

Illus 1 Location of Melgund Castle.

Excavations at Melgund Castle, Angus, 1990–96

John Lewis

The site

Melgund Castle (NO 545 564) stands on the left bank of the Melgund Burn, 2.5km E of the village of Aberlemno and roughly midway between the towns of Forfar and Brechin in Angus. The S side of the castle would have been protected by the steep-sided valley of the burn, whereas elsewhere the ground is reasonably level, rising gently towards Melgund Mains Farm, some 300m to the N.

The parent rock of the area is a friable medium- to coarse-grained, reddish sandstone of Lower Devonian Age (Cameron and Stephenson 1985, fig 1). This rock is exposed along the course of the Melgund Burn where it has been exploited at several locations, not least by the castle's builders. In the field immediately N of the castle the bedrock sometimes protrudes through the overlying glacial till as far as the base of the ploughsoil. The till comprises reddish brown clays, silts and sands containing varying amounts of gravel and occasional glacial erratics, which have been utilized for the castle's foundations and the cores of its walls as well as for

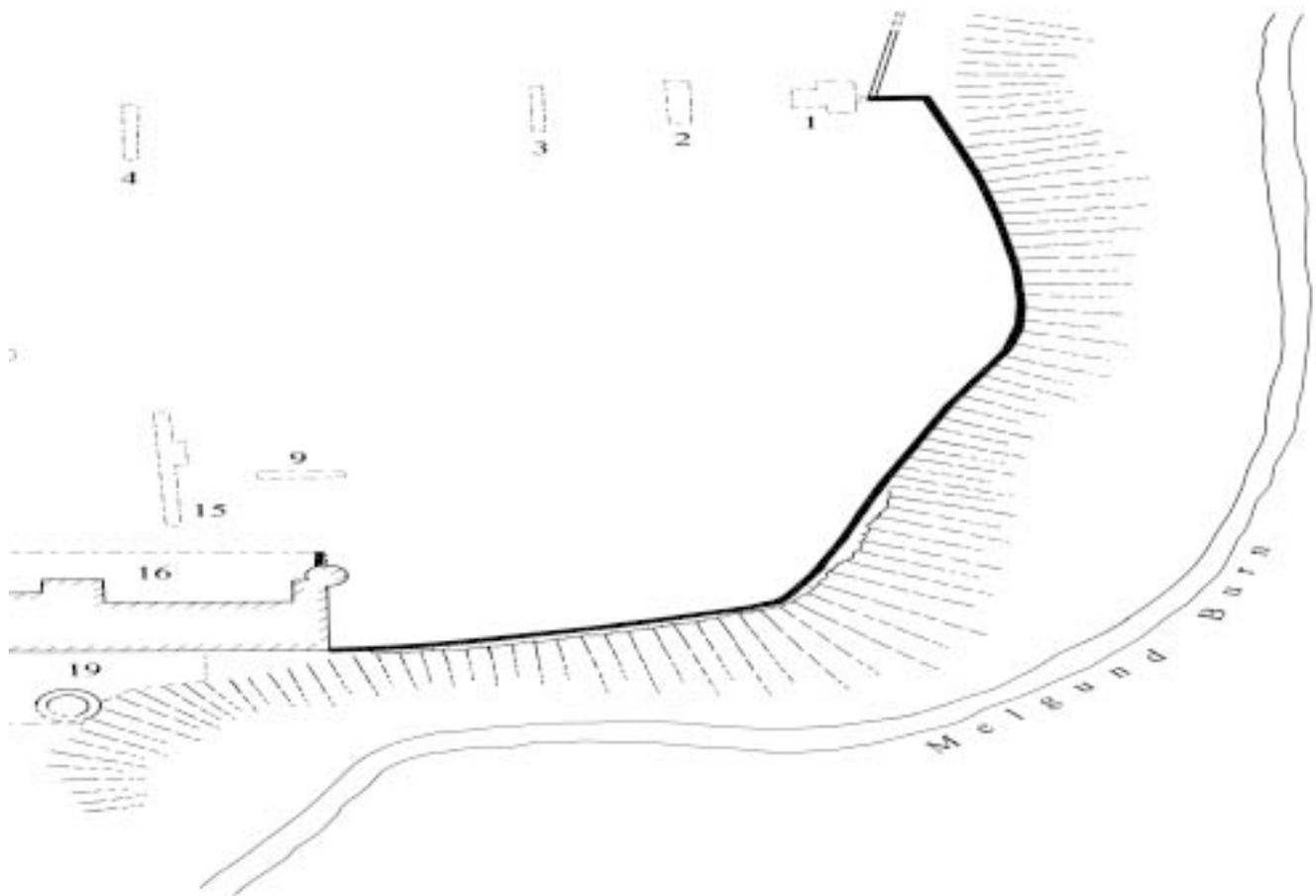
later field walls. Farming in the Melgund area is mostly arable and, until recently, the field immediately N of the castle was ploughed yearly. That field measures roughly 170m square and is bounded on its E and W, respectively, by the Melgund Burn and a tarmacaded road which runs southwards to the hamlet of Pitkenedy.

Historical and architectural summary (Illus 4)

Melgund Castle was begun in the summer of 1543 by Cardinal David Beaton, Archbishop of St Andrews, for his mistress, Marion Ogilvie, youngest daughter of the marriage of Sir James Ogilvie of Lintrathen and Janet Lyle, his fourth wife (Sanderson 1986, 40). Marion spent most of her early adulthood in Arbroath, where she acquired several properties, but she was often in Edinburgh. She probably met Beaton there around 1526 when she was in her early thirties (Sanderson 1986, 42). Beaton purchased the lands of North Melgund from Janet Annand, the widow of his brother, James, in September 1542 (RMS, 3, 2788). The liferent of the barony



Illus 2 *Melgund Castle, viewed from the north-west.*



Illus 3 Plan of the castle and its environs, showing the location of the trenches.

was reserved to Marion Ogilvie who was designated 'lady of Melgund' (Sanderson 1986 143). In 1545, the neighbouring lands of South Melgund were acquired from the Cramonds of Auldbar (RMS III, 3108). The first indirect reference to the castle occurs as 'Apud North-Melgund, 21 April 1545' (RMS 3, 3095) and its first direct mention is as 'lie Manis et maneriem de North-Melgund' which dates from late 1547 (RMS 3, 2788). Melgund was probably just one of several castles acquired by Beaton for the women in his life. These included Finavon for his eldest daughter, Margaret, Countess of Crawford; Vayne for his daughter, Elizabeth, wife of Alexander Lindsay; and Kellie for his daughter, Agnes, as wife of Ochterlonie of Kellie (Sanderson 1986, 39). Marion also had five sons by Beaton: David, George, James, Alexander and John. The cardinal was stabbed to death at St Andrews Castle in the spring of 1546; Marion Ogilvie retained liferent of Melgund until her death in 1575 (NAS CC8/8/3).

Melgund remained in the hands of Beaton's descendants until about 1630 when it was acquired by the first Marquis of Huntly. In 1635 Huntly sold the estate to Harry Maule of Boath from whom it passed to a kinsman, Earl Patrick of Panmure, before 1663 (Warden 1881, 319). The estate passed, by marriage, to James Murray of Philiphaugh whose descendant, Agnes

Murray, married Sir Gilbert Elliot, third Baronet of Minto in about 1750 (Warden 1881, 320).

A cursory glance at Melgund suggests that it is a late medieval castle comprising a tower (apparently dating to the 15th century) onto which a hall range and small NE tower had been added to its E side during the following century. However, from a close inspection of the castle's masonry, it is clear that its two principal elements are of one build and that, for some reason, the intention had been to make Melgund appear older than it actually was. Although unusual, this design is not unique and can be seen at Carnasserie Castle, near Kilmartin, Argyll. Carnasserie, also dating to the 16th century, was the residence of John Carsewell, the first Protestant Bishop of the Isles. Melgund Castle is faced with rubble, occasionally brought to level course, although its door and window surrounds are of ashlar. Further information concerning the castle's architecture can be found in MacGibbon and Ross 1892.

At Melgund, the principal tower was built on an L-plan and is five storeys (including an attic) high with external walls 1.6m thick. At ground level, its principal wing is divided into two vaulted cellars, above which is the owner's private hall, accessed by a wide, circular stair in the small N wing. The stair continued upward to what were presumably bedrooms, one to each level,

although their floors are now missing. The doorway into the private hall bears Beaton's coat of arms on its lintel, this feature becoming visible only after recent stone-cleaning. Ogilvie's arms can be seen above the adjacent doorway that led into the E range.

The E range had two main storeys plus an attic in its roof space. There were five vaulted chambers at ground level, the westernmost being the kitchen with a large fireplace set into the E wall of the tower. The other rooms were probably used for storage although the easternmost one had a wider door than the rest, suggesting that it housed large objects. Over the kitchen and two of the cellars was the main hall and to its E, above the other two cellars, was a dais chamber (with-drawing room). The hall, which was level with the private hall in the tower, was accessed from the stair in the N wing. A doorway led from the hall to the dais chamber which was also entered from a stair adjacent to the small, circular tower that projects from the NE corner of the castle. The stair continued upwards to an attic, containing what were probably private apartments for the castle's retainers. There was further accommodation within the upper floors of the NE tower, one room per storey. The ground-floor chamber in the NE tower had flanking gun-loops (one each angled towards the W, NE and SE), a somewhat advanced arrangement for the 1540s (Zeune 1992, 61).

Entry to the tower house was at ground-floor level, through a doorway at the end of a small lobby set against the E wall of the tower. From this lobby another door opened into a passage, now demolished, that had extended along the entire length of the E range. The ground-floor cellars of the E range were entered from the passage, over which was a series of rooms accessed from the great hall and the dais chamber. The N wall of the passage ran from the tower house to the W side of the NE tower and its masonry was integral with that of both buildings. Although nothing now stands of this E range extension, excavation did reveal some of its elements. Its N wall is shown still standing in a drawing dated 1802 (Illus 8) but the doorway at the wall's W end is clearly in the wrong position. At some stage, a small vestibule was added onto the castle's entrance, its foundations being uncovered by excavation (see below).

The grounds around the castle would have been surrounded by one or more boundary walls. As will be seen from the following account, it was not possible to define with certainty the extent of any of those enclosures although it appears that the inner barmkin lay to the immediate N of the castle.

The excavations

The decision by the castle's present owner, Martyn Gregory, to convert at least part of Melgund into a habitable residence resulted in small-scale archaeological investigations being undertaken within its buildings and at several locations outside its main walls prior to the onset of building work. These investigations began

in 1990 when the Scottish Urban Archaeology Trust (SUAT) carried out a resistivity survey in the field to the N of the castle in an attempt to locate the line of the N wall of the barmkin. The results proved negative, suggesting that, had a wall run across that area, little evidence of it survived. Exploratory trenching by Scotia Archaeology Limited within the same area later that year also failed to locate any structural remains. At the same time, two trenches were opened to the W of the castle, revealing evidence to suggest that a road might once have led to the castle from that side.

Between 1991 and 1996 several excavations within and around the castle were undertaken by, or in consultation with, Scotia Archaeology Limited. In 1991 an area measuring approximately 36m E/W by 6–8m wide was excavated within and just beyond the demolished passage on the N side of the E range. In 1992 and 1993 a few exploratory trenches were opened on the small terrace to the immediate S of the castle, between the tower house and the Melgund Burn, to determine how that area might have been used. In 1994 investigations were concentrated mainly within the castle's interior where the first floor of the tower, the first-floor dais chamber in the E range and the cellars below its hall were cleared of most of the debris that lay within them. Small-scale excavation also continued on the S terrace.

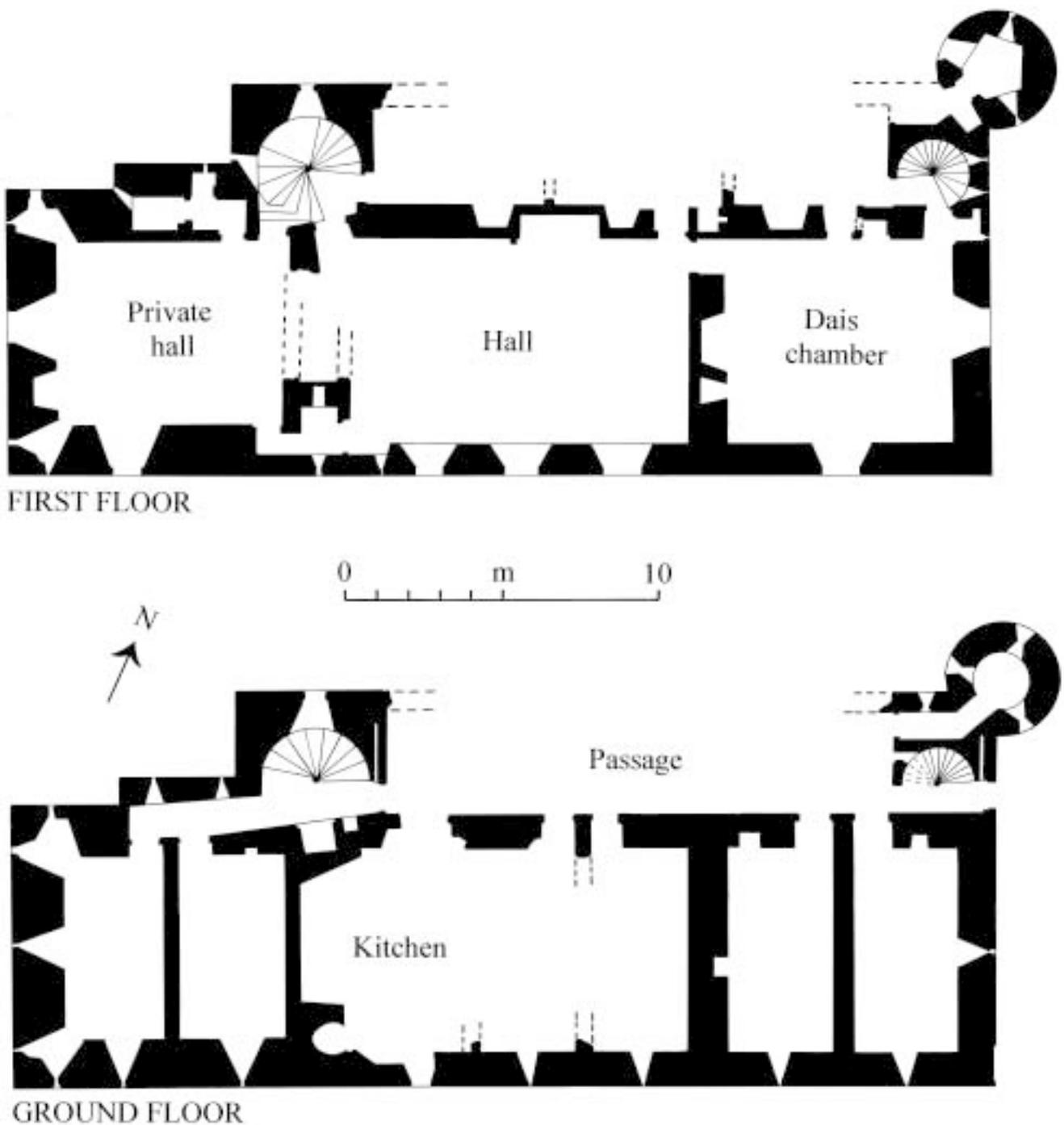
There were two principal aims in 1996, to complete the excavation of the S terrace and to trace the locations and extents of the castle's outer enclosures. Excavation on the S terrace was conducted entirely by hand whereas trenching in the field which bordered the N, W and SW sides of the castle was undertaken by machine under archaeological supervision. In addition, further clearance work was carried out within the cellars below the E range hall and on the wall-head of the circular NE tower. These investigations coincided with a programme of masonry consolidation undertaken within the E range and the NE tower by Ian Cumming (Builders).

The tower house (Illus 4–6)

Excavation showed that the foundations of the S wall of the castle were set into a bedding trench cut into the glacial till and, in places, the bedrock. These foundations project from the wall face in two steps, each 0.25m wide. It can be assumed that the castle's other walls were similarly constructed.

The ground floor

Large quantities of rubble and other debris were removed from the E cellar (probably a wine cellar) without archaeological supervision but nothing of importance seems to have been damaged in the process. However, work remained incomplete within this and the adjacent cellar and it is not clear whether the earthen surfaces exposed within them were actually floors or simply debris that had still to be removed.

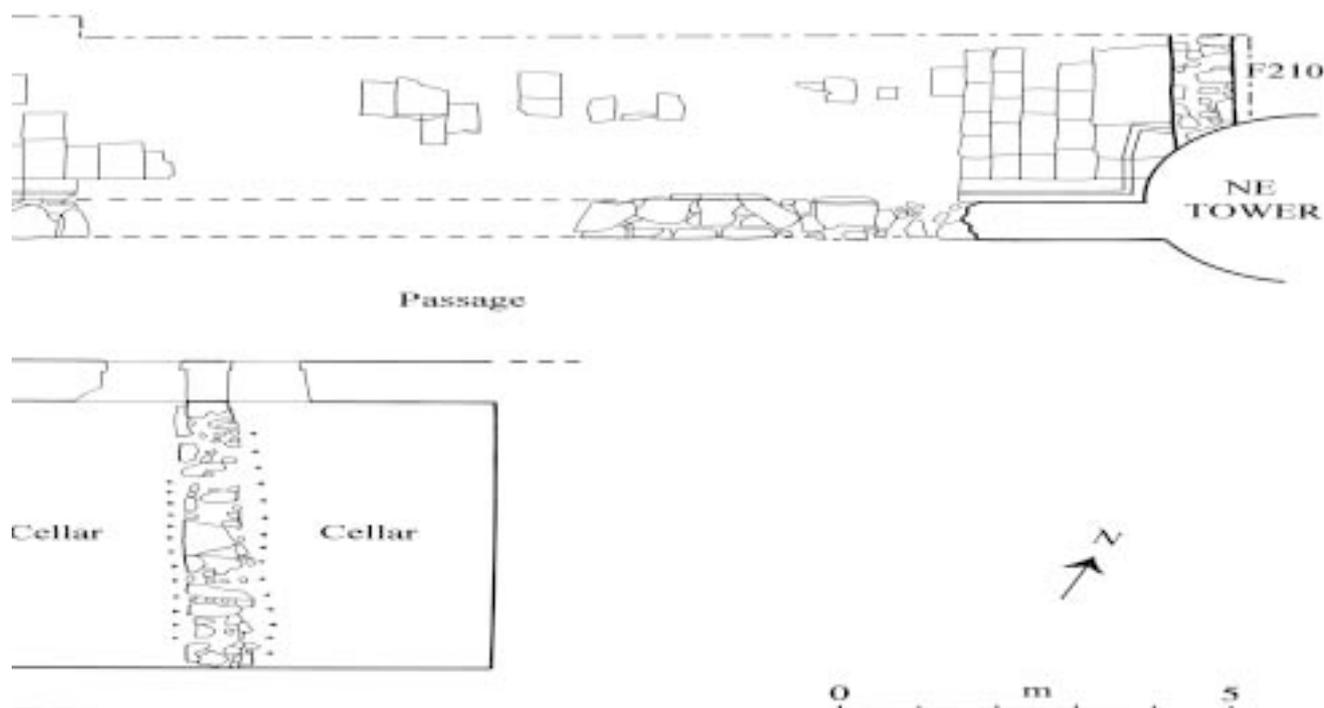


Illus 4 Ground-floor and first-floor plans of the castle.

The first-storey hall

The principal apartment at first-floor level was the private hall for the castle's owner. It is entered from the stair tower, through a doorway 0.93m wide, located at the E end of the N wall. An adjacent opening leads into two small chambers that overlie the ground-floor passage. At some stage (perhaps in the 17th century), a small opening was slapped through the E wall of the hall, at its S end, linking it with the more public one in the E range.

The hall measures 7.40m E/W by 5.95m wide within walls 1.6m thick. It is lit by two large, arched windows, one midway along the W wall, the other towards the W end of the S wall. The fragmentary remains of stone window seats can be seen in each recess. On the lintel over the W window, which is badly damaged, are the arms of Marion Ogilvie; Beaton's can be seen over the S window. Unusually, the fireplace is at the S end of the W wall rather than midway as might be expected. It is almost intact although its N jamb and the hearth have been damaged by heat and its lintel is badly cracked.



Illus 5 Plan of the north side of the castle, showing the excavated remains of the vestibule, and the east and west walls of the barmkin with its paved floor.

Recessed 0.80m into the wall and measuring 1.30m wide at its face but narrowing to only 0.70m at its back, this fireplace is rather small for a hall of this size. There are small wall recesses in the NW and SW corners of the room, each with a wide-mouth gun-loop. Overlying the crude floor of the SW recess were coal fragments and dust, suggesting that the defensive capabilities of this alcove had been forsaken for a more prosaic use as a fuel store for the adjacent fireplace.

Prior to excavation, the floor of the chamber was overlain by up to 1m of rubble which was deepest against the W wall. Among this debris were a few moulded stones and some sandstone facing-stones although most of this material comprised unworked rubble. Little of the hall floor survived below the rubble, only an area of flags measuring 3.2 by 1.9m in the SW corner and the remnants of two badly-cracked flags further N. Two of the flags near the fireplace had interlocking checks. The flagstones, which measured typically 0.6m by 0.5m and 40–80mm thick, had been laid with a minimum of bedding material over the crowns of the underlying vaults, which are both aligned N/S. The extrados of the E vault lay immediately below the rubble; levelling deposits of red-brown clayey soils with small stones and gravel (redeposited subsoil) had been spread over the western half of the room.

A doorway in the N wall of the hall opens into a small latrine chamber which, in turn, leads into an even smaller room which, according to MacGibbon and Ross (1892, 312), was a safe, or strong room, an interpretation reinforced by the discovery of three crook hinges on its doorway compared with two on other doors. The

two small chambers lie directly over the short passage leading into the two ground-floor cellars beneath the hall. The latrine chute terminates at the base of the tower's N wall, as does another that served the second floor of the tower although the two had separate outlets.

The east range (Illus 4–6)

Although the E (hall) range is integral with the tower house, it is convenient to treat it as a separate building, one that included more public accommodation than the tower. At ground level were five vaulted chambers, the westernmost a kitchen and the remainder stores. On the first floor was a hall and dais chamber and perhaps bedrooms in the roof space although nothing of the uppermost storey survived. Of the passage and overlying bed-chambers on the N side of the range, nothing survived above ground.

The two cellars below the dais chamber had been cleared of debris before excavation began and were not the subject of these investigations; the area below the hall, whose floor had collapsed (or perhaps, more likely, deliberately demolished), still contained large quantities of debris. Most of this material appeared to be wall core although several vaulting stones and a few other worked pieces of sandstone had escaped the attentions of stone-robbars. In the kitchen, where the dividing wall between it and the tower house and the chimney over the large fireplace had collapsed, the rubble was banked upwards to a depth of over 2m, almost to the



Illus 6 View from the east into the first-floor hall of the tower house, with the ground-level kitchen in the foreground. Note the oven on the south side of the kitchen fireplace.

first-floor level of the tower.

All three rooms below the hall were about 3.2m wide with doorways in their N walls although the W jamb of the kitchen door was missing. The kitchen was entered from the lobby adjacent to the stair tower whereas the remaining cellars were accessed directly from the passage. Prior to excavation, the only traces of cross-walls between the basement chambers consisted of fragmentary tusking projecting from their side walls. These walls were only 0.55m wide and built of mortar-bonded rubble on slightly wider, clay-bonded foundations set into bedding trenches up to 1.2m wide. In places, even the foundations were missing and rarely did the walls stand more than one course high.

The floors of all three chambers were simply glacial till, which was quite sandy within the kitchen but more stony and clayey in Room 3. There was a small aumbry at the N end of the E wall of the easternmost cellar.

The ground floor

The kitchen

The most striking feature of this, the westernmost of the three chambers below the hall, was its massive fireplace which was 3.7m wide and recessed some 1.8m

into the room's W wall. Its chimney was almost entirely demolished below first-floor level where its surviving remains were in a very dangerous condition. In the right-hand side of the fireplace, in its uppermost surviving course of masonry, about 1m above floor level, was a narrow check for a salt box, only the back and W side of which survived.

Set into the W wall, to the left of the fireplace and 0.6m above floor level, was a circular oven, 1m in diameter, whose front was missing. Its domed roof was built of squared blocks of sandstone which had been damaged by heat whereas its floor of similar masonry was remarkably well-preserved. The flue from the oven connected with the main chimney of the fireplace.

The only other feature of note within the kitchen was a shallow sink, 0.6m in diameter and set into the S wall at ground level. Waste was removed along a narrow channel that ran through the wall into a stone-sided drain which debouched into the nearby burn.

The first floor

The hall

The once impressive hall was entered from the stair in the tower house, its doorway being adjacent to the one

leading into the private hall. It was totally derelict, having lost both its roof and floor, which was probably flagged although no paving stones were found within the rubble below. The room measures 11m E/W by 6.25m wide and had windows only on its S side: one large window towards the E end of the hall and two smaller ones further W, set high enough to allow space for a sideboard, or buffet, and perhaps furniture below them (MacGibbon and Ross 1892, 313). In the N wall was a fireplace, 2.5m wide, with jambs of clustered roll-mouldings. To its right was a doorway that had led into one of the three chambers over the passage. Nearby, at the N end of the E wall, was another doorway leading into the dais chamber.

The dais chamber

This room measures 7.3m E/W by 6.6m N/S and was entered through a doorway from the hall. Another doorway in the NE corner of the room opens onto a spiral stair which had also led to what were probably servants' quarters in the attic above. Midway along the N wall is a door into the now-demolished easternmost chamber over the passage. This room had been contiguous with the first floor of the NE tower, forming a small suite of apartments. Midway along both the E and S walls of the dais chamber is a tall window, each set about 1m above floor level although the masonry below both was damaged.

In the centre of the W wall is a fireplace measuring 1.9m wide. There is a slight remnant of roll-moulding on its N jamb but no other decoration survives. Its hearth of random sandstone rubble has been badly eroded by heat, only a small fragment of the hearthstone remaining *in situ*. To the left of the fireplace is a small recess, perhaps a log store.

There were remnants of a paved floor adjacent to the fireplace, where the flags were of similar size to those in the tower, and against the E end of the N wall, where they were slightly smaller. These flags were bedded in coarse gravel and sand. Just above floor level in the S wall are two vertical slots, one of which is cut into the W rybat of the window, the other 1.9m further W. These slots probably housed wall furniture of some kind, perhaps bench seating.

The north-east tower

This small, circular tower has an internal diameter of only 1.7m within walls 0.9m thick. According to MacGibbon and Ross (1892, 316), the single ground-floor chamber may have contained a well although no trace of one was visible at the time of the excavation. The first-floor chamber, which had connected with one of the bed-chambers on the N side of the E range, is pentagonal in shape.

Removal of 0.8m of rubble and sand from the top of the tower revealed a cobbled surface set on 1m of voided rubble. This material had been used to level up

the space over the roof vault of the building's second floor. The cobbles lay about 0.4m below the level of the wall-walk around the E range and appeared to be contemporary with it.

The north side of the castle (Illus 5, 7 and 8)

Up to 1.4m of rubble and other post-abandonment debris was removed from the area to the immediate N of the castle (Trench 16), which measured roughly 30m E/W by 8m wide. Within this area were the remains of the passage against the N side of the E range. Because of the constraints of time, it was not possible to uncover the entire length of its N wall, its exposed remains comprising two stretches of mortar-bonded foundations, 1m wide, separated by a gap of about 6m. For the same reason, excavation could not be completed within the interior of the passage.

The masonry of the N wall of the passage was integral with that of the stair tower and the NE tower and appeared to be an original feature of the castle. The entrance into the castle had been at the W end of the passage, through a 1.2 m-wide doorway, whose right-hand jamb was set into the E wall of the stair tower. At some stage, the castle entrance appears to have been made



Illus 7 The north side of the castle, showing the excavated remains of the north wall of the passage, the vestibule and the paved floor of the barmkin. Viewed from the east.



Illus 8 Pen and ink drawing by Hugh 'Grecian' Williams, dated 1802, showing the north wall of the passage still standing.

more secure by the addition of a small vestibule against the original doorway. The vestibule measured only 1.8m by 1.4m; of its 0.6 m-wide mortar-bonded rubble walls, only one course survived. Because it had been demolished to ground level and there was no obvious threshold, it was not clear from which direction the vestibule had been entered although the wear on the flagstones to its N suggests entry might have been from that direction.

The floor of the vestibule was flagged. Similar paving extended around its exterior, forming what was probably the surface of a courtyard, which appeared to be contemporary with the addition. Only remnants of this flagged surface survived, its best preserved sections being adjacent to the vestibule and in the angle between the NE tower and wall F210, which ran northwards from it (see below). A channel, 10mm wide and 4–7mm deep, had been cut into the flags, presumably to remove rainwater from the courtyard. The channel sloped gently downwards towards the E as far as wall F210, which appeared to have truncated it. Excavation did not extend E of wall F210 and the full course of the drainage channel remains unknown.

A stone-lined drain, with an internal width of 0.25m, projected 0.9m from beneath the W side of the vestibule. Although its original extent and age remain

unknown, this drain clearly predated the vestibule and the flagged surface of the courtyard.

The barmkin and the castle's boundaries (Illus 3)

The castle may have had several walled enclosures extending outwards from its main building, the innermost of these being the barmkin, which would have had ancillary accommodation, domestic offices and perhaps stables ranged around the inside of its perimeter. Beyond the barmkin there were probably other enclosures, containing more outbuildings as well as gardens and orchards. Excavation provided a few indications of the locations of some of those enclosures but the picture is still confusing and incomplete.

Evidence relating to the enclosures can best be divided into what was retrieved from three separate areas: Trench 16, to the immediate N of the castle, where remnants of the barmkin were uncovered; the N side of the field where some evidence of an outer boundary was uncovered; and the area to the W and SW of the castle where post-Improvement field walls overlay the foundations of other walls that were probably contemporary with the castle.

Trench 16

Running northwards from the N wall of the tower house, 1.7m from its NW corner, was a sandstone rubble wall (F202), 0.8m wide, three courses (0.9m high) of which still stood. However, the tusking that protruded from the castle wall was an indication that the wall had once stood to a total height of at least 1.7m although it was not clear why the wall's surviving masonry was both bonded and pointed with clay while the tusking was mortar-bonded. Furthermore, the surviving stonework of wall F202 abutted the castle whereas the tusking was clearly integral with it. This suggests that wall F202, which is interpreted as the W wall of the barmkin, was a two-phase structure although this does not explain all of the anomalies within it.

Wall F202 was exposed as far as the northern limit of excavation in Trench 16, a total length of 7.5m. There appeared to have been a doorway 4.7m from the tower, evidence of which survived as a threshold of sandstone flags with a small socket for a central bolt. Both door jambs were missing although, from the size of the threshold and the location of the bolt socket, the door was approximately 1.6m wide. Outside the doorway was an area of crude metalling, comprising unworked sandstone flags and rounded boulders pressed into the clayey soil. There was little evidence of wear on this surface although sometimes this can be difficult to detect on sandstone. Below the ploughsoil in Trench 17, some 4m W of wall F202, was a compact spread of small pebbles and gravel, perhaps a continuation of the metalling outside the barmkin wall. In an attempt to trace the course of this putative road, Trench 18 was opened some 8m W of Trench 17 but only ploughsoil and underlying glacial till and bedrock were uncovered within it.

Abutting the N side of the NE tower were one to two courses of a clay-bonded rubble wall (F210), which extended beyond the trench edge, some 2.4m N of the building. The wall was only 0.85m wide and was clearly not an original feature, having been built over some of the flagstones that formed the surface of the courtyard. Furthermore, on the evidence of tusking extending 5m up the face of the tower, F210 had replaced an earlier wall, which had been some 0.3m wider.

The north field

Four groups of trenches were opened within this field:

Trenches 1–5, to investigate the course of a wall, 80m N of the castle, which returned westwards from the one that follows the line of the Melgund Burn;

Trenches 6–8, to determine how far N wall F202 extended;

Trench 9, to discover how far wall F210 continued beyond Trench 16; and

Trench 15, excavated in 1990, to verify (or otherwise) the results of the resistivity survey which attempted to trace the course of the N wall of the barmkin.

Trenches 1–5

Abutting the SE corner of the castle is a 1.0 m-wide drystone wall that runs eastwards and northwards along the top of the river bank, to a point some 80m N of the castle. From there it returns westwards, petering out after 5m. At that point it is abutted by another drystone wall which runs northwards as a continuation of the E boundary of the field.

The curved wall is thought to be contemporary with the castle, its westward return perhaps being the northern limit of one of the castle's outer enclosures. Several trenches were opened to determine how far that wall continued westwards. Trenches 1 to 4 were located 2.3m, 15.5m, 28m and 64.7m, respectively, from the end of the wall's upstanding masonry. Trench 5 was opened at the W end of the field, close to the drystone wall that now forms its western boundary, to determine whether the earlier wall had extended that far. In each trench the ploughsoil was 0.3–0.45m deep.

Trench 1 was T-shaped and measured a maximum of 5m square. Within it was the bottom course of the boundary wall which, although damaged by ploughing, still retained both its faces. At this level, the wall was about 1m wide and built of rubble without any discernible bonding material. Its masonry was well preserved at the E end of the trench, where the effects of ploughing were minimal, but its remains were fragmentary further W.

Very little of the wall remained in Trench 2, which measured 8.0m N/S by 1.8m wide, merely a scatter of small sandstone blocks lying on the same alignment as the wall in Trench 1. In Trench 3, which measured 8.0m N/S by 1.0m wide, the wall was again very fragmentary although the remnants of both wall faces remained.

A more interesting picture emerged in Trench 4, which measured 9.4m N/S by 1.0m wide. A few fragments of sandstone rubble lay midway along the trench, in line with the wall in Trenches 1–3 and, 3.5m from it, at the S end of the trench, were the remains of a parallel wall which, although very fragmentary, did retain a distinct face on its N side. Although it is possible that the alignment of the boundary wall had deviated somewhat from that in Trenches 1–3, it is perhaps more likely that the wall at the S end of the trench was a separate structure, perhaps the wall of a building set against an enclosure wall.

Trench 5 was located 4.5m from the drystone wall that now defines the western limit of the field. Nothing of archaeological interest was uncovered within this trench, only a 0.5 m-deep deposit of dark, slightly humic material lying between the plough-soil and the subsoil. This material is thought to be the result of worm and root action on the underlying till which was sandier and softer than elsewhere in the field.

Trenches 6–8

Only in Trench 8, located 21.5m N of the tower house and measuring 3.5 by 3.2m, was there any evidence of what might have been the W barmkin wall, a spread of shattered sandstone fragments and yellow clay. Although this clay was very different from that occurring in the subsoil in that part of the site, it was identical to the material bonding the masonry of wall F202.

There was no trace of a wall, or any other features of interest, within Trenches 6 and 7, only ploughsoil overlying the sand, gravel and pebbles of the glacial till and bedrock at a depth of 0.4–0.5m.

Trench 9

Measuring 7.5m E/W by 1.0m wide, Trench 9 was located 15.4m from the NE tower, in line with wall F210 which abuts its N face. No trace of that wall nor anything else of archaeological interest was uncovered within this trench. Unfortunately, it was not possible to investigate the course of wall F210 any further in 1996 because the area between Trench 9 and the NE tower was used as a builder's yard and large volumes of spoil extended in various directions from there.

Trench 15

Trench 15, which was excavated in 1990, measured 20m N/S by 1.0m wide and was located 13m N of the E range. A band of small pebbles was uncovered about 7m from the N end of the trench, prompting a small extension to be opened on its E side. However, this merely proved that the pebbles were part of the glacial till and were not associated with any wall or road. Nearby, at the base of the ploughsoil, was a flat, circular slab of sandstone, 0.78m in diameter and 0.12m thick. One side was rough whereas the other was reasonably smooth and soot-blackened, suggesting it had been used as the base of an oven. It is not known whether the stone came from a building within the barmkin or had been removed from the kitchen within the castle.

The west and south-west sides of the castle

From the SW corner of the tower house a drystone field wall ran southwards for 28m before returning westwards for a further 100m where it met the W boundary of the field. The eastern section of this wall was demolished in order to expose the wall (F313) whose remains lay beneath it.

Wall F313

The remains of this rubble wall, 0.8–0.9m wide and bonded with pink, sandy silt, abutted the SW corner of the tower house. It was aligned perfectly with the building's W wall, unlike the later field wall which, for some reason, had been set about 0.4m further E. Wall F313 sat on silty loam, perhaps buried topsoil or garden

soil, and survived to a maximum height of 0.45m. It ran southwards for 31m before returning both to the E and W. There was no opportunity to investigate the E arm of this wall which probably continued as far as the break of slope above the Melgund Burn. The W arm of the wall, which was exposed in Trenches 10–12 (Illus 3), lay about 2m to the S of and parallel with another drystone field wall. Its course was traced for about 50m, from where it petered out although some rubble lying to the N and the S of that point indicated that other walls may have extended in both directions from it. Unfortunately, there was insufficient time to investigate these features and the arrangement of enclosures in this area remains unresolved.

Trenches 13 and 14

These trenches were opened to determine why the W wall of the field was considerably thicker (1m) at those points than along the remainder of its length, where it was only 0.65m wide. Trench 13, which measured 2.5m by 1.5m, was located 2m from the SW corner of the field; Trench 14, measuring 1.7 by 1.5m, lay some 30m further N, adjacent to the gate that now leads into the field. It was thought that the variations in width might reflect phases of wall construction or perhaps indicate the locations of demolished structures associated with an earlier entrance into the castle grounds. However, in both trenches the thicker masonry extended only 0.4m below ground level and was the probable result of wall repairs, there being no evidence of an entrance through this wall other than the gateway which is still in use.

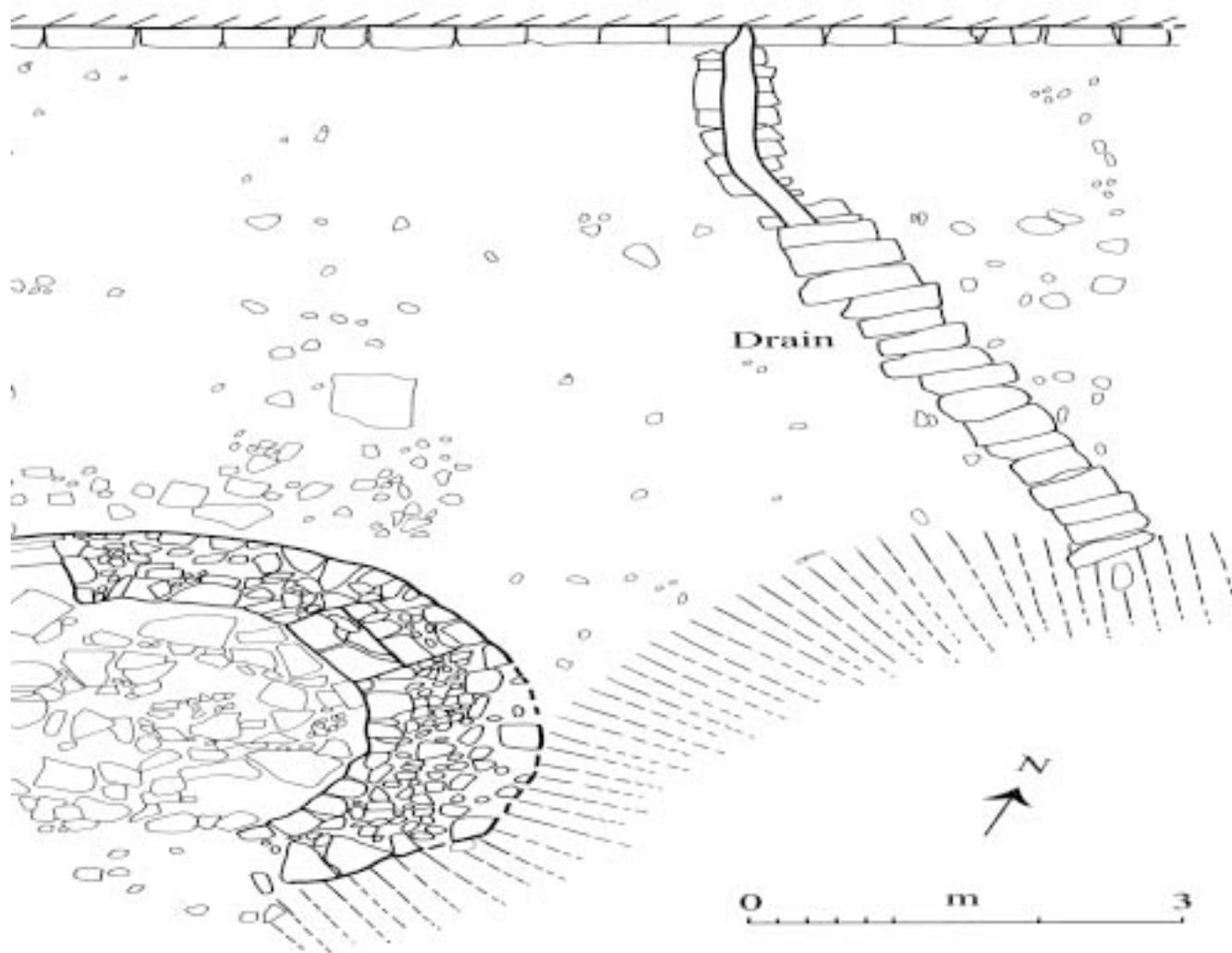
The south terrace (Illus 9–11)

Exploratory trenching in 1992, 1993 and 1994 on the S terrace revealed a few features which were fully exposed only when a much larger area (Trench 19) was opened in 1996. The terrace is roughly triangular and is bounded on its N by the castle, on its W by wall F313 and on its E and SE by the top of the river bank. The maximum dimensions of the terrace were approximately 30m N/S by 25m E/W; the trench, which was of similar shape, measured 20.4m E/W adjacent to the castle and 12.8m N/S at its western edge, along wall F313.

The excavated area was covered with up to 0.6m of humic soils, mortar, clay and rubble which contained large quantities of stone tiles from the roof of the castle. Understandably, this material was deepest adjacent to the castle although rubble was scattered throughout the trench.

Wall F319

Running southwards from the tower house, at an angle of 10° to wall F313, were the fragmentary remains of wall F319, which survived as a single course of masonry for a length of about 8m. This wall was 1m wide and



Illus 9 Plan of the south terrace, showing structure F308, walls F313 and F319, and the drain.

built of sandstone rubble bonded with yellow clay, identical to that used in wall F202 on the N side of the tower. Destruction debris overlay wall F319 and extended a short distance to the S of it. Although it is not clear how this wall related to other structures nearby, it might have been a precursor of wall F313; another possibility is that it was associated with circular structure F308 to which it might once have been joined (see below).

Wall F319 was built on what appeared to be buried topsoil, a fairly humic, silty loam, which did not occur elsewhere on the terrace, perhaps because it had been removed in readiness for the construction of circular building F308.

Structure F308

Without doubt the most interesting feature on the terrace, circular structure F308, was uncovered over several seasons of excavation. It measured 3.4m in diameter

within walls 1m thick which increased to 1.4m on the SE, presumably to provide additional support near the edge of the slope. The building had been completely demolished on its S and SW sides although its bedding trench was still visible in places. Its masonry comprised coursed sandstone rubble bonded with pink, clayey silt, which stood to a maximum height of 0.8m on the N side of the building. Its interior was floored with crude, but reasonably flat, sandstone flags, which had been badly disturbed by tree roots and animal burrowing. There was no obvious sign of wear on these stones and no deposits overlying them that might have helped interpret the building's function.

On the N side of the building was a doorway, only 0.55m wide, with an E jamb of neatly-cut sandstone blocks of which two courses survived. An iron hinge for a door was set into the outer face of that jamb, a complementary check in its masonry indicating that the door had opened outwards; the 120° angle of the check would have allowed the door to open wide. The W jamb



Illus 10 View from the north of structure F308. Note the doorway on its north side.



Illus 11 View northwards from the interior of structure F308, showing the doorway and, to its east, the recess with its blocking removed.



Illus 12 *Melgund Castle after the refurbishment of the tower house. Viewed from the north.*

was much cruder; it may have been a secondary insertion although this could not be confirmed. One of the carved stones from the W jamb was recovered from the collapsed masonry within the doorway. Sunk into its outer face was a small socket with traces of lead and iron-staining, derived from an iron clasp or hinge, although at what height the stone had been set is not known.

There was a recess, 0.8m wide and 0.75m deep, in the inside face of the wall, 1.5m E of the doorway. The recess was at ground level and its floor appeared to be stepped upwards into the thickness of the wall, suggesting it had been an embrasure for a low window rather than a cupboard. At some stage, it had been blocked with coursed rubble bonded with clayey silt.

Drain

Running southwards from the sink outflow in the E range kitchen was a drain which extended across the terrace as far as the break of slope above the Melgund Burn. Built of unworked sandstone rubble, its 0.2m-wide channel was capped with crude sandstone flags although these were missing from the northernmost 2m of its length. The drain was not floored and its fill consisted entirely of topsoil containing 19th-century pottery. This suggests that the missing capstones had been removed fairly recently.

Other than at its SW corner, there was no trace of garden soil on the terrace. Indeed, subsoil, and in places bedrock, often lay directly below post-abandonment deposits, particularly towards the E end of the trench. There was little evidence to suggest that the terrace had been paved, other than a single, roughly cut sandstone flag, lying 2m N of structure F308.

Finds

Remarkably few artefacts predating the 19th century were recovered during the excavations; of these, most were found within topsoil or other post-abandonment deposits. Furthermore, the rather modest bone assemblage was all retrieved from modern levels.

Coins

Nicholas McQ Holmes

1 Billon penny of James IV, second issue, dating from c1500–10. The coin is quite worn and was probably in circulation until the mid-16th century

2 ‘Bun penny’ dating from the second half of the 19th century

Metalwork

Julie Franklin

Spoon Bowl of spoon, probably of a base silver alloy with a high copper content (AOC Conservation Report, 7). Its handle is missing. The bowl is wide and curves upwards and is a little more elongated than the classic late medieval fig shape. It has been stamped on the inside, near the handle join, with a small, single fleur-de-lis.

Length 61mm, width 45mm, thickness 1mm.

Stray find

Dating spoons is usually achieved from the shape and decoration of the stem and knob although the forms of the bowl and stamp can also prove useful. Spoon bowls with similar shapes to the Melgund example were produced between the 14th and early 17th century (Hilton-Price 1908; LMMC 1940, 128–33). Hilton-Price (1908, 71) describes two spoons very similar to the one from Melgund, both being made of *latten* (thin sheets of bronze-like alloy) and having ‘seal top knobs’. One was from London, the other from an unspecified provenance. He dates them to the late 16th or early 17th century.

Pottery

George Haggarty

Given the size of the area excavated at Melgund, the ceramic assemblage is rather a meagre one. Furthermore, only a small percentage of this material appears to be contemporary with the castle’s occupation. As might be expected, a few examples of 19th-century pottery (possibly from Victorian picnics) were retrieved; this material is described in the full archive of the assemblage but is not listed here.

Medieval ware

One body sherd with attached rod handle fragment in a slightly gritty fabric with an external green glaze was recovered from topsoil to the N of the castle. This sherd is thought to date to the 15th century and hence predates the castle’s construction.

Saintonge ware

Six sherds from an early 17th-century figurine vessel of Saintonge white ware were recovered from topsoil on the S terrace. Three conjoining sherds are from the shoulder of the vessel, two other fragments have evidence of horizontal cordons and another is from a strap-handle. There appears to have been a hole near the top of the shoulder of the vessel, which is decorated with a clear lead glaze and brown dashes. A full description of this material can be found in Haggarty (forthcoming).

Beauvais ware

One body sherd of post-medieval Beauvais hollow-ware in a white fabric with a bright green glaze on both

surfaces was retrieved from a post-abandonment deposit on the S terrace.

Frechen ware

There were six sherds from two 17th-century Frechen stoneware vessels within topsoil on the S terrace. Three body sherds, two of them conjoining, were from a pale grey jug covered on its exterior with a salt glaze over an iron wash, giving a brown ‘orange-peel’ effect typical of this material. Three other conjoining sherds were from a pale grey-pink jug, again with an iron wash and salt glaze.

Scottish oxidised wares

These oxidised wares are by far the commonest material represented in the assemblage, most of it probably dating from the 16th and 17th centuries although some may be a little earlier. A high percentage of this material (60 sherds) was recovered from topsoil on the S terrace and, as might be expected, most were badly abraded.

Tin-glazed earthenware

One small, abraded handle fragment of tin-glazed earthenware was retrieved from post-abandonment debris on the S terrace. This material, in an off-white fabric with a very pale, blue-white glaze, dates to the late 17th or early 18th century.

Slipware

Six badly abraded fragments, three of them rim sherds, from a slipware plate of probable 18th-century date were recovered from topsoil on the S terrace.

Clay tobacco pipes

Dennis Gallagher

The identifiable material within this small assemblage is predominantly Dutch in origin and demonstrates how Dutch pipe-makers were able to compete successfully in the Scottish market alongside Edinburgh manufacturers, especially before the expansion of the home industry after c 1660. Although their numbers vary considerably and their use may have depended on personal preferences as much as on broad market economies, Dutch pipes are frequently found in assemblages from eastern Scotland, including small ones such as those from Melgund and Balgonie Castles (Martin 1987, 267) and particularly at ports such as St Andrews (Davey 1997, 98) and Aberdeen (Davey 1982, 220).

The two moulded rose bowls (nos 1 and 2) are examples of a very common, cheap Dutch export of mid-17th-century date. The stamped stem (no 4) is from a more expensive pipe, the price reflecting the time taken to apply the individual stamps by hand. The Scottish bowl (no 5) is an enlarged version of a form prevalent

in 1660–80 and may be dated to 1680–1720. Horton *et al* (1987, 244, no 14) show a similar bowl type from a context dated to 1698–1700 from Darien. This bowl has an Edinburgh-type stamp, previously unrecorded.

Catalogue

None of the pipes described below is illustrated.

1 Bowl with moulded rose and petals; bottered; Dutch style, c 1640–70; bore 7/64" (2.8mm).

2 Basal fragment with dot rose; mid-17th century; bore 7/64" (2.8mm).

3 Bowl with pellet on right side of base; bottered; Dutch style, c 1650–70.

4 Stem fragment with three single, overlapping fleur-de-lys stamps on top; oval section of stem indicating worn mould; Dutch c 1630–50; bore 7/64" (2.8mm).

5 Large burnished bowl with crude milling and 'portcullis' style basal stamp; an Edinburgh type; bore 7/64" (2.8mm).

Glass

Robin Murdoch

Window glass

Most of the glass retrieved from the excavations comprised small, thin, badly decayed fragments of window glass, of which there were approximately 200 in total. With the exception of one sherd found within destruction debris in the E range, the entire assemblage was retrieved from post-abandonment deposits on the S terrace. Most of the fragments were coated with the dark brown or black corrosion products typical of pot-ash glass, which comprises most of the material from 16th- and early 17th-century Scottish sites. A few sherds were in much better condition, suggesting they were of soda glass, produced in Scotland from the third quarter of the 17th century. There were some shadows on many sherds, indicating that they were from leaded windows and not residual debris from glazing operations.

Many of the window sherds were very small and had grozed edges, evidence that the complete quarries had also been small. The grozed edges varied in angle, some even being curved, suggesting that at least some of Melgund's windows had more complex patterns than the simple arrangements of diamonds which had become popular by the mid-17th century. Almost all the window glass was tinged. However, none of it was dense enough to be termed coloured glass although a castle of such high status as Melgund might be expected to have had decorative panels in the centres of at least some of its windows.

Vessel glass

Six very small sherds of what appeared to be vessel glass were recovered from the S terrace. Unfortunately, it was not possible to identify the sources of those fragments or date them accurately although, being very thin, they probably predate 1700. Indeed, there was little evidence from the glass assemblage to indicate occupation after that date, only one very small sherd which may have come from a wine bottle.

Animal bones

All of the animal bones retrieved from the excavations were from topsoil or other post-abandonment deposits. None is described here.

Discussion

As is often the case, excavation answered some questions about the site while posing hitherto unexpected ones. One of the most disappointing aspects of these investigations was the paucity of finds (particularly stratified ones), making it difficult to ascribe dates and functions to the structures and features that were uncovered. One interesting discovery, however, was the remains of two vessels of Saintonge ware found on the S terrace. Although dating to the early 17th century, this very high quality pottery suggests that Melgund might have retained a link with southern France for some time after the death of Beaton who was elected Bishop of Mirepoix, SE of Toulouse, in 1538.

In common with the layout of the excavation account, the discussion section is also divided into those findings retrieved from three areas of the site: the castle buildings; the enclosures surrounding those buildings; and the S terrace.

The castle buildings

Clearance work within the tower and the E (hall) range revealed nothing unexpected, either in terms of the layout of the buildings or what was contained within them. With the exception of the kitchen, which was ideally located for serving both the tower house and the E range, all the ground-floor rooms within both buildings were probably used as stores. One of the rooms in the tower was probably a wine cellar. Domestic offices, such as a bakery and a brewhouse, would have been situated in buildings arranged around the barmkin of which little survived above ground level.

The barmkin and other enclosures

Walls F202 and F210 were probably the W and E walls of an inner enclosure, or barmkin, which spanned the length of the castle between the tower house and the NE tower, a distance of some 28m E/W. Only short

stretches of those walls survived above ground level, where they adjoined the N side of the castle. Most of their stonework was probably robbed to build nearby houses and field walls after the castle had been abandoned. On the evidence of both excavation and geophysical prospecting, little remains of the barmkin or of the buildings that might have stood within it, except perhaps for what might have been a remnant of a building in Trench 4 and part of a paved floor just beyond the castle.

There were tantalising glimpses of what may have been structural phasing just N of the castle, where a drain ran below the vestibule (a secondary structure) and presumably also below the paving that seems to have formed the floor of the barmkin. Furthermore, there was evidence to suggest that wall F210 (the E barmkin wall) had been built over its flagged floor. On the other hand, perhaps the conclusion to be drawn here is that minor alterations and repairs were common occurrences within the castle and that what is described above testifies to this.

In addition to the barmkin, there would probably have been gardens and orchards and perhaps other enclosed areas surrounding the castle. There was certainly evidence of a large enclosure to the N of the castle, beyond the presumed limits of the barmkin. The E wall of this outer enclosure ran along the top of the river bank, returning westwards as its N wall, some 80m from the castle's principal buildings. Exploratory excavations against and near the extant W wall of the field (Trenches 5, 13 and 14) demonstrated that this wall was not built over an earlier one whereas the field's S wall and the one that ran from it to the tower house did overlie earlier boundaries. There was also some indication, albeit fragmentary, of a wall running northwards from the original S boundary wall, 50m W of the castle. On this evidence, there might have been an outer enclosure measuring 80–110m N/S by a maximum of 135m E/W, such an area perhaps being sub-divided by other walls whose locations are still to be determined. Unfortunately, the evidence is anything but conclusive and considerably more excavation would be needed before the situation can be clarified.

The south terrace

The principal feature of interest on this small, triangular area was the circular structure, F308. Very little of its superstructure survived and few diagnostic features remained, making it impossible to estimate its original height and difficult to visualise how it functioned. Two possible interpretations for this small building are offered here: a dovecot and a garden pavilion. It is unlikely to have been an ice-house, being too small, lacking a drain to remove melt-water and having a floor at ground level rather than sunk into the ground.

While most extant dovecots are rectangular in plan, several circular ones, which date from the 16th century, survive in the arable farming areas of eastern Scotland.

In Angus, circular dovecots with ground plans similar to that of the Melgund structure include: Barns of Wedderburn, just outside Dundee (at NO 434 350); Kinblethmont, 6km N of Arbroath (at NO 642 472); and Forthringham, 7km S of Forfar (at NO 457 440). There are several examples in Fife, including: Aberdour Castle (RCAHMS 1933, 21); Newark Castle, St Monans (ibid, 265); and Macduff's Castle, Wemyss; (ibid, 283). Elsewhere, circular dovecots can be seen at: Learmonth Gardens, Linlithgow (RCAHMS 1929, 232); Dirleton Castle (RCAHMS 1924, 27) and Elcho Castle, Perth and Kinross (at NGR: NO 164 210).

Unfortunately, little remained of the Melgund structure above ground level and the nature of its superstructure remains unknown. However, if it had been a dovecot, it would have tapered somewhat towards its conical roof which, like the one at Fotheringham, would probably have had a wooden cylinder (known as a 'glover') containing several entrances for pigeons. Inside, a potence (a revolving pole with steps) would have allowed a collector to reach several hundred nesting boxes to remove birds for the table. In some instances, predators were thwarted by raising the dovecot on piers; in most cases there was a string course (known as a 'rat course') on the inside face of the wall, a short distance above floor level.

In the late medieval and post-medieval periods, dovecots were common in those areas where grain crops were abundant, providing fresh meat when other sources were scarce. They could, however, be unpopular with landowners whose crops were foraged by birds from adjoining farms. Indeed, it was common to site dovecots close to a neighbour's fields to exploit their resources while protecting one's own although Melgund would have been an exception to this case.

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Abstract

Clearance work at this 16th-century castle uncovered the remains of floor surfaces and other features within the tower house and adjacent hall range, together with the walls and flagged floor of an extension built against the N side of the range. Excavation within and beyond the barmkin revealed evidence of boundary walls and, to the immediate S of the castle, the remains of what is thought to have been a dovecot.

Keywords

barmkin walls
Cardinal Beaton
dovecot
hall range
tower house

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