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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

MACLELLAN'S CASTLE



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

MACLELLAN'S CASTLE

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1 Summary

1.1 Introduction

MacLellan's Castle (or MacLellan's House) is a roofless but otherwise complete tower-house mansion situated at the west end of St Cuthbert Street in the centre of Kirkcudbright. Completed around 1580 for Sir Thomas MacLellan of Bombie, provost of Kirkcudbright, the tower house was elaborately planned and incorporated fine architectural details. The small area of ground around it will have buried archaeology relating to the accompanying barmkin (courtyard), gardens and perimeter wall, and possibly also to the domestic buildings of the Greyfriars' convent that preceded it on the site.

Sir Thomas's son Robert, 1st Lord Kirkcudbright, died in debt in 1639, probably through his involvement in James VI's Ulster Plantation scheme, while the MacLellans' social, economic and political capital was effectively exhausted by their efforts in the Civil War of the 1640s. By the 1750s MacLellan's Castle had passed to the Maxwells of **Orchardton**, who stripped the house of its contents and removed the roof. The property thereafter stood neglected until Sir Charles Hope entrusted it into state care in 1912.

1.2 Statement of significance

MacLellan's Castle is an unusual surviving example of a castellated mansion built inside a town, occupying a prominent site within Kirkcudbright. It is also a large and architecturally significant building in its own right.

MacLellan's Castle is of national importance as an excellent example of later-16th century castellated architecture. It is unusually large as Jacobean tower houses go, with at least 15 private chambers on its three upper storeys, giving it more the appearance of an urban palace than a town house.

The tower house is of unusual design, a unique variant on the L-plan. Its double projection in the re-entrant angle is also unique in Scotland, and the additional tall tower at the SE corner is highly unusual.

The tower house has other unusual, if not unique, architectural features internally. Of especial note are the straight stair rising to the first floor, the 'laird's lug', the provision of dry-stool closets and the presence of three back stairs. These mark MacLellan's Castle out as a building reflecting the increasingly sophisticated concepts of comfort, space and privacy which were replacing those of security and defence. In short, MacLellan's is a fine architectural expression of the Jacobean age.

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.

2 Assessment of values

Description

MacLellan's Castle today comprises the tower-house residence completed by Sir Thomas MacLellan of Bombie in 1582, the ancillary buildings, yards, perimeter walls and gardens having long disappeared (see para 2.2 below).

The tower house is an unusual, and unusually large, variant of the L-plan form widely adopted in Jacobean Scotland. Four storeys high, its design manifests the deliberate and self-conscious change in tower-house building in the later sixteenth century. Gone, by and large, is the obsession with security that dictated the design of the severe, closed-up towers of the preceding two centuries (eg, **Threave Castle** and **Cardoness Castle**), to be replaced by a new approach to domestic comfort and the display of conspicuous wealth and power.

MacLellan's ground plan has two significant variations on the normal L-plan (a) an additional five-storey tower at the SE corner, and (b) the NW re-entrant angle between the two main wings contains two projecting jambs rather than just one; the latter detail is unique.

These variations on plan combine to make the house more convenient and roomy. With the exception of the double projection in the re-entrant angle, the tower house's overall plan is not unlike that at **Elcho Castle**. The fact that there are two entrances – the front entrance in the re-entrant angle and a rear access into the SE tower – is also unusual; their existence adroitly enabled the formal and service access to become separated.

The exterior of the building is graced with some fine architectural details. The rounded stair turret corbelled out from the main block's east front is topped by boldly projecting corbels that probably supported a rectangular caphouse. The stair turret projecting from the SE tower rests on continuous corbelling, whilst at the main west and north gables are round angle turrets carried on vertical corbel bands set on continuous horizontal corbelling. All the windows are comfortably-sized, even at the ground floor. The tower has an array of gunholes– wide-splayed apertures all around the ground floor and the odd round or cross-shaped shothole at the higher levels. These are capable of deterring intruders but not of withstanding a fully-pressed siege.

The finest architectural detail is reserved for the entrance front in the NW re-entrant angle, so as to impress visitors. Here the door and window surrounds are nicely moulded, particularly the window above and to the left of the entrance, with its dogtooth enrichment and finial pediment. The wall-heads are decorated with corbelled corner turrets and stone cannon-shaped water-spouts. Immediately over the door is an elaborate tri-partite armorial panel below a pediment terminating in a thistle. The border of the upper panel is decorated with roses and thistles (the panel itself is missing but probably housed the royal arms of James VI). The two lower panels display the arms of Sir Thomas MacLellan (left) and Dame Grissel Maxwell, his second wife (right), and the date 1582 - though curiously Sir Thomas and Dame Grissel

didn't marry until 1584! It is possible that the date 1582 is misleading, and that the house was not completed until 1584 at the earliest.

Internally, the accommodation is arranged as in all other Jacobean towers – that is, 'below stairs' rooms on the ground floor (a good-sized kitchen in the north wing and four vaulted cellars in the main block, all linked by vaulted corridors) and, on the upper floors, public rooms (hall and withdrawing chamber), private bedchambers and studies.

Developmental sequence

Based on our current understanding, MacLellan's Castle seems to have a relatively straightforward development history, though there are few documentary sources which can confirm this. A summary is given below:

Foundation Phase: late-16th century

MacLellan's Castle is thought to have been built in a single construction campaign in the late-16th century by Sir Thomas MacLellan, based on the charter of 1569 and the date of 1582 inscribed on the building itself. This is certainly consistent with the general character of the architecture, and the fact that it overlies a friary complex which was suppressed around 1560.

Development Phase 1: abandonment, mid-18th century

At some point, MacLellan's Castle was abandoned and fell into ruin. Two key changes are recorded during this period.

The removal of the building's roof and the stripping of its internal fittings and furnishings.

The complete destruction of extensive additional architectural elements, among which an impressive external gateway is specifically mentioned.

The antiquary Francis Grose, who visited around 1790, was told that the building had been unroofed 'about forty years' earlier, after which the stonework was plundered.¹ Victorian sources state a precise date of 1752 for the removal of the roof and furnishings,² a date which is replaced in more recent works by '1742'.

However, there is no evidence that the castle received any significant use or upkeep after the 1660s, and it is unclear what state of repair it was in by the mid-18th century. The castle was acquired around 1782 by the Earl of Selkirk, and appears to have been left in the same roofless state.

In spite of this neglect, the stonework of the building remains essentially complete to the wall-head and there is no real evidence for the removal of masonry from the main building. It is assumed that the original architectural setting was long-vanished before the end of the 18th century

¹ Grose ii. 188.

² Balfour Paul v. 263, Mackenzie, vol ii., Appendix, p. 49.

Development phase 2: period of state care, 1912 – present

Writing in the 1880s, MacGibbon and Ross expressed a hope that MacLellan's Castle would be re-roofed and restored to use, perhaps as a local museum.³ This did not happen and it came under state care in 1912. Some limited restoration work has been undertaken, with little impact on the original fabric – notably the removal of the mass of ivy which previously covered the exterior of the building, while the service entrance in the base of the SE tower, blocked when MacGibbon and Ross surveyed the site in the late-19th century,⁴ has been opened up.

2.2 Evidential values

Site and surroundings:

MacLellan's Castle has never been archaeologically investigated, though some clearance work was carried out by the Office of Works after the property came into state care in 1912.

The archaeological potential of the site must be high. The ground occupied by the late-16th century castle was previously the site of the Greyfriars' convent, founded by James II c.1455, and remains of its domestic buildings and yards may well survive. The document transferring ownership in 1569 suggests that the MacLellans took over the friary's orchard and formal gardens in conjunction with their new house.

The upstanding tower house will have almost certainly been surrounded by a barmkin, or courtyard, containing ancillary buildings, structures, yards and gardens, all enclosed within a perimeter (barmkin) wall. Oral tradition in the late 18th century recalled the impressive extent of the demolished structures associated with the Castle, including a prominent entrance gateway,⁵ and evidence of these lost features is likely to survive below the neatly manicured grass. It should be noted however that there are no obvious wall-raggles on the surviving building to indicate the position of courtyard walls, and the castle which the 1st Lord Kirkcudbright built on his Irish plantation in the 1610s was described as a strong self-contained building without a 'bawn' (the Ulster equivalent of a barmkin) or any other dependent structures.⁶ These two details make it possible that the relationship between MacLellan's Castle and its associated enclosures and outbuildings was unusual: it need not have followed the conventional model in which the principal courtyard directly abutted the building and enclosed the entrance facade. The only feature remaining from this barmkin is a well near the entrance doorway, which in view of its somewhat odd position may perhaps be a legacy from the Greyfriars' convent.

³ MacGibbon and Ross, ii. 149.

⁴ MacGibbon and Ross, ii. 150.

⁵ Grose ii. 188.

⁶ G. Hill, *The Conquest of Ireland. An Historical Account of the Plantation in Ulster at the Commencement of the Seventeenth Century* (Belfast 1877, repr. Kansas City, MO., 2004) p. 583

The building itself:

MacLellan's Castle has been a roofless ruin for around 250 years, and was probably abandoned a century before that. However, the masonry of the building remains substantially complete, and as such, it serves as an important example of a major Scottish mansion of the Jacobean period, unaffected by later phases of modernisation or restoration.

Our understanding of the building remains grounded in the same basic techniques of informed inspection used by MacGibbon and Ross in the late-Victorian period, identifying important, unusual or problematic features of the architecture.

The structure is well-understood and relatively easy to interpret, which in itself is an indication of its importance and the quality of its architecture. However, there are still opportunities for more detailed specialist surveys of the fabric of the building, and for the re-evaluation of its arrangements in the light of evolving academic understanding of the wider social and architectural context.

2.3 Historical values

Associations:

As its name suggests, MacLellan's Castle is primarily associated with the MacLellan family, but it was originally the site of a medieval Franciscan friary. The Franciscan presence in Kirkcudbright is sometimes said to have originated as early as the 13th century, which would have made this one of Scotland's first communities of friars, but it seems more likely that the late-medieval friary was a new foundation established by James II at a date between 1449 and 1456.⁷

The fate of the Kirkcudbright friary during the Reformation is not well-documented, but in 1569, a document issued in the name of the three-year-old King James VI (actually by the government of the Regent Moray, who had overthrown Mary Queen of Scots), asserted that the friary had been "demolished a long time before", and granted its ruins, along with the adjacent orchards and gardens, to Thomas MacLellan, laird of Bombie, "for the construction of a manor-house and buildings".⁸

Various stories are told about the origins of the MacLellan family – the best-known tale claims that they were descended from the blacksmith who made Mons Meg. Whatever their exact origins, their surname identifies them as

⁷ I.B. Cowan and D.E. Eason *Medieval Religious Houses, Scotland* (London, 1976), p. 126, convincingly showing that James II was the effective founder of the late medieval friary, and dismissing the existence of an earlier Franciscan house, the only evidence for which consists of a doubtful foundation charter purportedly issued in 1239, and a misinterpreted reference from 1300 which probably relates to the nearby Augustinian Priory at St Mary's Isle.

⁸ *Registrum Magni Sigillii Regnum Scottorum. The Register of the Great Seal*, ed. T. Thomson, J. Maitland Thomson, J. Balfour Paul, J. H. Stevenson and W. K. Dickson (11 vols., Edinburgh, 1814-1984), vol.4, No. 1901. The quotations translate the Latin phrases *longo tempore retroacto demoliebantur* and *per edificationem quarundam maneriei et domorum super eiusdem*.

descendants of the early Gaelic inhabitants of Galloway, and the power and influence of the family in the 16th and 17th centuries seems to have been connected to their ability to raise a host of fighting men from among their kin and followers.⁹

Like many Jacobean grandees, Thomas MacLellan sought to strengthen his power and status by developing connections with the court, acquiring lordship over former monastic lands and acting as a local royal official.¹⁰ The grand new residence he built on the site of the old friary stated the scale of his ambitions, and was paralleled by his taking over the chancel of the adjacent parish church as a family burial aisle where his splendid monument remains intact. A date-stone on the mansion proclaims the date of 1582, which is plausible enough as the year of its completion, and the laird is said to have entertained the king there in 1597.

In addition to his high-profile public status, some sources also indicate that MacLellan was involved with wine-smugglers and pirates operating out of Kirkcudbright harbour – a lucrative but illegal role which might go some way to explaining his rise to prominence, and the unusual location of his impressive seat, directly adjacent to the harbour itself. The ground floor vaults and the discreet back door may even have had a purpose in connection with the movement of contraband.

Robert MacLellan succeeded his father Thomas and seems to have been a violent youth – he was variously accused of attempting to assassinate his guardian, physically attacking the minister during a meeting of the parish council, casually taking pot-shots at local lairds while out riding around Kirkcudbright, and chasing a total stranger across Leith Links with a drawn sword. In 1610, he decided to relocate to Ireland to participate in the colonial occupation of Ulster, building himself a strong new castle near Londonderry and bringing over large numbers of armed settlers from Galloway, but he also made himself useful in Scotland as a pro-government MP and local administrator; for these various services, he was created Lord Kirkcudbright in 1633.¹¹

The 1st Lord Kirkcudbright had no sons, so in 1639, he was succeeded as 2nd Lord by his nephew Thomas, and in 1647 he in turn was succeeded in turn by his cousin John as 3rd Lord. Both men were zealous Presbyterians who fought with some distinction as military commanders in the Civil War, but the expense of repeatedly raising regiments for the Covenanter cause drowned the MacLellan lordship in debt, and their determination to fight for

⁹ Compare the remarks about the 1st Lord's ability to recruit armed settlers for his plantations in Ireland made by Stevenson, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17665> [accessed 22 Sept 2015], and the comments of Balfour Paul, v. 267-69 on the regiments raised by the 2nd Lord and 3rd Lord during the Civil War.

¹⁰ Balfour Paul, v. 262-264.

¹¹ Balfour Paul, v. 264-7, Stevenson, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17665> [accessed 22 Sept 2015]

their beliefs proved counterproductive: by the 1660s, their religious principles were regarded by the government as little better than treason.

In 1663, the 3rd Lord Kirkcudbright attempted to stage a local insurrection against the installation of an Episcopalian clergyman in the church beside MacLellan's Castle, but he was quickly arrested and imprisoned; it seems that he died in jail in 1665. Although the title passed briefly to his son, the 4th Lord, the MacLellan patrimony had been destroyed by creditors. The next in line did not bother to lay claim to the peerage.¹²

It is unclear what use, if any, was made of the building after the 1660s. In the 18th century, ever more distant cousins intermittently claimed the title of Lord Kirkcudbright, but this was done largely at the behest of political patrons, who sought additional votes in the tightly-contested Convention of the Nobility, the body which elected the Scottish Representative Peers in the House of Lords.¹³

By the mid-18th century, the title of Lord Kirkcudbright is said to have descended to an Edinburgh glover, who sold white dancing gloves outside the entrance of the city's public ballroom. The story goes that he kept his two identities, as a craftsman and a nobleman rather separate: the 6th Lord Kirkcudbright only appeared in the capital's polite society during the Convention of the Nobility. After casting his vote, he always took to the dancefloor for one night, as an honoured guest at the gala ball which marked the end of the meeting. For one night only, the glove-seller outside the door was absent.¹⁴

The Maxwell of Orchardton family

By the 1750s, MacLellan's Castle had passed to Sir Robert Maxwell of Orchardton, an exiled Jacobite baronet who had fought for the French at Fontenoy and for Bonnie Prince Charlie at Culloden. Making his way back to Kirkcudbright, he managed to transform himself from a ragged outlaw to a respected member of the local establishment, recovering his patrimony from an usurping cousin - a story so shamelessly romantic that it is hard to disentangle fact from fiction (the tale was borrowed by Sir Walter Scott for the novel *Guy Mannering*).¹⁵

Sir Robert married Miss MacLellan, who is said to have been a niece of one of the claimants to the Kirkcudbright peerage, and to have brought him the castle as her inheritance; but he was also the heir of line of Sir Thomas MacLellan and the 1st Lord Kirkcudbright, through the latter's only daughter, who was his great-great-grandmother, and if the original charter of 1569 was

¹² Balfour Paul, v. 267-69.

¹³ Balfour Paul, v. 269-73.

¹⁴ Balfour Paul, v. 272.

¹⁵ For this and the two following paragraphs, see Mackenzie, vol. ii, Appenix pp. 44-52., McKerlie, v. 83-88. Sir Robert's status as heir-of-line of the original Bombie lairds and the 1st Lord Kirkcudbright has not been noted previously, but can be seen by following the MacLellan descent in Balfour Paul, v. 262-67 through its sequel in the Maxwell pedigree given in McKerlie v. 84-86. For the charter of 1569, see above, n. 5.

not superseded by a later re-grant, he was in fact the rightful heir to the castle (but not the Kirkcudbright peerage).

It is unclear if Sir Robert and his lady ever made their home in the old castle. They are said to have stripped the mansion of its roof and contents, removing the best furniture to their new house at Orchardton (their motives are not clearly explained in the sources, but it is possible that this was done to avoid payment of the 'window tax' for which the building became liable in 1748). In the 1780s, Sir Robert was compelled to sell the roofless mansion to the Earl of Selkirk, subsequently passing into state care in 1912.

It should be noted that the name of MacLellan's Castle is a relatively modern one. Sources of the 18th and early 19th centuries consistently call it "the Castle of Kirkcudbright" or "Kirkcudbright Castle". The modern name appears in a tourist guidebook in 1860, and found favour in the Ordnance Gazetteer, but as late as the 1880s, MacGibbon and Ross preferred to call it "MacLellan's House".¹⁶

Ability to demonstrate particular past ways of life:

MacLellan's Castle serves as a monument to the society of post-Reformation Scotland. The kitchen and other service spaces on the ground floor are a monument to the concentration of people, resources and activity necessary to sustain the lifestyle of the rooms above, while the spacious great hall and other formal apartments on the first floor hint at the grandeur of the lifestyle enjoyed by powerful men and their loyal associates, and the various surviving architectural details subtly emphasise two ideas that were important to the ruling class: the expression of aesthetic good taste, and the practical and effective organisation of their surroundings.

The upper apartments are not now directly accessible (their timber floors long gone), but their array of windows and fireplaces can be clearly seen from the first floor, giving a strong sense of the human panoply of kinsmen, servants, and guests who would have surrounded a major figure such as Sir Thomas MacLellan or his son the 1st Lord Kirkcudbright.

The Castle also serves as a backdrop against which the activities of the MacLellan family in the Ulster Plantation and the Civil War can be set, thereby allowing a wider exploration of the complex history of the 17th century. While most of these activities are not closely associated with the castle itself, they are grounded in the physicality of the building in two ways: the story climaxes with the 3rd Lord's attempt to expel the minister of the adjacent church in 1663, and throughout the period the actions of the MacLellans were ultimately based on their ability to raise fighting men, and thus served as an expression of their position as local leaders, of which the building remains the physical embodiment.

¹⁶ MacGibbon and Ross, ii. 149.

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

MacLellan's Castle is a fine and large example of a 16th-century tower-house. In addition, it is particularly noteworthy due to its unconventional urban setting (most castellated residences were located on rural estates and set apart from other buildings), and the complex variation on the L-Plan design.

Internally, it also retains a number of important architectural details. Features of especial interest are:

- the main stair rising from the front entrance to the first floor, which is, most unusually, a straight stair (cf, the straight stair introduced into **Crichton Castle's** north range around the same time);
- the well-appointed first-floor room at the head of the stair in the north wing, with the ornate window overlooking the front entrance, perhaps the chamber of the lord's steward, responsible for running the house (cf, a similar room at the **Earl's Palace, Kirkwall**);
- the hall, including an unusually large room with a capacious fireplace topped by a 4m-long lintel carved from one piece of stone;
- the 'laird's lug', a small closet immediately behind the hall fireplace, wherein the occupant could eavesdrop on conversation in the hall. Such 'laird's-lugs' are unusual, and are normally simple spy-holes (eg, at **Greenknowe Tower**);
- the dry-stool closet in the withdrawing chamber off the hall, another innovative feature. Such closets were only then beginning to displace the open-chuted privies common in medieval times;
- the three 'back stairs' linking the first floor with the upper levels, an unusually large provision for the period (cf, **Elcho Castle**);
- the number of rooms in the upper three storeys – at least 15 – which is an unusually high number.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

MacLellan's Castle stands at the heart of the town, close to the quayside. Its lofty and impressive bulk gives it a dominant presence in the townscape, particularly when viewed from down St Cuthbert Street. That said, the castle has the feel of a semi-rural setting, surrounded as it is by open space, with grass lawns and well-tended flower-beds.

The stark, bare brown stone walls present a somewhat dour, forbidding appearance, particularly when viewed from St Cuthbert Street and Castle Street. The architectural feast on the re-entrant angle façades facing NW towards Castle Bank, and thus away from the town centre, come as a pleasant surprise.

The castle interior offers a variety of experiences and emotions for the visitor, from the dark and mysterious in the vaulted spaces of the ground floor, to one of spaciousness and light on the upper floors. The views from the top of the castle, looking out over the town and the River Dee as it wends its way towards Kirkcudbright Bay, are splendid.

2.6 Natural heritage values

There is no outstanding Natural Heritage Value, though there may be bats in some parts of the castle.

2.7 Contemporary/use values

Because of its central location in the burgh, MacLellan's Castle is a highly conspicuous feature in the townscape. In addition to its role as a heritage visitor attraction, the tower house is occasionally used as a venue for social and other historically-themed events. The highlight comes towards the end of August when the town's summer festivities are brought to a climax by a 'Floodlit Tattoo' that features a lone bagpiper standing in a first-floor window facing down St Cuthbert Street. More recently, the summer 'Art and Crafts Trail' uses the castle to feature 'Rapunzel'.

The fact that the burgh's War Memorial is situated immediately east of the tower house inevitably makes the castle a focus for acts of Remembrance by the local community.

As a building, however, MacLellan's Castle remains primarily notable for its architectural qualities rather than any specific historical connections. Although it acts as a natural focus for the identity of the MacLellan family, there are no significant historical events or traditional tales specifically associated with the site. It doesn't even seem to have a ghost!

Access

MacLellan's Castle is located in a prominent position near the waterfront in Kirkcudbright, directly adjacent to the road, with parking available nearby. The exterior can be viewed without difficulty from the pavement. The interior is open to the public between 1 Apr and 30 Sep, daily from 9:30am to 5:30pm, with the last entry at 5pm [2015 opening times]. Tickets are charged at £4.50 for adults, £2.70 for children and £3.60 for concessions.¹⁷

The service basement on the ground level and the great hall and other apartments on the first floor are fully accessible, but the loss of the timber floors mean that the upper apartments are not readily accessible. A project to provide further access to the upper parts of the building and create a viewpoint on the wall-head is proposed [2015]

Education

School parties and other educational groups are allowed to visit MacLellan's Castle for free, and teaching personnel are encouraged to make a free preparatory visit in advance. A Historic Scotland handout for teachers, entitled

¹⁷ 'MacLellan's Castle Property Overview', Historic Scotland website, http://www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/propertyresults/propertyoverview.htm?PropID=PL_204 [accessed 22 Sep 2015]

Investigating MacLellan's Castle, is readily available.¹⁸ However, educational access is limited to the summer opening period from April to September, and the practical visiting period is thus curtailed by the school holidays in July and August.

Recreation and amenity

MacLellan's Castle is surrounded by an area of grass with flowerbed borders which adds to the amenity of this part of the town.

3 Major gaps in understanding

- What was the layout and form of the Greyfriars Convent that preceded the castle on the site?
- What was the extent of the wider castle complex that surrounded the tower house? For instance the nature of likely barmkin buildings, enclosure wall, gardens and orchards that served the tower house.
- Does the well belong to the castle period or is it a legacy from the Greyfriars' convent?
- Can we learn more about the social, economic and political interests of the MacLellan family? How did their fortune arise – were smuggling activities a contributory factor. What influences led to the unusual design of the Castle.

4 Associated properties

(other locally related places) – Barscobe Castle (17th-century property of the MacLellans); Bombie Moat (predecessor of MacLellan's Castle); Castledykes (Kirkcudbright's 13th-century royal castle); Greyfriars' Church (inc. the MacLellan Monument); **Orchardton Tower**; Raeberry Castle (another property of the MacLellans of Bombie)

(some other Gallovidian Jacobean tower houses) – Barjarg Castle; **Carluith Castle**; **Castle of Park**; **Drumcoltran Tower**; Hills Tower; Plunton Tower; Sorbie Tower

(some other Jacobean tower houses in Historic Scotland's care) – **Carnasserie Castle**; **Claypotts**; **Corgarff Castle**; **Craignethan Castle**; **Elcho Castle**; **Glenbuchat Castle**; **Greenknowe Tower**

5 Keywords

tower house; armorial panel; barmkin; gunhole; well; Jacobean; MacLellan

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¹⁸ Historic Scotland, *Investigating MacLellan's Castle* (online publication, n.d.), www.historic-scotland.gov.uk/investigating-maclellans-castle.pdf [accessed 22 Sep 2015]

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Timeline

1273 – Cane McCillololane (MacLellan) witnesses the charter establishing Sweetheart Abbey, the first of the surname to appear on record.

14th century – the MacLellans acquire the estate of Bombie, 2 miles east of Kirkcudbright. They probably build the moated manor that survives there.

1435 – Patrick Maclellan of Bombie is recorded as 'custumar' of Kirkcudbright.

1455 – following James II's overthrow of the Black Douglases at nearby **Threave Castle**, the king makes Kirkcudbright a 'free burgh'. He also founds a Franciscan friary (Greyfriars convent) in the town, probably at the same time. William MacLellan of Bombie, who sides with the king, benefits from the subsequent redistribution of Douglas lands, and in 1466 becomes the first MacLellan to be appointed provost of Kirkcudbright.

1513 – William MacLellan of Bombie, joint chamberlain of Galloway, is killed fighting for James IV at the battle of Flodden.

1547 – Thomas MacLellan of Bombie is killed fighting for Queen Mary at the battle of Pinkie.

1560 – the Protestant Reformation brings an end to the Greyfriars' presence in the burgh. The friary church is appropriated as the burgh kirk.

1569 – James VI grants the disused Greyfriars' convent to 'our beloved Thomas MacLellan of Bombie' for the purpose of letting him build 'a mansion and certain houses thereupon.' Sir Thomas and his first wife, Helen, daughter of Sir James Gordon of Lochinvar, begin to plan their new residence in the burgh, using stone from the ruined convent.

1576 – Sir Thomas becomes provost of Kirkcudbright.

1577 – Sir Thomas acquires land at nearby Castledykes, the old royal castle, to provide more stone for his new mansion. The stonemasons are Robert and Alexander Coupar.

1581 – Lady Helen Gordon dies. Sir Thomas visits France in the same year, perhaps deriving therefrom some of those novel ideas his new tower house displays.

1582 – MacLellan's Castle is finished, according to the dated stone above the entrance doorway.

1584 – Sir Thomas marries his second wife, Grissel, daughter of Sir John Maxwell, 4th Lord Herries.

1587 – James VI visits Kirkcudbright and stays with Sir Thomas and Dame Grissel at their castle. (The silver gun presented by the king to Sir Thomas on the occasion is still on display in the town's Stewartry Museum.)

1597 – Sir Thomas dies and is buried in the chancel of the former Greyfriars' Church, adopted by the family as their private burial aisle. He is succeeded by his son, Robert.

1606 – Sir Robert becomes provost of Kirkcudbright at the age of 14.

1610 – Sir Robert purchases 2,000 acres of land at the Rosses, County Donegal, as part of James VI's Ulster Plantation scheme, but fails to settle any Scots thereon.

1616 – Sir Robert sells his Donegal estate, and acquires land in Londonderry from the Haberdashers' Company, of the City of London, along the east side of the River Roe, where he builds a castle and bawn [barmkin]. He also acquires land in Londonderry from the Clothworkers' Company, and land in County Down through his marriage (1614) to the eldest daughter of Sir Hugh Montgomery.

1639 – Sir Robert (created 1st Lord Kirkcudbright in 1633), dies at Ballycastle, County Antrim, and is succeeded by his nephew, Thomas MacLellan of Glenshinnoch, a noted Covenanter, who helps defeat the Marquis of Montrose at Philphaugh (1645).

1647 – Thomas dies, also in Ireland, and is succeeded by a cousin, who becomes John, 3rd Lord Kirkcudbright. He opposes the introduction of an Episcopal minister at Kirkcudbright, is imprisoned in Edinburgh and dies in disgrace in 1665. The title of Lord Kirkcudbright, and the notional ownership of the mansion, descends to ever-more-distant cousins, eventually ending up with an Edinburgh glover.

c. 1750 – The ownership of MacLellan's Castle passes to Sir Robert Maxwell of **Orchardton**, a former Jacobite officer, seemingly through marriage to the niece of one of the claimants to the title. They strip the house of its contents and remove its roof.

1780s – the Maxwells sell MacLellan's Castle to Lord Selkirk, of St Mary's Isle, Kirkcudbright; Lord Selkirk extends the medieval burgh further to the east.

1838 – Greyfriars Church ceases to be used as the burgh's parish church and becomes a school.

1912 – Sir Charles Hope entrusts MacLellan's Castle into state care. The Office of Works undertakes major conservation works, including clearing the mass of ivy covering the walls that, according to MacGibbon and Ross (1887), made the building look like 'a huge hay-stack, of a green instead of a yellow colour'.

1921 – The burgh's War Memorial, designed by G. H. Paulin, is erected immediately to the east of the castle. The following year the former Greyfriars Church, with its monument to Sir Thomas MacLellan, is restored by P. McGregor Chalmers as the Scottish Episcopal Church.

Appendix 2: Summary of archaeological investigations

There appears to have been little or no archaeological investigation of the site, either within the building or in the surrounding setting. The CANMORE database records only a series of inspection visits, the most recent being in 1965.¹⁹ The archaeological potential of the site thus remains practically untapped.

¹⁹ 'Kirkcudbright, Castle Street, Maclellan's Castle', CANMORE online database <http://canmore.org.uk/site/64065/kirkcudbright-castle-street-maclellans-castle> [accessed 22 Sep 2015]