains the caponier (a stone-vaulted shooting gallery; see Figures 3 and 6). On the inside of the ditch was a remarkable, now lost feature – a very high thick stone wall. This was effectively an artillery platform and would have largely obscured the view of the tower house from the west. This wall was demolished in 1579 and the stone used to fill the ditch; the latter was excavated in the 20th century. The outer court is also bounded by stone walls though these are less substantial than those of the inner court. In the south-west corner has been added (c.1665) an L-shaped house and offices (Andrew Hay's House; see Figure 4).



*Figure 3: View of the caponier within the stone-faced ditch. © Crown Copyright HES.*



*Figure 4: View of 'Andrew Hay's House', offices and gateway, in the south-west corner of the outer court. © Crown Copyright HES.*

## 2.1.24 Sequence of building

The sequence of building of the castle complex is open to debate and more fully discussed at [Section 2.4](#) and [Appendix 3](#). There are three main possibilities:

1. Craignethan began as a courtyard castle (of which the north-east and south-east towers with the east range survive) which then had the tower house inserted,
2. The tower was the first structure with the courtyard buildings subsequent,
3. The whole ensemble was a single design concept, though built in phases.

## 2.1.3 Issues and evidence base for interpreting the development of the castle

Because Craignethan is unusual in several design features, and because of the importance within the design of its artillery fortifications, there have been various interpretations of the development of the castle since it was first drawn and analysed by MacGibbon and Ross<sup>7</sup> in the late 19th century. [Appendix 3](#) details the various interpretations. The general understanding has been that Sir James Hamilton of Finnart was solely responsible for Craignethan. However, three members of the Hamilton family are closely associated with the place and could each have made material contributions to its architecture. Matters are complicated by lack of both clear documentary evidence and closely dateable stylistic features in the structure. Furthermore, due to the generally turbulent politics of the late 16th century, power swung between several key families, including the Hamiltons, so control of castles and houses jockeyed back and forth between them and the crown.

In terms of documentary evidence, two dates seem relatively fixed. We know that there was a castle on this site by 1532 and this is further described as being built by Finnart. The 1579 details of Privy Council orders for the demolition of the castle allow a degree of certainty about what existed at that time – i.e. the castle as it stands today minus the 17th century house. Demolitions are confirmed by archaeological fieldwork.

Other than this, there is relatively little scope for tying down documents precisely to building works. The Timeline at [Appendix 1](#) gives fuller details and the historical values are discussed at [Section 2.3](#) below.

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<sup>7</sup> 1887

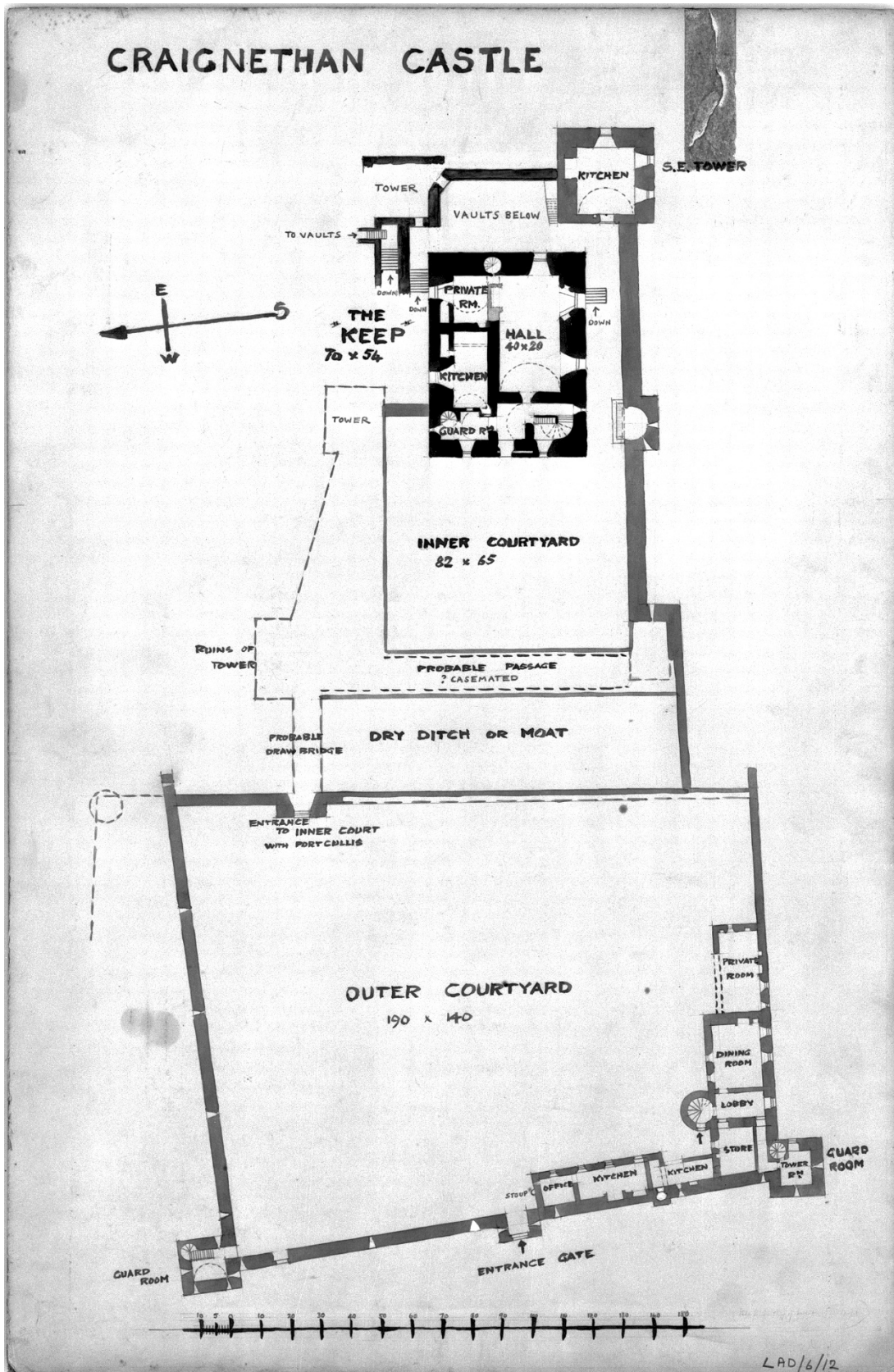


Figure 5: RCAHMS 1956 plan of Craignethan Castle, prior to excavation in the 1960s onwards. © Crown Copyright: HES.

## 2.2 Evidential Values

The evidential value of Craignethan is very high and primarily lies in the physical fabric and sub-surface archaeology of the site itself. The large-scale excavation of the great ditch and outer court during the 1960s revealed the extent of the artillery defences, and their sophistication, neither of which were truly anticipated. The scale of this lost or buried work evidences the lavish spending on, and interest in, artillery fortification.

A programme of clearance excavation and masonry consolidation took place between the site being taken into State care (1949) and the mid-1960s. The excavation work was directed by Iain MacIvor, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, and was largely carried out using local labour under a Government-funded scheme.



*Figure 6: View of the well-preserved caponier. © Crown Copyright HES.*

The work concentrated on two areas – the great ditch and the outer court. The chief discovery in the great ditch was the well-nigh unique caponier, which had been accessible in the 19th century though buried under rubble, and significantly remains extremely well-preserved. (see [2.4 Architectural and Artistic Values](#)). In the outer court a metalled road was found leading to the drawbridge crossing the ditch near its northern end. Also in the outer court were found the slots for timber sills forming the lean-to

structures around the inside of the perimeter wall. Interestingly, there was no evidence for a roadway leading to a central gate through the main west wall of the inner court, as postulated by McKean<sup>8</sup>.

In 1984, as part of the masonry consolidation programme, John Lewis directed excavations at the north-east tower and its adjacent basement cellar in the east range. The former was found to have originally been a kitchen, and subsequently reformed as a brewhouse. The arch of the kitchen fireplace could not be consolidated and was removed.

In 1995 excavation on the site of the east range showed that a building range had been planned here from the outset in the 1530s but was never completed.

The archaeological potential at the site remains considerable. Standing Building survey and analysis would be an extremely valuable tool to aid understanding of the place. The entire inner courtyard has scarcely been investigated, and the precise use and layout of the outer courtyard still remains something of a mystery, though this is likely to have been a formal garden. There is also a possibility that the kitchen garden may well be in evidence beneath the grass outside the south postern. It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that evidence for siege works exists on the hill overlooking the site from the west (where the carpark is today). The nature of the settlement at Craignethan after the castle was abandoned remains unclear and archival sources give evidence of multiple occupants at Fence and Craignethan (see [Appendix 1](#) Timeline).

## 2.3 Historical values

Historically Craignethan is important for its ability to demonstrate various aspects of noble life and interests in 16th century Scotland. Key facets include association with the powerful Hamilton family and features of domestic life and planning, artillery and fortifications – these latter are dealt with in Section [2.4.3 Defences and Fortifications](#), below. One further aspect of great interest are the detailed instructions to ‘cast down’ the castle, ordered in 1579 (see [Appendix 1](#)) which allow some reconstruction of lost elements, as well as confirming which features the Crown regarded as particularly threatening.

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<sup>8</sup> McKean, C., Craignethan: castle of the bastard Arran PSAS vol 125 (1995) p1077, illus. 6.



### 2.3.1 Association with the Hamiltons

The castle is closely associated with the powerful Hamilton dynasty, and like **Cadzow**, is a key site for charting their rise and fall. This noble house was a heartbeat away from the Scottish throne, until their downfall was brought about by their loyalty to Mary, Queen of Scots (Mary I) after her escape in 1567.

The three key Hamilton figures associated with Craignethan are:

- James Hamilton of Finnart, in possession c.1532 until his death in 1540
- James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran, later Duke of Chatelherault in possession c.1542 – c.1568
- James 3rd Earl of Arran, declared insane and confined at Craignethan from c.1570 until 1579, when the Privy Council orders the demolition of the castle

#### 2.3.1.1 James Hamilton of Finnart

James Hamilton of Finnart (c.1496 – 1540) was an extremely interesting figure, with exceptional administrative and political skills. The great-grandson of James II, he was the eldest, but illegitimate, son of James Hamilton, 1st Earl of Arran. He therefore did not inherit his father's title, but was a key figure at court, and at his father's death, became head of the House of Hamilton and tutor (Guardian) to his half-brother, the future 2nd Earl. He was also named ward of the Hamilton estates, including Craignethan. He exploited the power that came with these positions and when he was later tried for treason, Arran, who by that time was an adult, was one of the accusers.

Finnart is known for both his interest in architecture, and for amassing land and wealth on an extraordinary scale. He acquired the lands of Nauthane (Craignethan) which were confirmed in a charter of 1532 which also states that Finnart has built a castle there. His close relationship with his third cousin, James V, was such that in 1531, James permitted Finnart the honour of altering his arms, removing the mark of illegitimacy, and adding the coveted royal escutcheon<sup>9</sup>. In 1539 he was appointed Master of Works Principal under James V, in charge of all His Majesty's building works<sup>10</sup>. Finnart's downfall and execution was therefore quite unexpected amongst

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<sup>9</sup> McKean, 1999, 145

<sup>10</sup> This adds to a long list of influential judiciary and administrative posts he had held, including: Master of the King's Stables, Captain of Dumbarton Castle, Captain and Keeper of Linlithgow Palace, and the principal Sewer (or butler) at the king's table [McKean, 1999, 144]

contemporary chroniclers<sup>11</sup>; by 1540 he had been tried and executed for treason. He is known to have superintended Royal works at **Blackness**, **Linlithgow** and **Stirling** as well as **Cadzow** for his half-brother, 2nd Earl of Arran.

The degree to which Craignethan is entirely or largely Finnart's work is subject of some debate<sup>12</sup>; [Appendix 3](#) gives more details of the various published interpretations. Certainly, historic documents support his acquisition of the lands and construction of a castle by 1532, and it has been assumed that Finnart was responsible for the whole layout of the castle including the courtyards and rampart. However, there are some inconsistencies in the structure and layout which may indicate changes in plan and perhaps different patrons.

### 2.3.12 James Hamilton, 2nd Earl of Arran and Duke of Chatelherault in the French nobility (1519-1575)

Following Finnart's execution, Craignethan was annexed to the crown and became a royal castle with a small garrison. Two years later it was restored to James 2nd Earl of Arran (1517-75) who had become Regent of Scotland on James V's death. It is possible that it was he, the 2nd Earl, who completed the building of Craignethan, particularly the outer court.

The 2nd Earl was the eldest son of James Hamilton, the 1st Earl of Arran, and his second wife, Janet Beaton. His grandfather had married James II's sister, which made Arran the heir presumptive to the Scottish throne for much of his life. A fair amount of his time was spent keeping control of the extensive Hamilton estates in Lanarkshire, Linlithgowshire, Renfrewshire, Ayrshire and the Isle of Arran. He had nine children, including James Hamilton, the future 3rd Earl of Arran.

As a teenager he befriended James V and following his death the 2nd Earl was made governor of the realm and tutor to Mary I. This was also when he was recognised as heir presumptive. Though initially very powerful within the royal court, he earned a reputation throughout his life for being inconsistent. For example, he converted to Protestantism, then back to Catholicism, then again to Protestantism when it suited him.

He was involved in the agreement for Mary I to marry the dauphin of France and he received a French duchy as a result and the title Duke of Chatelherault. This allowed him extra time and resources to put into his estates over the next few years, particularly **Kinneil**, with its extensive

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<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Summarised in an unpublished report for HES by David H Caldwell *Craignethan Castle its place in history* 2017

interior decorations. However, a rift began with Mary of Guise, and in 1554 he laid down his governorship.

The 2nd Earl's fortunes turned around again with Mary I's return to Scotland, when she appointed Arran to her council. At this point Finnart attempted to negotiate a marriage between Mary I and his son, the future 3rd Earl, though this did not go ahead. His position was again threatened with the return of the 4th Earl of Lennox to Scotland in 1564, his closest rival for his role as heir presumptive, which was worsened by the marriage of Lennox's eldest son Henry, Lord Darnley to Mary I.

After Mary I's enforced abdication there was a protest made at James VI's coronation in regard to the 2nd Earl's role as heir presumptive, but this came to nothing. Some of his properties were damaged in a raid by English troops in 1571 and he rebuilt **Kinneil**, Hamilton and **Cadzow** following this. He died at Kinneil in 1575.

Documents give us some idea of how the 2nd Earl used the castle, it is a possibility that he undertook new (or completed Finnart's) building work, possibly to the outer court. Craignethan was a secondary residence but he regularly visited especially over the winter months, once with the Earl of Angus and once with the French diplomat Henri Cleutin, sieur d'Oisel. The castle possibly offered amenity in winter with convenience and comfort in its compact planning, combined with an opportunity for hunting in the adjacent acres. Between the Nathan and Craignethan burn, or in the area called 'Fence' or fences, they may have once been nets or traps. Some areas were forested, and timber was extracted after Finnart's execution<sup>13</sup>.

### 2.3.13 James Hamilton, 3rd Earl of Arran (1537/8?-1609)

The 3rd Earl of Arran was the eldest son of James Hamilton, the 2nd Earl, and Margaret Douglas. During much of his life the second Earl was heir presumptive to the Scottish throne, making Arran the next in line. Given this position, the future third Earl was the subject of several high-profile marriage negotiations including to Mary I, and Elizabeth I, though he never married.

When his father went with Mary to France and received a duchy, Arran accompanied him and commanded the Scots Guards. During this period Arran became an opponent to Mary and it has been suggested that he converted to Protestantism out of spite after Mary married the dauphin, rather than himself, though this has been questioned. What is known is there was increasing distrust of Arran by the French court that culminated in him fleeing back to Scotland.

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<sup>13</sup> NRS E32 household books. *ER*

The animosity between Mary and Arran continued after her return to Scotland as he publicly criticised her refusal to convert to Protestantism. This was made worse by a developing feud between Arran and the Earl of Bothwell. During this period, it was also becoming increasingly clear that Arran was mentally unwell. He was declared insane and imprisoned in **Edinburgh Castle** for four years before being released to his mother in 1566, after which he was held at Craignethan Castle by two of his brothers, who acted as the head of the estate. His connection with Craignethan is therefore strong and somewhat poignant.

### 2.3.2 Walter Scott, *Old Mortality* and Tillitudlem

Craignethan entered popular culture in the nineteenth century due to the success of Walter Scott's 1816 historical romance novel *Old Mortality*, which was largely set in and around the fictional castle of Tillietudlem. Standing 'upon the angle of a very precipitous bank, formed by the junction of a considerable brook with the Clyde'<sup>14</sup>, Craignethan was soon identified as the inspiration for the castle, although there is some debate over whether or not this was denied by Scott himself. His biographer son-in-law, J.G. Lockhart, however, noted how Scott had 'expressed such rapture with the scenery' of Craignethan's ruins, and that the inspiration for the name of Tillietudlem was likely taken from the nearby ravine of Gillytudlem<sup>15</sup>. Lockhart accompanied J.W.M. Turner on a visit to the site in 1834, where Turner created a series of sketches, thought to have been possible options for a new edition of Scott's *Prose Works* and *Waverly Novels*, as well as Lockhart's biography of Scott<sup>16</sup> (see [2.4.5 Artistic Values](#)).

Whether or not Craignethan was the true inspiration for Tillitudlem, the popularity of the novel brought large numbers of visitors to the castle to see the romantic ruins for themselves. Latterly, from 1878 to the mid-20th century, they arrived via a new train halt, added on the Coalburn branch of the Caledonian Railway, and named 'Tillitudlem'<sup>17</sup> in honour of the novel;

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<sup>14</sup> Stevenson and Davidson, 2009, p139

<sup>15</sup> Lockhart, 1862, p30

<sup>16</sup> Sketches and further info accessible at: [www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-r1136216#f\\_1\\_2\\_4](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-r1136216#f_1_2_4)  
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-d26288>  
<https://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-entrance-to-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-d26289>

<sup>17</sup> Visible on OS 25 inch map, accessible at:

<https://maps.nls.uk/geo/explore/#zoom=16&lat=55.69249&lon=-3.89617&layers=168&b=1>

the name which was also adopted by the neighbouring hamlet which subsequently developed.

Scott's association with the property extends beyond *Old Mortality*, having been offered the use of the house built for Andrew Hay, at that point in the possession of Lord Douglass. Ultimately Scott was not able to take advantage of this offer, but a reference to an event associated with the site may be found in another of his works. Queen Mary was popularly thought to have lodged at Craignethan during the battle of Langside (although see [Appendix 1](#) for her likely dates of visit). This event featured in Scott's novel *The Abbott* of 1820<sup>18</sup>.

## 2.4 Architectural and artistic values

Craignethan is acknowledged as a bit of an enigma: it has several unusual features both in its internal planning and its defences, and the intellectual conception behind its creation is not fully understood. Additionally, the castle has become synonymous with a dramatic revising of Scotland's architectural history from the 1970s which moved away from the view of defence as the prime motivation for castles, to one which stressed their cultural sophistication and adoption of castellated features as badges of status rather than necessity.

### 2.4.1 Location and setting

Craignethan is comparable to a relatively small group of 'hidden castles' which are not sited in a key strategic location (unlike another of Finnart's creations, Avendale [Strathaven]). Though its siting on a promontory over a gorge is dramatic and gives the impression of a strong fortress, it is tucked away out of sight of main communication routes and was probably always surrounded by woodland. In this it seems analogous to **Cadzow Castle**, near Hamilton, which is also associated with Finnart, and parallels have been noted with **Castle Campbell** and **Crichton Castle**<sup>19</sup>. It is likely that there was a conscious design intention to play-up the drama of the setting, particularly on the southern approach to the castle from the Nethan valley, as McKean notes<sup>20</sup>. However, like Crichton, Craignethan is overlooked by higher ground - the area currently occupied by the carpark. This gives a spectacular view of the whole castle complex, and originally

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<sup>18</sup> [www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-the-great-hall-r1136222](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-the-great-hall-r1136222)

<sup>19</sup> Insert foot note to Allan Rutherford thesis p105

<sup>20</sup> McKean p 1071

the mighty west wall, presumably with its wallhead artillery. However, this overlooked location would seem to weaken any serious defensive intent<sup>21</sup> despite the plentiful array of gunloops. It is worth noting Captain Drury's account that the castle, although strong, was 'situate in a hole', and was commanded on all sides; though Drury was speaking from the perspective of 1570s artillery capacity, rather than that of the 1530s.

Undoubtedly, Craignethan presents a martial appearance and the ditch, wall and caponier together form an unprecedented show of force and tactics: there is debate as to how effective they would ever have been against well-resourced attack though, or to what extent they were conceived of as a show-piece. Craignethan may have been a place of last resort for Finnart, but it also provided peace and tranquillity, within a secure shield.

#### 2.4.2 Architecture: plan and elevations and details

Craignethan's tower house is quite sophisticated in its planning and has a number of unusual and notable design features including:

- The double-pile plan with a flue-bearing spine-wall dividing the building into principal chambers to its south and service offices to its north. The plan also included a private suite (presumably Finnart's own) off the dais end of the hall.
- The hall is at ground level and not on the first floor, while two lobbies provide separate entrances to 1) the hall, main stair and chambers above and 2) the kitchen serving hatch and stair down to basement cellars. In general, 16th-century tower houses rise through three, four or more storeys with rooms and suites stacked vertically. Invariably the hall will be on the first floor over a range of (usually vaulted) cellars. The convention of the first floor hall also held good in preceding centuries and so Craignethan's ground floor hall is a real departure. Even though it still has basement cellars, the formal entry is very definitely at ground level. The palace at Stirling c1538, for which Finnart was Master of Works, is the only other real example of a ground floor hall.
- The building seems to employ deliberate 'rational' proportions in its planning, e.g. the ratio of the hall in height to length is 1:2<sup>22</sup>. More accurate survey work requires to be done to tease out this theme and place it in the context of other contemporary sites.

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<sup>21</sup> Rutherford p 106

<sup>22</sup> McKean p1077

### 2.4.3 Defences and fortifications

The fortifications at Craignethan are one of its most notable features, yet there is doubt over the pattern of their development and their efficacy. While the castle changed hands between rival factions several times, so must have been seen as a valuable prize, it was not tested under actual siege. The detailed instructions for its “downcasting”, and the archaeological evidence for that destruction seem to confirm that it was thought prudent to disarm the stronghold.

There was a long period of experimentation across Europe from the late 15th century to the 1540s in which different ideas were mooted and tried before there was a general consensus as to the key characteristics that would make successful fortifications. This would seem to be the context into which Craignethan fits. As David Caldwell<sup>23</sup> notes, none of the defensive provisions at Craignethan appear to be totally unique for the earlier 16th century when set in a wider European context. They represent ideas that were probably circulating widely, and which would have been known to many interested in military matters.

The key defensive features at Craignethan, in addition to the usual array of gunloops and curtain walls are the west rampart wall, the ditch, and within the ditch the traverse and caponier. The ditch itself is unprecedented in Scotland in terms of its depth, sheer sides and careful masonry lining – it looks very much like a showpiece, however, as Caldwell points out it would have been relatively easy to circumvent. The massive west wall we can only surmise, but based on the volume of stone recovered from the ditch it was of great height and thickness, with fragments of corbels and gunloops recovered in the excavation, so also a carefully planned and finished work.

The caponier is believed to be the earliest example in Scotland, and perhaps in the UK. Its purpose was as a “shooting gallery” to pick off any attackers who penetrated the ditch. It seems that it was not initially an integral part of the ditch design as the walls are not bonded to the sides of the ditch. However, it has been pointed out that the caponier would have quickly filled up with gunsmoke if it was ever put into sustained use.

Then there is the question of the siting of the castle, as Captain Drury noted “situate in an hole”, overlooked and seemingly very vulnerable to bombardment. While there were 15th-century theories circulating in Europe that firing down upon a castle in a hollow was difficult, it would seem a foolhardy plan at Craignethan.

It is important to note that when in 1579, perhaps for the first time, Craignethan was at imminent risk of bombardment by artillery, the garrison

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<sup>23</sup> David Caldwell *Craignethan Castle* 2017 Unpublished Report for HES

preferred to abandon their posts and the castle fell without a struggle. It seems that while Craignethan certainly demonstrated several state-of-the-art military features, the whole defences did not, in practice, hang together as well as they might have.

#### 2.4.4 Role in Scottish architectural history

Craignethan's precise function as a place of strength and resort has been much debated. It has become synonymous with a dramatic revising of Scotland's architectural history from the 1970s which stressed - some may argue ultimately overstressed - 'delight' over 'defence' and the culture of architecture and the arts over the art of staying alive and in power in a troubled society.

The interpretation of the advanced nature of the works at Craignethan in terms of its fortifications, its external appearance and its novel internal domestic arrangements shifted in the 1980s and 90s from its presentation as a remote, impregnable 'den' or last refuge to that of a pleasant riverside 'chateau' complete with the trappings of power in the form of the latest innovations in military architecture - the 'must have' architectural innovations of a sophisticated Renaissance prince. Craignethan was thereafter re-presented in the 1990s as a courtly, highly sophisticated ducal residence. This was in line with a strong revisionist theme in Scottish history that challenged prevailing ideas about the culture of pre-Union Scotland. These views, along with the authorship of the design of the military fortifications, have themselves since been challenged, see [Appendix 3](#) for fuller details.

#### 2.4.5 Artistic

As mentioned above, J.W.M. Turner visited Craignethan Castle with J.G. Lockhart in September 1834, gathering material to use as possible illustrations for forthcoming publications of Walter Scott's work. Turner completed 12 sketches of Craignethan from different viewpoints, documenting the route he took as he approached from the north<sup>24</sup>, entered at the west gate<sup>25</sup>, and explored the castle and its interior, including the Great Hall<sup>26</sup>, before circuiting around the site to study it from different angles<sup>27</sup>. These studies are a useful resource, allowing an insight into the

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<sup>24</sup> see [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-d26286](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-d26286)

<sup>25</sup> see [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-entrance-to-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-d26289](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-the-entrance-to-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-d26289)

<sup>26</sup> see [www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-the-great-hall-r1136222](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-the-great-hall-r1136222)

<sup>27</sup> From the south-east: [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-below-to-the-south-east-and-nethan-gorge-d26294](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-below-to-the-south-east-and-nethan-gorge-d26294)



appearance of the castle at this time, e.g. with the great ditch infilled, vegetation on the top of the masonry, and a sculpted figure (possibly a lion) on the gatehouse in the centre of the western wall.

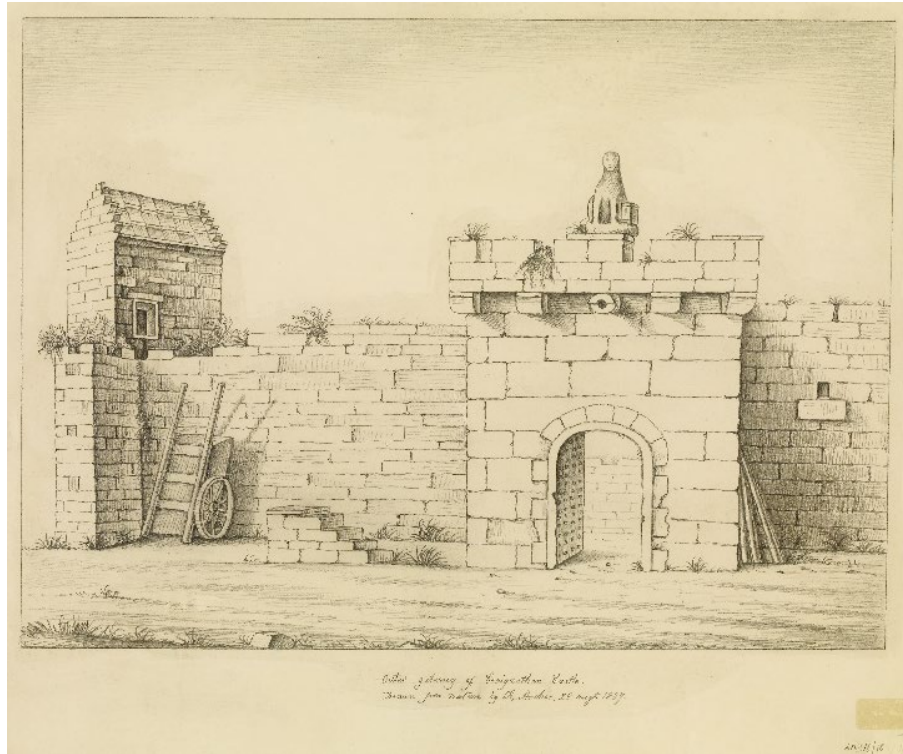


Figure 7: Pencil drawing entitled 'Outer Gateway of Craignethan Castle' by Alexander Archer, dated 23/8/1837. Note sculpted figure of possible lion. © Courtesy of HES (Alexander Archer Collection).

These details can also be corroborated by other illustrative sources, such as Andrew Archer's detailed 1837 studies; e.g. Archer's depiction of the sculpted creature over the gateway (Figure 7; and compare this with [Figure 4](#))<sup>28</sup> can be compared to Turner's<sup>29</sup>, and the photograph of c.1880 in which the figure has been relocated (Figure 8)<sup>30</sup>. Similarly, their

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From the north-east: [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-below-to-the-north-east-three-sketches-d26295](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-below-to-the-north-east-three-sketches-d26295)

From the north: [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-d26288](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-from-the-north-d26288)

<sup>28</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1152200>

<sup>29</sup> [www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-the-entrance-to-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-r1136219](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/research-publications/jmw-turner/joseph-mallord-william-turner-the-entrance-to-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-r1136219)

<sup>30</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1217582>

representations of the vegetation atop the battlements of the western façade of the tower house (Figure 9)<sup>31</sup> can be compared to later images<sup>32</sup>.



Figure 8: Photograph of c.1880 entitled 'Courtyard of Craignethan Castle'. Note sculpted figure of possible lion in centre of image. © Courtesy of HES (Thomas Annan Album).

Numerous romantic 19th-century Picturesque depictions of the castle can be noted, including Joseph Swan's c.1830 engraving of the dramatic landscape setting<sup>33</sup>, Kenneth Macleay's 1850 brown wash study<sup>34</sup>. And the slightly surprising "reconstructed" view of Craignethan as a turreted gothic chateau of 1838<sup>35</sup>.

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<sup>31</sup> Archer: <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1152195> vs. Turner: [www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-the-tower-house-d26290](http://www.tate.org.uk/art/artworks/turner-craignethan-castle-lanarkshire-the-tower-house-d26290)

<sup>32</sup> E.g. <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1447400>

<sup>33</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1114984>

<sup>34</sup> [www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/11525/old-gateway-craignethan-castle](http://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/11525/old-gateway-craignethan-castle)

<sup>35</sup> <https://canmore.org.uk/collection/1114978>



Figure 9: Pencil drawing entitled 'Front View of Craignethan Castle' by Alexander Archer, dated 23/8/1837 © Courtesy of HES (Alexander Archer Collection).

## 2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

The castle is remarkably well hidden. It is visible from a distance only from the south, from the mill in the Nethan Valley far below, where it takes on the appearance of a ruined towered citadel dominating the skyline. This must always have been the principal approach.

The monumental impact of the grand and symmetrical layout of the castle and its courts is best appreciated by the visitor on arrival at the carpark, on the hill overlooking the complex from its western side. That knoll provides the perfect viewpoint, with the castle's impressive form and monumental scale laid out below. Finnart's great tower house lodging takes centre-stage, and the whole stage-set is fringed by dense and attractive woodland, with the deep rocky Nethan Gorge lurking way below. As such, it appears as a daring intervention within the landscape.

The tower house's frontal façade remains impressive, despite the passing of the centuries, particularly its wall-head battlement rising from a double row of corbels arranged in a chequer pattern, with turrets at each corner and in the middle. The highlight for today's visitors is often the stair up to the top and the views over the landscape. There is a distinct contrast between the wilder wooded gorge setting, (perhaps with a glimpse of

hunting peregrines), and the enclosed expanse of mown grass and paving in the courtyards. While doubtless these areas were much more “active” in the castle’s heyday, probably with gardens and service buildings, the contrast of enclosure versus natural setting would have been apparent historically too.

## 2.6 Natural heritage values

Craignethan is set in attractive countryside. This has been designated as the Nethan Gorge SSSI, which forms part of the Clyde Valley Woodlands National Nature Reserve<sup>36</sup>. The SSSI is cited as an outstanding example of semi-natural deciduous gorge woodland, which also supports an important assemblage of woodland beetles. The canopy of the woodland occupying the Carboniferous limestone gorge is dominated by elm, ash and oak; parts of which are included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory. Herb-rich meadows and deciduous scrub also form an integral part of the site.

Most of the Nethan Gorge SSSI is designated as part of the Clyde Valley Woods Special Area of Conservation (SAC) as a European habitat defined as: ‘Mixed woodland on base-rich soils associated with rocky slopes’<sup>37</sup>. The bedrock geology belongs to the Johnstone Shell Bed, the Midland Valley Carboniferous to Early Permian Alkaline Basic Sill Suite, and the Limestone Coal Formation<sup>38</sup>.

The castle is home to an interesting variety of wildlife, including bats in the tower house’s basement vaults and, temporarily, an angry badger<sup>39</sup>! The SSSI is noted as a habitat for a number of uncommon beetles, including the nationally scarce *Cerylon fagi*, *Tetratoma ancora* and *Ptinomorphus imperialis*.

A walking route passes by the castle, and this brings in visitors with interests in the natural heritage who might not otherwise know about the castle.

## 2.7 Contemporary/use values

There has not yet been an assessment of the various communities which might value Craignethan castle, or the values they attach to the place.

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<sup>36</sup> See <https://sitelink.nature.scot/site/1218>

<sup>37</sup> See <https://apps.snh.gov.uk/sitelink-api/v1/sites/1218/documents/1>

<sup>38</sup> British Geological Survey 2020 *GeoIndex*. Accessible at: <https://www.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/>

<sup>39</sup> See [www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-43808574](http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-glasgow-west-43808574)

Aside from its clear research value, the main use of the castle is as a visitor attraction. The site is open seasonally, between April-September, and received over 5,300 visitors in 2018<sup>40</sup>.

In terms of intangible values, there are a number of ghost stories associated with the property, with supposed sightings of the headless apparition of Mary, Queen of Scots, and a bothersome poltergeist allegedly resident in Andrew Hay's House.

A picnic visit to Tilletudlem Castle also inspired a traditional Scottish song associated with various singers including Robert Wilson in the 1950s and the Alexander Brothers in the 1970s<sup>41</sup>.

### 3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

- What are the social values of Craignethan; what communities can be identified for whom the place holds value.
- Was there an earlier castle on the site prior to Finnart's arrival in the late 1520s, and if so of what date and form? The entire complex is in need of a comprehensive Standing Building survey. This may identify areas of masonry that might suggest the existence of an earlier work. It could also potentially identify areas of masonry post-dating Finnart's time (e.g. the outer courtyard wall is thought perhaps to have been completed in the 2nd Earl's time).
- How much of the castle's design was Finnart's doing, or has his role been overstated?
- Did Finnart plan his great tower from the outset, or was his original intention that his lodging be in the north-east tower, engaged with an adjacent east range housing his great hall and a kitchen tower at the south end? Perhaps we will never know, but here too, Standing Building survey may help.
- Further investigation could illuminate the function and layout of both courtyards, and confirm whether the postulated kitchen garden is indeed in evidence beneath the grass outside the south postern.

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<sup>40</sup> For access information, please see: [www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/craignethan-castle/](http://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/craignethan-castle/)

<sup>41</sup> Accessible at:

[http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/63047?backURL=/en/search%3Fpage%3D1%23track\\_63047](http://www.tobarandualchais.co.uk/en/fullrecord/63047?backURL=/en/search%3Fpage%3D1%23track_63047)

- The nature of the settlement at Craignethan after the castle was abandoned remains unclear, and while archival evidence gives evidence of multiple occupants at Fence and Craignethan (see [Appendix 1](#) Timeline) this may merit further study.
- Why was the planned east tower never completed?
- How was the kitchen originally accessed, and to what extent was layout and circulation affected by alterations made in the early 20th century?
- It is known that Finnart's residence included a lavish chapel, whose 'chapel-geir' was appropriated by James V in 1540. Further investigation may determine its location; the south-east tower is considered the most likely.
- What was the layout of the formal garden and associated ranges within the outer court? Archaeological excavation may prove insightful.
- What was the relationship between the "instant" publicity of being identified as a Walter Scott location and the development of tourism at the site? What was the view of the owner, was there a conscious effort to tempt Scott to use, or not use, particular places as identifiable settings in his works? This question could be asked of many of Scott's locations - e.g. Doune, Craigmillar, Melrose etc.

#### 4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

*Other extant castles of Hamilton of Finnart:* Avendale (Strathaven); Cadzow; Kinneil House

*Royal castles Finnart is associated with in terms of design:* **Blackness;** Dunbar; Linlithgow Palace; Stirling; Tantallon (?)

*Other 16th-century caponiers:* - **Blackness; Tantallon (?)**

#### 5. KEYWORDS

Craignethan; castle; tower house; lodging; ditch; artillery work; caponier; gun-hole; siege; Hamilton dynasty; Hamilton of Finnart; Earls of Arran; Mary, Queen of Scots; Covenanter; Walter Scott; Tillietudlem

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# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX I: TIMELINE

**c.1496** – Sir James Hamilton of Finnart is born. Although the eldest son of James Hamilton, 1st Earl of Arran, he is born illegitimate. Had he been legitimate he would have succeeded his father as Earl of Arran and heir to the throne.

**1512** – Sir William Hamilton of Cander owns Strahill in Draffane.<sup>42</sup>

**1513** – After the death of James IV at the Battle of Flodden, Finnart joins the entourage of Regent Albany and travels to France. He returns in 1518, and gains the confidence of the new king, James V. By 1525 he is chief adviser to his father, the earl.

**1516** – 3 March, James Hamilton of Schawfield (d.1529) holds Draffanehill, the mansion of Draffane, to the west of the site of the castle.<sup>43</sup>

**1521** – Lands belonging to John Campbell of Loudon, including Draffen in Lanarkshire, were granted to James, Earl of Moray. The charter does not record a castle at Draffen, though other castles are named<sup>44</sup>. Moray, an ally of Margaret Tudor, was in command of the royal artillery in the minority of James V and was required to give this up to the Earl of Angus in 1526. Moray took part with Finnart and the Earl of Arran against Angus in support of Margaret Tudor<sup>45</sup>.

**1529** – At his father's death, Finnart becomes head of the House of Hamilton, and tutor (guardian) to the young 2nd Earl, also James. It is likely that he began his building at Craignethan (and quite possibly **Cadzow Castle** also) at this time, see entry for 1532.

**1532/1538/9** - There is a confirmation under the Great Seal, dated 4 January 1538/39, of a charter of 15 May 1532 by the Abbey of Kelso to Sir James Hamilton of Finnart of the castle and fortalice of Nauthane and its

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<sup>42</sup> *HMC 11th report VI*, 216

<sup>43</sup> *Protocol Book of Gavin Ros* (1898), p.27 no.166.

<sup>44</sup> NRS GD39/1/2

<sup>45</sup> Emond, 'Minority', 499, 672-3. Artillery was a potent symbol of authority and power beyond its actual capacity: Henry Lord Methven was made Master of Artillery when he married Margaret Tudor. Could Moray have started to build at Craignethan? Finnart's Craignethan was directly evocative of roles and struggles during the minority in the 1520s, responding to Angus' blockhouse at **Tantallon**, and the royal power delegated to Lord Methven.



lands in the barony of Lesmahagow<sup>46</sup>. There can be no reasonable doubt that Nauthane is an early name for Craignethan and refers to the castle there today. It is clear from this confirmation that Finnart acquired the feu-ferme of the castle and lands by purchase. They were 'conqueste', that is acquired, not inherited, and the castle is further said in the charter to have been built by Sir James. So Finnart had already undertaken building work at Craignethan prior to May 1532. Finnart also had confirmation at the same time of a grant of 2 September 1532 by Kelso Abbey of the office of Baillie of the barony of Lesmahagow. It additionally mentions the castle of Nathane which is to be a part, and pendicle, of the said office, the place where Finnart required to pay an annual reddendo of a penny<sup>47</sup>.

**1539/40** - Finnart is rewarded with his most lucrative post yet - Master of Works Principal in charge of all His Majesty's building works, chiefly at this date the new Palace in **Stirling Castle**. He is also given full legitimacy. However, he falls out of favour with James V soon after, is arrested, tried on a charge of plotting against the king, found guilty and summarily executed in **1540**. On his demise Craignethan becomes a royal castle. The small garrison installed includes a captain and three gunners. The armament comprises at least two heavy cannon and five smaller pieces. James V and Mary of Guise visit, bringing the royal tapestry.

**1540** - Alleged visit by King James V to the castle for the marriage of Sir James Hamilton's daughter Agnes with the Master of Somerville. The source for this seems ultimately to be a rather later and unreliable family history of the Somerville family<sup>48</sup>, which is not regarded as a reliable source.

**1540-2** - Crops from Craignethan were recorded for the crown by Mr John Davidson, Kelso Abbey's notary who had written Finnart's charters, and include, meal and poultry from 'lie intakis, prata et lie fensis'. The 'in-takis' were farms at Craignethan and Fence. There was hay in the meadow. Finnart also had Threepwood with its orchard, and 'Strahills' (?near Fence) with its barley. There were two foresters employed at Craignethan, and a gardener. Timber was taken across the Clyde. The administrators had a malefactor called Bogill executed.

**1541/1542** - visit by King James V to the castle. This event is based on references to Craignethan in the accounts submitted by the chamberlain of Douglas for the period from 31 August 1541 to 4/5 July 1542, and by the receiver of rents for the lands of Draffan for 1 September 1540 to 29 July 1542. The accounts are included in the *Exchequer Rolls* (ER, XVII, 581-3) since the lands had been forfeited to the Crown as a result of the execution

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<sup>46</sup> Paul and Thomson 1883: 419-20, no 1885

<sup>47</sup> Paul and Thomson 1883: nos 1885, 1220

<sup>48</sup> Somerville 1815: 393

of Sir James Hamilton of Finnart. The entries that specifically seem to indicate the presence of the king are a payment for 18 hens delivered for the expenses of the king being at the castle of Craignethan at some unspecified time between 1 September 1540 and 5 July 1542<sup>49</sup>, the other entry relates to provision for the King's horses. They were fed at Craignethan, and for the visit stables were repaired or newly built.

**1542** – On James V's death, Finnart's half-brother, James, 2nd Earl of Arran, becomes regent. He takes back Craignethan for himself, though his main residence is **Kinneil House**. It is conceivable that Arran completed the building of Craignethan, particularly the outer court. Arran remains regent for 12 years, during which time he regularly visited Craignethan, once with the Earl of Angus and once with the French diplomat Henri Cleutin, sieur d'Oisel. He was created Duke of Châtelhérauld (**1549**) by Henri II of France, in recognition of his part in arranging the marriage of Queen Mary and the French Dauphin, François. A devout Catholic, Arran is at the centre of the growing religious and political troubles besetting Scotland in the build-up to the Protestant Reformation of **1560**.

**1566** – Arran is banished to France for opposing Queen Mary's second marriage, to Henry, Lord Darnley (he hoped that Mary would marry his eldest son, James). Craignethan is occupied on behalf of the queen. No sooner does Arran return to Scotland (**1567**) than Mary is forced to abdicate in favour of her infant son James VI. Arran opts to support Mary.

**1568** – Visit to the castle by Mary Queen of Scots in the days after her escape from Lochleven Castle on 2 May. Her secretary, Claude Nau, writing 10 years later, merely says she was at Hamilton from 3-13 May<sup>50</sup>, but two reports by Sir William Drury, Governor of Berwick, tell a different story. One dated 6 May 1568 says she was still at Draffen (Keith 1845: 802). The other, added to a letter dated 12 May of that year, indicates that she had then gone to Draffen<sup>51</sup>. 'Draffen' was then an alternative name for Craignethan.

However, on leaving for **Dumbarton Castle**, Mary's small army is intercepted at Langside (13 May **1568**). Mary flees to England.

**1568** – After the battle of Langside some of the household furnishings of James V are found in Hamilton and Craignethan<sup>52</sup>, Craignethan, along with **Cadzow Castle**, is surrendered to the new regent, the Earl of Moray, who has all its guns removed

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<sup>49</sup> McNeill 1897: 560, 582, 583

<sup>50</sup> Nau 1883: 91

<sup>51</sup> Wright 1838: 270

<sup>52</sup> *A Chronicle of the Kings of Scotland* (1830), 118

**1570** – Craignethan is back in Hamilton hands. Arran’s third son, Claud, re-arms the place and prepares for a lengthy siege. The garrison comprises 80 horsemen and 50 musketeers. It is possible that the traverse wall in the great ditch is built at this time, to replace the caponier.

According to Sir William Drury, Governor of Berwick, the castle, although strong, was ‘situate in a hole’, and was commanded on all sides. It then had no ordnance<sup>53</sup>.

**1572** – the Earl of Morton is appointed regent. An uneasy ‘stand-off’ between him and the Hamiltons ensues.

**1575** – Arran dies at **Kinneil House**. His eldest son, James, nominally succeeds as 3rd Earl. However, having been declared insane since 1562, his two brothers, John and Claud, now effectively run the Hamilton family’s affairs and confine their eldest brother in Craignethan together with their widowed mother.

**1577** – James 3rd Earl of Arran accepts a resignation by staff and baton and signs charter at Craignethan, but the landholder’s role is acted by his servant, and his legal curator, his brother John remains at Hamilton to sign his part on the same day, 21 Oct. 1577<sup>54</sup>.

**1579** – Regent Morton raises armed levies to take the Hamiltons’ Clydesdale strongholds of Hamilton, **Cadzow** and Craignethan. Craignethan is surrendered without resistance. Orders are issued for it to be ‘cast down to the ground, the inner barmkin ... and the tower upoun the south nuke of the samin, as alsau the tower upoun the north nuke at the entres [entrance], and the fosse [ditch] thair of fillit’. This was intended chiefly to demilitarise the stronghold; Finnart’s impressive and innovative tower house is left intact.

The 3rd Earl is taken with his mother to **Linlithgow**. The Earl’s brothers flee the country. The demolition was done after 3 July 1580 by Sir James Hamilton of Libberton.

**1579, May** - the abandonment of the castle on the prospect of a bombardment by a royal artillery train. There is evidence for the castle changing hands more than once in the 16th century as the result of hostile activity. There does not appear to be any detailed information to allow an assessment of how well the castle performed militarily on any such occasion.

The Earl of Morton, effectively still leader of the country in May 1579 on behalf of the young King James VI despite having had to resign the

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<sup>53</sup> Boyd 1903: 182, no 250

<sup>54</sup> NRS RH6/2452-3

regency, saw the suppression of the Hamiltons, still the main supporters of Queen Mary, as a useful diversionary tactic and means of gaining support from rivals and critics. He therefore launched an expedition to take the chief Hamilton strongholds of Hamilton and Craignethan. The siege of Hamilton Castle commenced on 4 May, but the siege train did not arrive until 15 May, on which the garrison surrendered on conditions.

The garrison of Craignethan fled in the night before the guns even appeared before them<sup>55</sup>. The siege train only consisted of two large battering pieces (cannons) and two medium sized pieces (a bastard and a moyen)<sup>56</sup>.

**1579, May** - demolition of the castle ordered by the Scottish Privy Council. James Hamilton of Liberton was ordered to

*... dimolische and cast down to the ground the inner barmkin of the said hous, and the tour upoun the south nuke of the samin, as alsua the tour upoun the north nuke at the entres, and the fowse thairof fillit; and that na thing remane within the clois about the the rute of the tour bot the dur thairof, to oppin plainelie in the clois; as alsua na thing to remane bot the garding dike on the west hand without flankis, and that the bigging 6 upoun the eist side of the tour, and the clois dykis on the south and north side, remane without flankis<sup>57</sup>.*

The Earl of Morton attempted to have the demolition delayed and it had still not been progressed by 9 June 1580<sup>58</sup>. Nevertheless, the present state of the castle indicates that a major effort must have been made soon after this to carry out some of the May 1579 instructions. Flattening the 'inner barmkin' (the west rampart) and its associated towers, and filling in the ditch, were clearly the priorities.

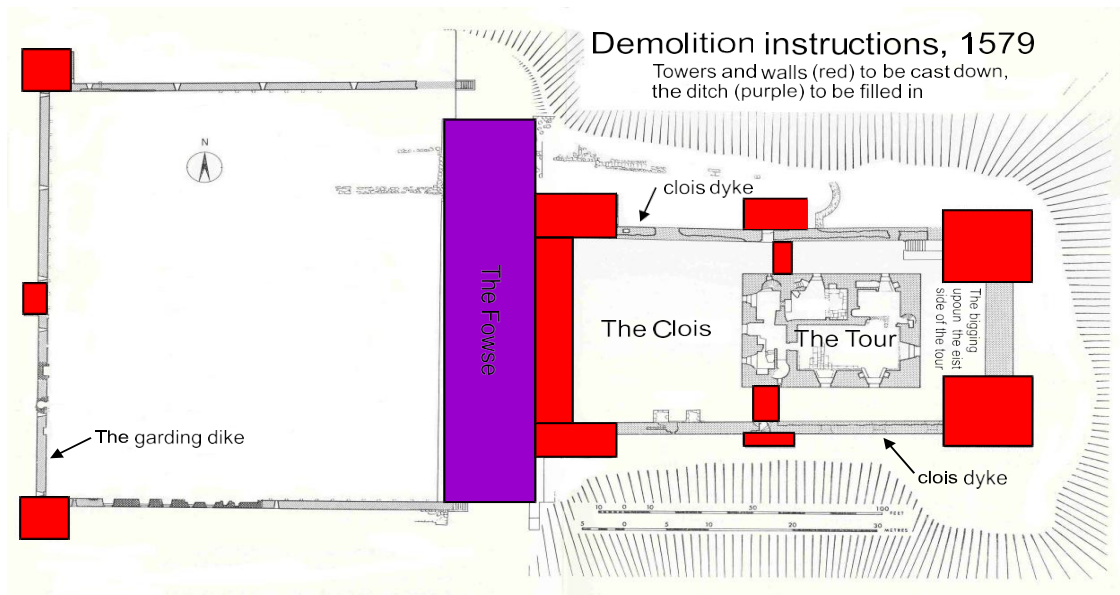
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<sup>55</sup> Masson 1880: 153; Boyd 1905: nos 407, 408

<sup>56</sup> McInnes 1978: 266

<sup>57</sup> Masson 1880: 189

<sup>58</sup> Ibid 289; Boyd 1907: 338



*David Caldwell's reconstruction illustration, from his unpublished 2017 report, produced for Historic Environment Scotland.*

**1591** – 29 October, the farmer Robert Bairnsfather in Fence of Craignethan dies. His will witnessed by John Broun of Draffen (the present-day Draffen farm). Robert had eight cows, 11 bullocks (stotts), 41 old sheep, 29 hogs, meal in the barn and barn yard, a nag and three mares with a foal. He owed Lord Hamilton for teinds in 1591 meal to the value of £13. Robert seems to have been the most substantial of several farmers working the lands of Fence and Craignethan. Robert's farm may have been outside the park drawn by Pont in 1596<sup>59</sup>.

**1592** – Laird of Niddrie and others imprisoned in the castle.

**1597** – 14 December, Brydie Marshall, widow of Robert Bairnsfather in Fence of Craignethan dies. John Watson was her servant (farmworker). John Hill and James Hastie in Hillheid of Craignethan (presumably farms between the castle and Fence) were witnesses to her will. She had two grey mares, six cows, 26 sheep young and old, 12 hogs, meal in the barn and barnyard. She owed 'my Lord Hamilton master of the ground for his service in 1597' meal to value £132-10s. Another farmer, James Loch in Fence was an executor<sup>60</sup>.

**1599** – John Hamilton returns from exile and James VI makes him Marquis of Hamilton.

<sup>59</sup> CC8/8/23 p.269-71

<sup>60</sup> CC8/8/31 p.92-3

**1620** – 15 December, Eufame Rinnick wife of Arthur Lang in Craignethan dies. Arthur and Eufame have a horse, cow with a calf, five heifers, five old sheep, a hog, sowing oats and beir and corn, showing they had a mixed farm. They owed forty merks to the Marquis of Hamilton and his factor John Stoullie at Corra Mill. Her children included John, James, Isobel, Margaret, Agnes, Jonett, Robert, Arthur and William. Robert Lang was first-named sitting ‘possessor’ of Craignethan when Andrew Hay bought the property in 1659. The farm was probably within the park.

**1623** – James, Marquis of Hamilton confirmed owner of the lands of Draffen, South Field, Threepwood, with ‘wardis and hayningis’ and the castle of Craignethan and required to take a single sasine at the castle<sup>61</sup>.

**1623** – 23 October, Cuthbert Hamilton farmer at Craignethan dies. His will was witnessed by Arthur Lang in Craignethan, Cuthbert’s sons James and John, and James Dougall in Fence. This shows that the land had multiple occupants. Cuthbert had two cows with calfs, a heifer, and corn in the barn and barn yard. Cuthbert had a knapping hammer and a mattock (which may have been used to quarry away at the castle). His daughter Margaret was his executor, she was to give his chest clothes and bedding to her youngest brother Cuthbert, John and James got his ‘rollers and wheels’ (arable equipment)<sup>62</sup>. Cuthbert Hamilton was a younger son of John Hamilton (d.1602) who had a mixed farm at nearby Netherburn to the north-west of the castle beyond Threepwood Moss. John had left his plough and harrow to his eldest son John (d.1623) who continued to farm at Netherburn<sup>63</sup>.

**1659** – Anne, 3rd Duchess of Hamilton, sells the castle to Andrew Hay, a noted Covenanter, who builds a new residence and office range in the outer courtyard<sup>64</sup>. The date **1665** is on the building. The property included ‘Fence and Craignethan’ with Crossford, Blair, Threepwood, Nethanfoot or yards. The previous ‘possessors’ of ‘Fence and Craignethan’ were Robert Lang, with James Hamilton, James Loch, James Rual, William Hamilton, Besse Whiteford and Adame Loch and their subtenants<sup>65</sup>.

**c.1730** – Archibald Douglas, 1st Duke of Douglas, purchases the castle.

**1799** – Walter Scott visits the castle in the company of Lord Douglas and is smitten with the place. He is offered the use of Andrew Hay’s house as a summer house but declines the offer.

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<sup>61</sup> RGS, no.141

<sup>62</sup> CC14/5/2 p.743-4

<sup>63</sup> CC8/8/37 p.53-4; CC10/5/5 p.84-6

<sup>64</sup> RGS, p.93

<sup>65</sup> NRS SIG1/75/131.

**1816** – Scott’s *Old Mortality* is published, and although Scott himself denies the association, many believe that the inspiration for his Tillietudlem Castle is Craignethan. It becomes a popular visitor attraction (J. M. W. Turner visits in **1834**)

**1876** - A new railway station nearby is named Tillietudlem Castle in honour of Craignethan’s celebrity appearance in *Old Mortality*.

**c.1900** – Charles Douglas-Home, 12th Earl of Home, carries out repairs to the masonry fabric. These are perhaps most obvious in the entrance vestibule in the tower house. (Douglas-Simpson<sup>66</sup> thought a door into the kitchen had been blocked – he may have been mistaken.).

**1949** – Alexander Douglas-Home, 14th Earl of Home, entrusts the castle into State care. Throughout the 1950s and 60s major works of masonry conservation are carried out. Excavation of the great ditch in 1962 uncover the caponier.

## APPENDIX 2: SUMMARY OF ARCHAEOLOGICAL INTERVENTIONS

A programme of clearance excavation and masonry consolidation took place between the site being taken into State care (1949) and the mid-1960s. The excavation work was directed by Iain MacIvor, Inspector of Ancient Monuments, and was largely carried out using local labour under a Government-funded ‘winter relief’ scheme.

The work concentrated on two areas – the great ditch and the outer court. The chief discovery in the great ditch was the well-nigh unique caponier (see [2.4 Architectural and Artistic Values](#)). In the outer court was found the metalled road leading to the drawbridge crossing that ditch near its northern end. Also in the outer court were found the slots for timber sills forming the lean-to structures around the inside of the perimeter wall. Interestingly, there was no evidence for a roadway leading to a central gate through the main west wall of the inner court, as postulated by McKean.

In 1984, as part of the masonry consolidation programme, John Lewis directed excavations at the north-east tower and its adjacent basement cellar in the east range. The former was found to have been a kitchen originally, and subsequently reformed as a brewhouse.

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<sup>66</sup> 1963

In 1995 excavation on the site of the east range showed that a building range had been planned here from the outset in the 1530s but was never completed.

The archaeological potential at the site remains considerable. The entire inner courtyard has scarcely been investigated, and the precise use and layout of the outer courtyard still remains something of a mystery, though this is likely to have been a formal garden. There is also a possibility that the kitchen garden may well be in evidence beneath the grass outside the south postern. It is also not beyond the bounds of possibility that evidence for siege works exists on the hill overlooking the site from the west (where the carpark is today).

## APPENDIX 3: INTERPRETATIONS

Our understanding of Craignethan has been shaped by a number of scholars. In their five-volume study of Scottish Castles, David MacGibbon and Thomas Ross recognised the importance of the site, its unusual plan and the huge defensive wall that had been toppled into the ditch. Stewart Cruden, Inspector of Ancient Monuments writing in 1963 (*The Scottish Castle*) following the major excavation and discovery of the caponier, ascribed the work to the 2nd earl of Arran. He considered the lodging in the context of tower house development and was not impressed with what he considered an experiment in improving amenity. He noted that it was 'not a successful solution to the problem of reconciling strength, amenity and good looks.'

Douglas Simpson, writing in the same year, took the opposite view, arguing that the plan of the tower or lodging was highly sophisticated for its date. Instead of simply piling up functions, Finnart had arranged rooms in sequence according to a ceremonial and domestic plan around a midrib or central 'diaphragm' wall. Simpson considered that an earlier structure, perhaps with a first floor hall, had pre-dated the 1530s build. He noted the former existence of a 'great gate' through the S wall of the inner court but had not had access to the ongoing excavation at Craignethan and could only note in a postscript that a caponier had been discovered.

In 1977, the Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Iain MacIvor, reviewed the work and discoveries at the site to make it presentable to the public. While carefully surveying and presenting the site as an artillery fortification, he took on board the political and cultural aspects of the architecture of the site. Importantly, he interprets apparent later changes as on-site modifications during construction rather than evidence of earlier work, as Simpson had argued. The windows in the south curtain wall are interpreted by MacIvor as clever features allowing light into the ground floor hall rather than as evidence of an earlier arrangement. In terms of



defence capability, he sees the innovations as responding to contemporary developments in siege tactics and artillery. However, he also suggests that the massive new wall gave an appearance of great strength which was never tested and which, if it had, may have been found wanting. Maclvor remained unsure about the date of the outer court but placed it as some time before the destruction of the castle's main defences after 1579.

Charles McKean, in a seminal essay of 1995, took Maclvor's thesis of a balance at Craignethan between show and strength to a completely new level. McKean suggested that the layout, composition and internal fitting out of the castle represented an attempt at formal Roman grandeur by a man who understood and could transpose the latest currents in continental architecture to a Scottish setting. McKean's later study *The Scottish Chateau* (2001) went further in claiming that Leonardo's unbuilt palace at Romorantin, France was a possible source which Finnart could have seen when, as McKean suggests as a possibility, he met Leonardo in 1517. Finally, McKean, wants to present Finnart as an architect in the modern sense of that word.

The definition of the site as 'architecture' in the sense that we now use it, is often contested. From the eighteenth century, architecture was narrowly defined as the application of the classical orders and, as a consequence, the 'introducer' of architecture to Scotland was long accepted as Sir William Bruce (1630-1710). More recently, we have come to think of an architect in broader terms, in the way in which it was used in the 20th century, as an organiser and administrator in charge of the entire business of building production. In this sense, Finnart is surely an architect in that he devises and administers building projects and conceives of them in their entirety as a complete, compositional production. As McKean notes, Finnart was also described as 'architector' in the sixteenth century but, confusingly enough, the term then covered a wider range of construction- and engineering-orientated activities. However, it is clear that Finnart - and his team - were in charge of Royal repair and building works and, in this sense, his role comes close to a modern understanding of the role of an architect and we can accept that his work at Craignethan, as his own client, represents a very pure expression of his artistic aspirations.

In an unpublished report for Historic Environment Scotland, David H. Caldwell summed up the evidence laid out in the research and interpretation published since MacGibbon and Ross's short analysis of 1887. He also proposes new interpretation of the site, including the suggestion that the outer court may have originally been a 'glacis', an open area in front of a defensive array designed to prevent enemy activity from going unseen or unchallenged. Caldwell challenges some of the claims made by earlier researchers, most important, whether Sir James Hamilton of Finnart was the sole designer of the building. He also questions whether some of the existing features of the site are original remains or the result of nineteenth and twentieth century restoration.