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A Miscellany Of Bastle Houses

by Tam Ward. 2017 .

A Miscellany of Clydesdale Bastle Houses.

Tam Ward

With contribution by Ann Mathieson

2017

Abstract

Since 1981 after the discovery that Windgate House near Coulter was a bastle house, search, survey and in some instances excavation, has revealed a series of hitherto unknown such houses in Upper Clydesdale. Research continues on the subject of Scottish bastle houses, and fieldwork, although now scaled down, continues also. This paper presents several sites which have seen less intensive research but are nevertheless important as part of the grouping of bastles and probably bastles in Upper Clydesdale, now part of South Lanarkshire.

Introduction

The following sites are given in this paper since they have not merited individual reports compared to those places which have been more thoroughly investigated, mainly by excavation and which are given on the BAG website (see references below). This work completes the reporting of sites which are confidently interpreted as bastle houses in Clydesdale, although other possible sites are known, and numerous localities where only historical references are now available, are also suspected as being of the bastle tradition of building and occupation in the 17th century (see Zeune 1992).

Sites

CARNWATH MILL

Tam Ward

2015

By sheer chance when visiting the late owner, Mr Tom Alison at Carnwath Mill Farm and on Biggar Museum business, the writer realised that the kitchen he was sitting in, and while having a cup of tea, was in fact part of a bastle house.

The most obvious tell-tale sign was the 1m thickness of the walls of a long building. A rapid survey showed several features typical of bastle houses in Clydesdale.

Carnwath Mill is famous in song; ‘No awa tae bide awa’ regarding a couple of drunken worthies and their sojourns around Carnwath and nearby Wilsontown. The recently renovated mill buildings date to the 18th century and were part of the farm of Carnwath Mill, some 2km to the east of the town of Carnwath in South Lanarkshire, NS 997 454.



Fig 1.
OS Landranger Map Sheet No 72.
Upper Clyde Valley 1:50,000.

However, part of the main farmhouse; the kitchen and a store room on the ground floor and rooms above, form most of the masonry of a long type Clydesdale Bastle House. A date stone built into the nearby wall of a more modern outbuilding gives a date of '1611' and initials 'IF & IV' and is certainly an incomplete marriage stone door lintel re used from an earlier building, it was often assumed this had something to with the nearby Mill since no other explanation was offered for it.

The ancient part of the farmhouse was surveyed with the following results:

Basement walls 1m thick survive on three sides; only the west side has lost its original wall, a gable, while that on the east side now forms part of the larger and later farm house. The present western wall may be original and have been a thinner dividing wall forming two chambers, as may be seen in other Clydesdale long bastle houses. It is possible that the original entrance and an internal stair could have been located at this end of the building which no longer exists.

Six openings have been created in the old basement walls to form doors and windows along both the long walls of the north and south sides. The doorway on the SE side has jambs which were originally for glazed windows, having the grooves cut for leaded glass; these may have been half shuttered windows. It is not possible to say where the original entrance to the bastle was but presumably it existed at one of the wider openings in the walls.

The upper floor walls reduce in thickness in keeping with what is known of other bastle houses, especially in England. The lower walls were thick for two reasons; one was for obvious defence and the other was to take the thrust of a barrel-vaulted chamber which normally was used as a storage area and a byre. It is likely that Carnwath Mill had a vaulted basement, but which has not survived. One window in the upper north wall appears original and reinforces the interpretation of the originality of the upper thin walls.

The entire stonework internally and externally of the small window was visible; it is now fitted with a modern plastic frame; however, it conforms to the types seen elsewhere, and in this case had a single vertical and centrally positioned iron bar to protect it from unwelcome visitors.

During a restoration work by a later owner and when the north wall was re-pointed another typical bastle feature was revealed; this was a blocked slit window on the long north wall and it was at this time that the new owner kindly allowed access to the roof space, which showed that the woodwork of the roof was entirely modern with no ancient timber surviving.

Old photographs show a fore stair to an upper entrance in the centre of the long north wall, it is possible that this doorway to the upper part of the building was a later insertion; however, the stonework at the former door (now a window) is identical to that of the small upper window. Only detailed inspection of the stone work surrounding the former door could prove its age.

The date stone is obviously removed from its original location but the date of 1611 is reasonable for a Clydesdale bastle house, being possibly one of the last ever to be built, since James VI had effectively 'pacified' the Borders of reivers by around 1610, making the need defensive houses unnecessary. People, especially tenant farmers who were increasing becoming better off in terms of disposable wealth, had to live in defensive bastle houses to retain that wealth in the face of the infamous Border Reivers.

It is possible that the Clydesdale bastles continued to be built for a short time after the need for their existence had expired, this was because the farmers could have little confidence that the 'troubles' would not restart in the untimely death of the King, which never happened. The names of the initials on the stone are unknown.



Plate 1. Showing east end of north wall with former upper floor doorway



Plate 2. Showing west end of north wall with original upper floor window and also slit window between two doors.



Plate 3. Showing original upper window and slit window



Plate 4. Showing blocked slit window



Plate 5. With former owner, the late Mr Tom Allison, showing upper entrance



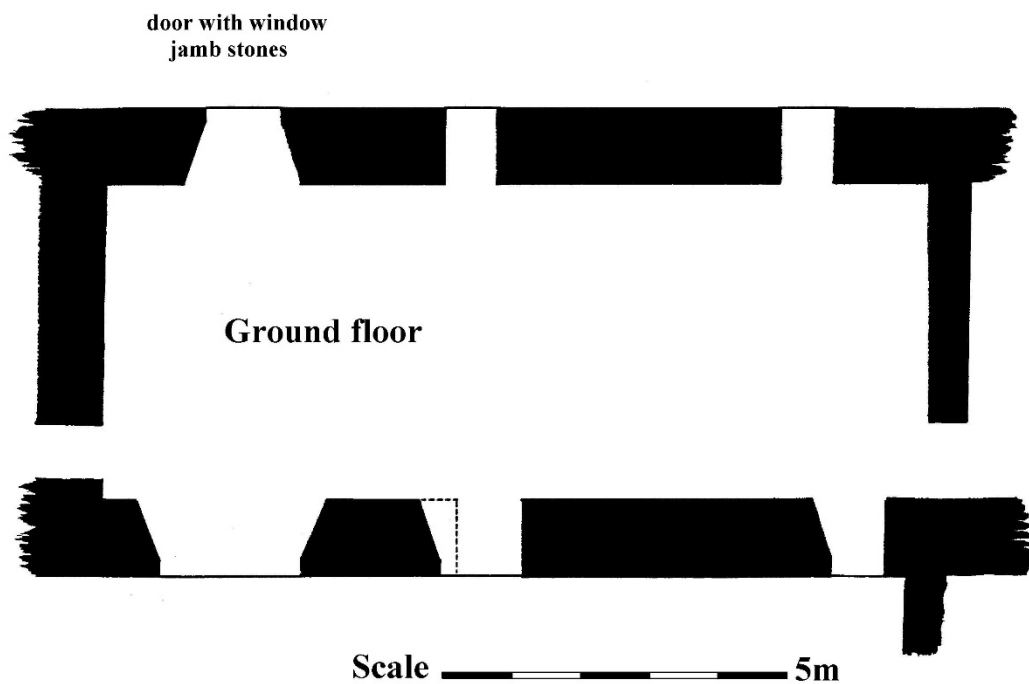
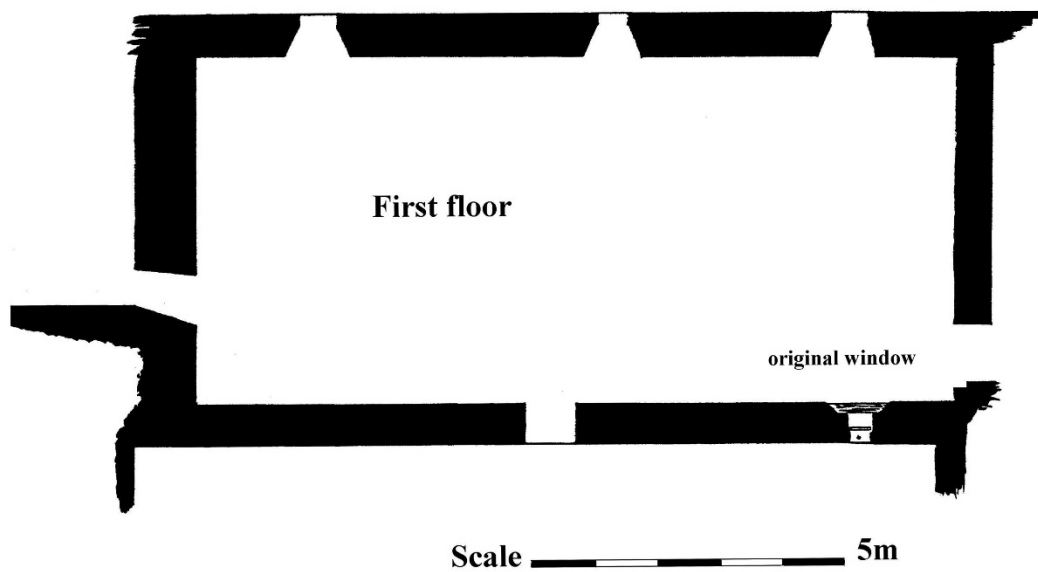
Plate 6. Showing upper entrance and fore stair.



Plate 7. Showing date stone with 1611 and 'IF' and IV



Plate 8. Showing window stones with glazing slots, now re-used in a doorway.



Figs 2 & 3. Carnwath Mill Bastle House Plan upper and lower floors.

The writer is indebted to former and present owners for access to the building.

Abstract

A previously unrecorded building at Nemphlar village near Lanark, South Lanarkshire, was shown to be a near perfectly complete example of a bastle house, possibly dating to 1607. A photographic record was taken, and a preliminary survey was done, and the house was then designated a B Listed Building. However, within a short period thereafter the building was radically and illegally altered, destroying many of the original features under the guise of ‘improvement’.



Fig 4.

OS Landranger Map Sheet No 72. Upper Clyde Valley 1:50,000.

The Building

The building was notified to Ed Archer of Lanark & District Archaeological Society who in turn contacted the writer, together they visited the house at 64 Hall Road, Nemphlar, this was around 1986, and they were astounded to realise the true architectural nature of the house.

An opportunistic photographic record was taken on that first day’s visit and which proved to be a fortuitous one, because when the site was re-visited the following week, the building had undergone its first phase of ‘alteration’.

Because of the importance of this building a comprehensive photographic record is given in this report to show how the building could very easily have been missed from the architectural record of Scotland’s historic buildings. The original 35mm slides have been deposited in the National Monuments Records for Scotland.



Plate 9. Showing building on first day visit

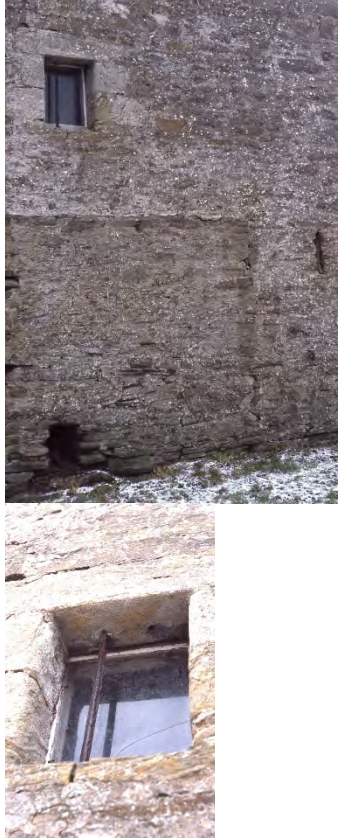



Plate 10. Showing building on first day visit

Bastle houses were only just being re discovered in Clydesdale through the work of the writer and his group of voluntary archaeologists, later to become known as the Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG). The fact that such houses had existed in Clydesdale and had now been found was exciting, since a new chapter of the social and architectural history of southern Scotland was unravelling and could be written and publicised.

It was such publicity that led to an informant contacting Ed Archer, but at first appearances the Nemphlar building gave few clues as to its antiquity, and the writer immediately suspected that the informant had got it wrong, because of the fore stair which is seen on most English Bastles, many of which are still complete. Nemphlar in all outward appearances looked like a 19th century cottage with later roof improvements; however, on walking around the house to its eastern gable, the revelation was immediate.



<p>Plate 11. Showing original bastle features of slit windows, barred gable window and byre drain tunnel</p>	<p>Plate 12. Showing the original wall had been heightened and an original upper floor window was blocked up.</p>
	
<p>Plate 13. Showing gable wall features</p>	<p>Plate 14. Showing the heightened wall and blocked window</p>

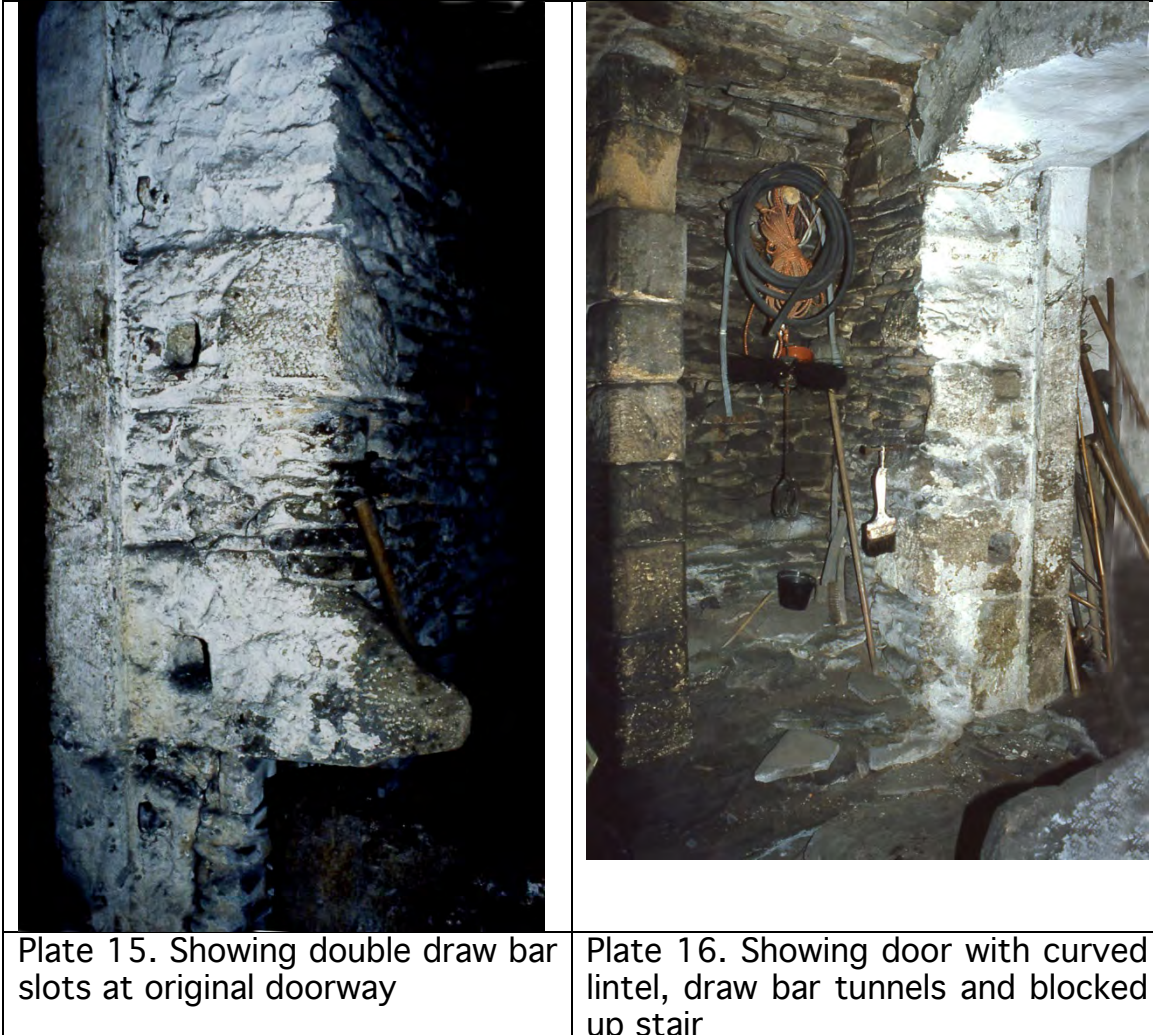
The gable and south wall could be seen to be ‘as built’, the slit windows in both walls were typical of what would be seen on bastle basements, allowing limited light and some ventilation into a byre area where a few of the most prized animals would be kept.

The small window had one (of two) original iron bars still in situ, although a modern glazed window frame was installed. The bars were set at 150mm or 6” centres making sure no one got unwanted access to the building.

On the south wall, a blocked window was clearly visible, and which would originally have been the house window, almost certainly with two vertical iron bars installed, even at upper storey levels. The chimney is a modern addition, but the wall was also clearly seen to have been heightened, therefore the *entire* original stone fabric of the building appeared to have survived.

The excitement very soon reached fever pitch when the two investigators had a look along the passage separating the newly found bastle from the genuine Victorian building on its west gable.

Here was an original entrance to the older building, instantly recognisable for what it was, and with immediate proof that the building was a defensible one with double draw bar tunnels and slots in the door jambs, a fundamental requirement for all bastle houses to prevent forced entry by unwanted visitors.



The entrance to the bastle which had a curved sandstone lintel was therefore centrally placed in the west gable wall and the single thick door had been protected by two draw bars. Upon stepping down into the interior and immediately on the right side was a blocked-up stair with a couple of steps surviving in front of the blocking wall.

Here was another characteristic of Clydesdale bastle houses where only a single entrance to the building existed at ground floor level and the building was provided by a mural stair to the upper house chamber. The excavated sites of Windgate House near Coulter, Smithwood and Wintercleuch in Daer Valley, Glendorch near Crawfordjohn and Glenochar near Elvanfoot (Ward 1998) all have such features. English bastle houses (RCHM 1970) often have a double entrance; one for the byre basement and another separate one at first floor level and which was originally accessed by a retractable ladder, only

later were the stone fore-stairs seen at many English bastles built, long after the time for defensive protection had expired.

The stair at Nemphlar was not built for the convenience of the occupants, but rather to impede any attacker who had gained entry, since it would have risen, turning left at a right angle, travelling over the haunch or curve of the barrel vault and as a much narrower stair, to reach the house above. Clearly this stair became an inconvenience to the occupants who created a second entrance in the building, giving more convenient access to the house and by building the stone fore-stair leading to it. It is likely that the upper entrance and the stone stair were created in the late 17th century.

The view into the building left no doubt as to its true character, here was a barrel-vaulted basement with a sloping floor and an open drain or grip running the full length and discharging through the east gable wall tunnel. A classic bastle byre arrangement and seen on several of the bastles given above. Furthermore, and a unique feature for Clydesdale bastles was an original stone trough or cist beside the doorway.

Not seen on the outside of the building, as the fore stair obscured them were a further two slit windows, making five in total for the basement, as stated above these unglazed windows gave ventilation and minimum light to the byre although in the case of Nemphlar an additional barred window was made in the gable.



Plate 17. Showing the barrel-vaulted basement looking east



Plate 18. Showing the barrel-vaulted basement looking west to the entrance and stair on left side



Plate 19. Showing the two slit windows behind the fore stair and splaying through the vault

Plate 20. Showing the trough or cist on the north side of the entrance.

On the second visit by Archer and Ward and much to their surprise the building had taken on a fresh look; the walls had been harled and some of the features recently photographed had now disappeared from view. Only a single slit window on the south wall remained and the blocked window there was no longer visible, although the evidence of the wall heightening could still be seen but would have been difficult to interpret had the wall not been seen, and recorded before. Even the glazed window had been harled over, glass and all!



Plate 21. With the new owner and harled wall. Compare with Pl's 1 & 2.



Plate 22. Showing the wall after harling and disappearance of the blocked window but note the wall heightening is still visible.

However, the new owner was present, and he allowed the pair to make a measured survey of the basement and have a look at the upper house area which was totally modern in appearance. The new owner stated that he had removed a carved stone from the fireplace upstairs and this was now used as a garden step, the stone was photographed and the date of 1607 was clearly seen in an escutcheon quartered with the date and two sets of initials; GF & DL. The names may stand for Forrest and Lockhart, both local names of the period, although that is conjecture.

The stone appears to be an original feature of the bastle, being a mantelpiece from the fire place from which it was removed, it may have been a marriage stone and indicate the date of construction of the house, although that cannot now be proved.



Plate 23. Showing the stone removed from the upper floor fire place.

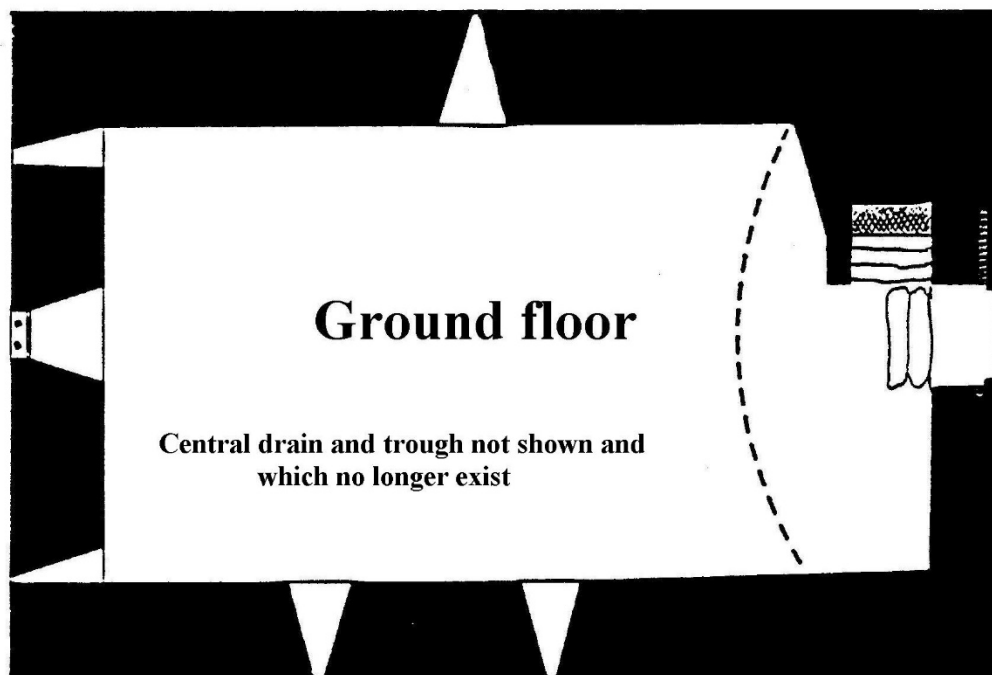


Fig 5. Ground floor plan showing features which were recorded, unfortunately the central drain and trough were not surveyed and are now lost along with several other original features.

The available plan of the house compares very well with what is known of other Clydesdale bastle houses. Two styles exist; a long type and a short type (Ward 1998 *ibid*), Nemphlar is a short type having only a single chamber in the basement rather than the two rooms in the long bastles.

While every building of this period is unique, Nemphlar offered the best example to study because of its completeness.

The fate which befell the building could *never* have been imagined, having told the owner of its significance the writer hoped to engage in a more complete survey of both planning and photography, especially of the basement floor plan. Unfortunately, this did not happen. The new owner had been told by a professional building surveyor that the building was experiencing movement, and this could be seen in the centre of the barrel vault as subsidence. What they were looking at was the two phases of construction of the barrel vault by using a timber arched frame, and the slightly staggered joint between them! So much for professional advice!

Clydesdale District Council was notified, and a building preservation order was served, and the building was created a B Listed Building.

Regardless of this and *with another owner*, the building was subjected to a series of unapproved alterations which have utterly spoiled what should have been a nationally important architectural gem. Despite protestations by the Scottish Civic Trust, newspaper articles (Topp) and articles produced in the Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland Magazine (Whyman 1992 & 1995) and other entreaties to the then Clydesdale District Council, the building is all but lost to antiquity by vandalism of the worst sort.

Nemphlar Bastle House should have been taken into public ownership as a Monument in Care and a Scheduled Ancient Monument, or at least been accorded Grade A listing to protect it from the ravages it has experienced. The disgraceful events following on the discovery of what may have been the oldest habitable house in southern Scotland, and the most complete bastle house in Scotland are a damning indictment on those people who are supposed to protect the nation's history, sadly, it seems to this writer, that all the wrong people are empowered to safeguard Scotland's heritage.

References

Royal Commission on Historical Monuments (England) *Shielings and Bastles*. HMSO 1970. H.G. Ramm, R.W. McDowall, Eric Mercer.

Topp G, *You're not on! Improvements to historic home 'illegal' council tell couple*. Hamilton Advertiser newspaper.

Ward T 1998. *Glenochar Bastle House and Fermtoun*. Biggar Museum Trust and Lanark and District Archaeological Society. ISBN 0 9520195 6 4.

Whyman P 1996. *Ravage of the Bastle House at Nemphlar, Lanark*. The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland - Magazine - Spring 1996 No 3.

WESTHALL TOWER

The remains of Westhall Tower lie adjacent an unclassified road half way between the villages of Newbigging and Dunsyre in South Lanarkshire, at NT 04871 47278, and beside the farm of the same name.

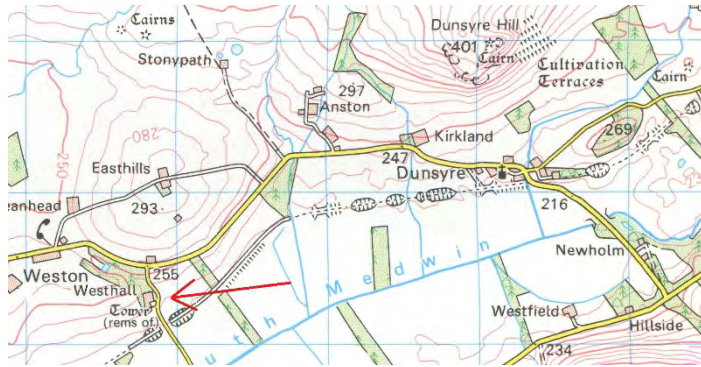


Fig 6. OS Landranger Map Sheet No 72. Upper Clyde Valley 1:50,000.

In the 1980's the choked interior of the building was cleared out by members of Lanark & District Archaeological Society under the supervision of the writer. The aim was to establish if any further architectural details of the building could be established and if dateable evidence could be found.

In the event little was determined as the interior had been sub-divided to make a pig sty and had then been infilled with rubbish dating to the early 20th century. Only a few sherds of green glaze pottery were found outside the building to indicate an earlier presence there.

The west wall stands to 4m high and only the two corners of this wall survive, along with evidence of a projecting stair on the north side. The existing floor surface is a well-made paving; however, its recent age is indicated by the fact that it slopes upwards towards the main surviving wall to form drainage for its final use as a pig sty.



Plate 24. View from the south.



Plate 25. Working on the stair foundation.

Irving (1865) reports that a castle stood near the village of Dunsyre, and Westhall is reported by him as being one of at least five "Fortalices of the same class" in the Parish of Dunsyre. There is a strong suspicion, principally based on land tenure that some of these buildings may have been in the bastle tradition of construction and operation, because usually, towers proper, that is to say three or more levels, would only have been occupied by

the laird and/or perhaps direct members of their families, while tenants certainly did occupy bastle houses in the late 16th and early 17th centuries.

References

Irving G V & Murray A 1864. *The Upperward of Lanarkshire Described and Delineated*. Vol's I, II and III. Thomas Murray & Sons Publisher, Glasgow 1864.

THORRIL

Thorril Castle

Located in the deep ravine of Parkhall Burn which flows north along the east side of the M74 motorway and 2km east of the village of Douglas, there are the remains of a probable bastle house and associated buildings. The site was first recorded as part of the M74 Project (Ward 1990) as Site No 1, and the report and survey plan given there, is repeated here.

Site No 1 OS Sheet No NS83SE NS 8647 3099
Location: Parkhead Hill Surveyed scale: 1: 500

At the base of the NE flank of Parkhead Hill and at the confluence of the Byrecleuch Burn and Parkhall Burn, there is a group of ruinous stone buildings with lime mortar showing through the grassy banks which cover the site.

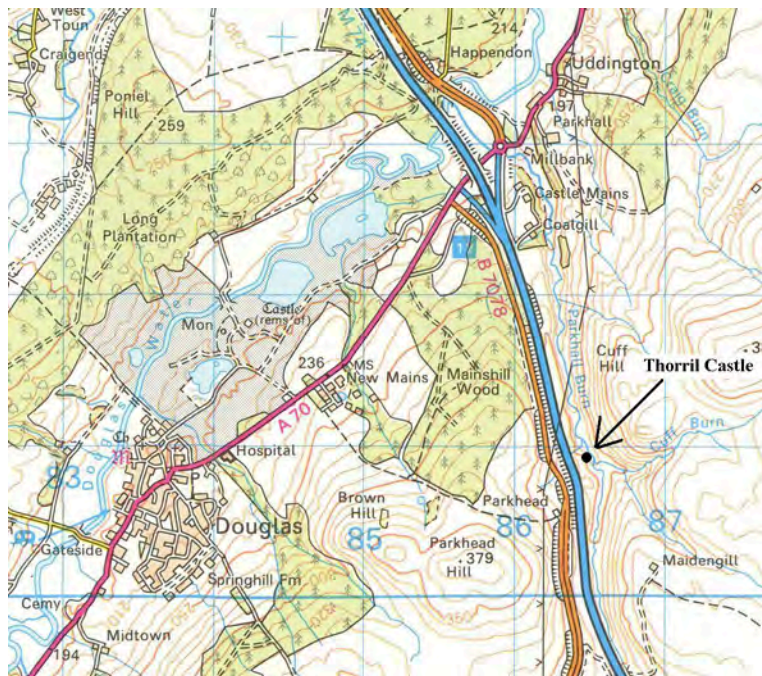


Fig 7. Showing location of the site beside the M74 Motorway

OS Landranger Map Sheet No 72. Upper Clyde Valley 1:50,000.

The approximate alignments of the walls are traceable by stones protruding from the grassy banks which vary in height from 0.5m to 2m. Three buildings can be traced, they are marked 'a', 'b' and 'c' on plan and the extrapolated plan indicates

the probable layout of the site. A wall connects 'c' with 'b' which is L shaped. The east end of 'a' is missing, most likely because of subsidence caused by the action of Parkhall Burn which flows north at this point. The wall on the east side of 'c' may have connected with 'a' but this has also been eroded by the burn. The internal area of 'a' would have been approximately 12m X 5m.

The other buildings can be judged to have been about 4m to 5m wide internally.

Apart from other information about the site (see below) the best indication for its date comes from at least seven stones found incorporated into the adjacent sheepfold to the S of the ruin. These are all 'roll moulded' shaped blocks of cream coloured carboniferous sandstone which has come from a doorway.

Squared blocks of tooled sandstone have been used to form the entrance into the sheep fold and other blocks are built into the drystone wall. The implication of this is that there is at least one building on the site which dates to the late 16th or early 17th century. Such a building can only have been a tower house or as is more likely in the context of the other buildings here, a bastle house. The main building here has had a fine entrance and the quoins have been dressed ashlar.

A track leads away from the site to the N and runs through an enclosure system of eroded turf banks.

The site is shown on Charles Ross map of the Douglas Estates and is dated 1769, the place is given as Thorril Castle. The site is omitted from all OS maps and has not been noted on any other historical maps.

Reference to the place is given in *The Upper Ward of Lanarkshire, Volume II, page 146*, by Irving and Murray (1864) "in Douglas, as in other remote Parishes of the Upper Ward, the farm steadings, in ancient times, were erected in the fortified form of small peels. Of these several remains still exist. The most important of them is at Parkhall laid down on Forrest's map as a 'castle in ruins'. Others are found at THORRIL within a few yards of Parkhead, Parrisholm, Glentaggart and Glespin".

The *New Statistical Account* (1841) for Douglas Parish also refers to the site as-"the vestiges of a fort near the great road to England", the writer there suggests the name is derived from Thirwall Castle. This is considered here to be mistaken. The Douglas's of Parkhead nearby were also lairds of Torthorwald Castle near Dumfries. This seems to be the more likely explanation for the name Thorril.

The place is a small defended farm and some of the buildings will be byres, as is suggested in the name Byrecluch. The choice of site has not been made for convenience and suggests an element of seclusion seems to have been desired by the owner. The 'great road to England' which was above the site to the W certainly did not exist when Thorril was built, although all the farm lands of this place are in that area and can still be traced by the old turf field boundaries.

This place is now incorporated into the Bastle Project, an ongoing research project into the defensive farmhouses of Clydesdale, which is run by the Biggar Archaeology Group.

Note: the location is now only accessible from the M74 junction to the north or from Maidengill in the south.

Refs: Ward. T 1989 'Bastle Houses of the Anglo Scottish Borders' Fortress Castles and Fortifications Quarterly, No5, 35 -43

Ward T 1988 "The Elusive Scottish Bastle House' Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, No12, 50-61

Gillanders et al 1986 'Report on the Excavations of Windgate House near Coulter Scottish Vernacular Buildings Working Group, No 10, 1 - 16



Plate 26. Showing the site *before* the M74 was built, looking west.

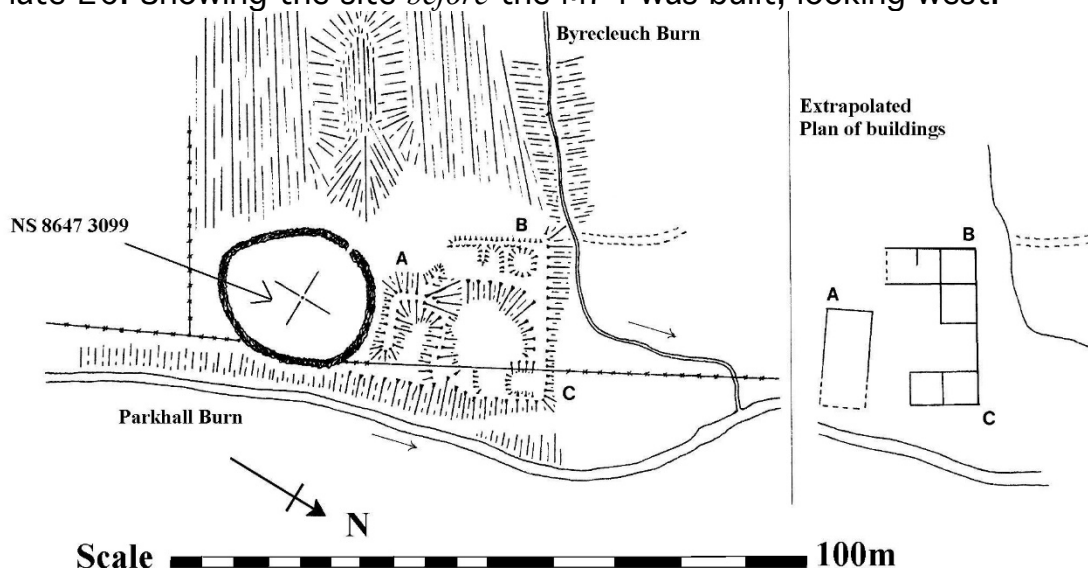


Fig 8. Showing site plan and supposed layout of buildings (Ward 1992).

Abstract

Describes a post medieval settlement in Upper Clydesdale (South Lanarkshire) and the results of a metal detecting project there.

Introduction

Lying 0.75km south of the village of Elvanfoot in South Lanarkshire and on the lower north flank of Watchman Hill there is the site of a bastle house and associated fermtoun. The location is at NS 947 166 and lies at 325m OD on a semi improved upland landscape typical of the Southern Uplands of Scotland. The site can be located on the OS 1:50,000 Landranger series of maps; No 78, Nithsdale and Annandale area.

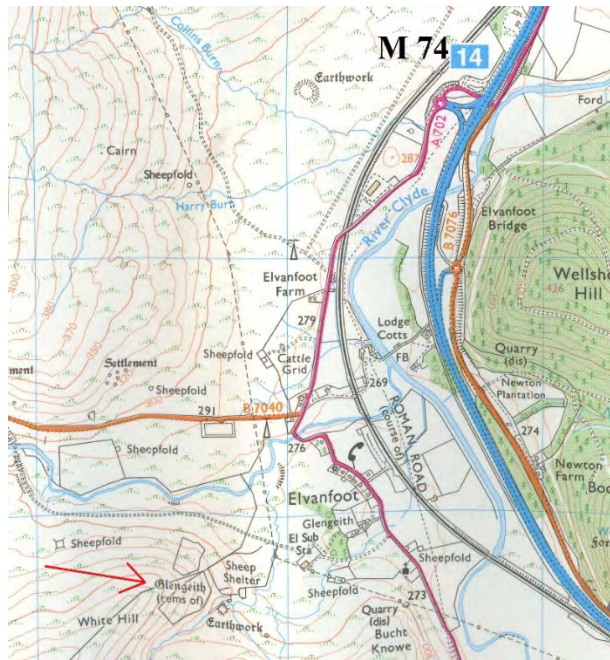


Fig 9.

OS Explorer Map Sheet No 329. Lowther Hills, Sanquhar & Leadhills. 1: 25,000.

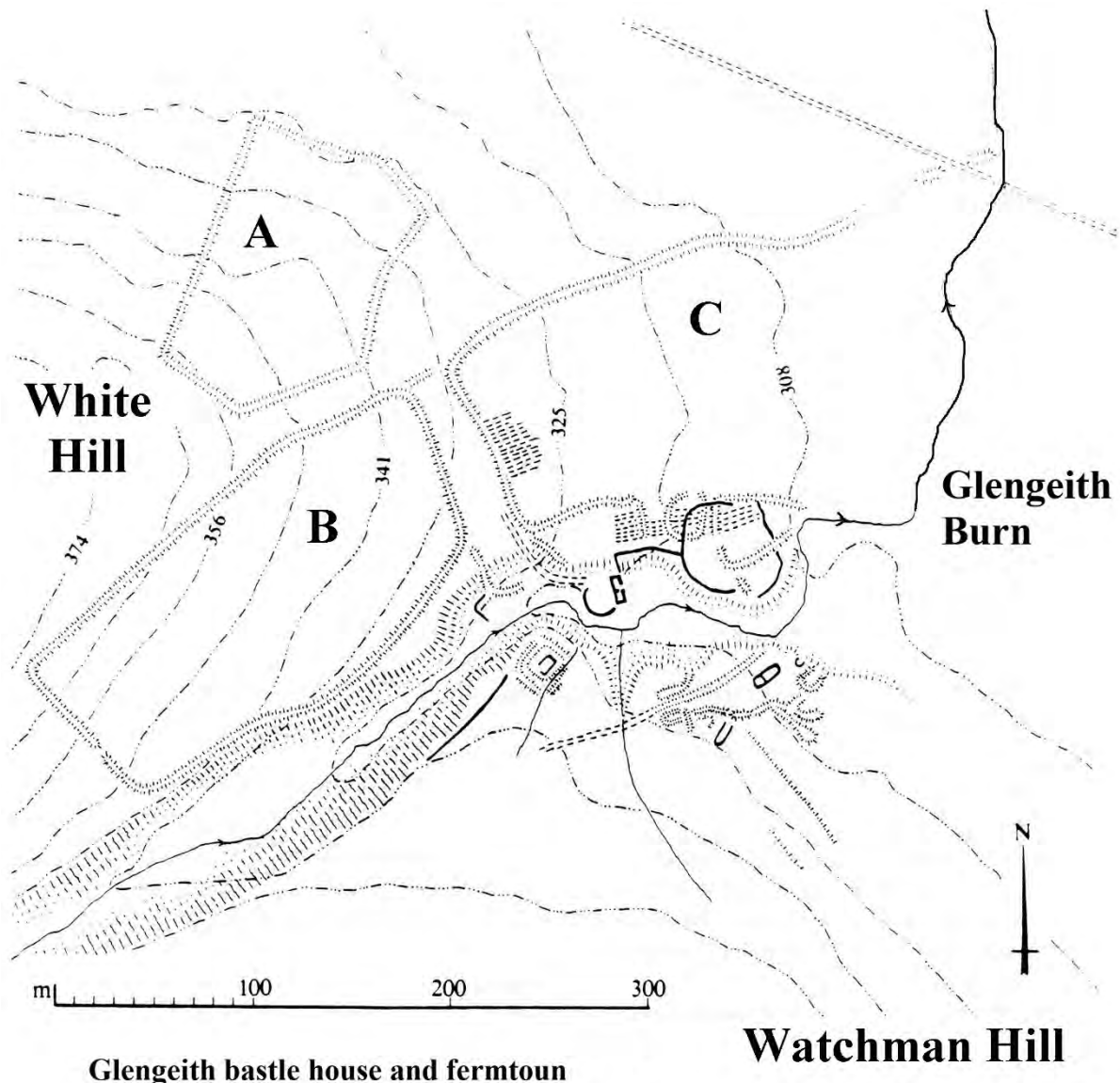
The site is included in the Clydesdale Bastle Project run by the Biggar Archaeology Group (BAG) and which investigates by means of survey and excavation, post medieval sites in the Upper Clyde and Tweed valleys (Ward 1998).

The site was surveyed by the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) at the request of this

writer, and at the same time the RCAHMS also kindly surveyed the nearby Glenochar Bastle House site (Ward 1998, *ibid*). Glengeith is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (Index No 4798).

Field evidence

The site is nestled at the foot of a ravine and straddles Glengeith Burn which flows north to meet the Elvan Water. Principally composed of earth works forming enclosures, banks, buildings and lazy beds, the site is nucleated apart from three large enclosures located on the slopes of White Hill to the west on the main site. Evidence of the lime mortared bastle house is however apparent below a sheep fold built directly over it, and at least one other rectangular shaped building can be seen to have stone footings for its walls.



Glengeith bastle house and farmtoun

Watchman Hill

Copyright : Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.

Fig 10. Survey plan of entire site. Courtesy RCAHMS.

The bastle house

The building is orientated on a N/S alignment and the southern end now has a modern drystone dyke building with a corrugated sheet roof.

The total width, as can be seen, is 7.5m, however a grassy berm on the long west side may obscure evidence of the original wall alignment there, making the actual width more. The total length of the bastle is around 13-14m assuming the north gable is buried below a grassy bank which rises 1.5m above the present shed, which is built with 2m high drystone walls on the alignment of the original lime mortared walls of the bastle.

In situ stones of the bastle walls are seen externally in the south gable and the east long wall. The internal size of the shed is 5m long by 3.4m wide, the latter size may be the original internal width of the bastle. Four stones running for 2.5m on the inside of the east long wall, and at existing floor height indicate the springing of the vault, possibly 1m above the original

floor level. The shed walls certainly are built in part with stones from the original building as many of them are covered in old lime mortar. The original bastle entrance may be near a now ruinous gap in the drystane dyke just north of the shed. If this was the bastle entrance evidence of the presumed mural stair may lie below the grassy bank on that side.



Plate 27. Showing the bastle site below the interior, original stones tin hut. later dyke.

Plate 28. Showing the Along the base of the

A level area about 4-5m long exists between the grassy bank and the break of slope up to the corner of the drystane dyke. It is possible that part of the bastle may lie below this area, or the bastle gable may have been built short of the sloping ground. Either way, the north gable of the bastle, although not in reach of the higher ground, must have been fairly level with it.

No other details of the bastle are visible, however, lying only a short distance from the SE corner and straddling the burn to form a low waterfall, is a dressed sandstone lintel. It measures 1.6m long by 0.4m high and 0.25m deep, and a curving edge is visible 75mm high to indicate its orientation on the house, the curved shape is similar in design to the door lintel at Nemphlar bastle near Lanark. The stone was examined in situ by feeling to determine if any inscription was carved on the underside, there is none.

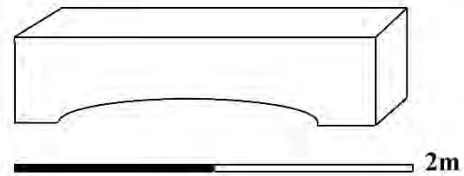
Enclosures, rig and buildings

Of the three large enclosures; A and B have complete circuits of their earth banks forming sub rectangular fields and with an entrance at the SW end of B. Whether C was totally enclosed is uncertain, however what is for sure is that the various patches of lazy beds beside it, clearly postdate it as can be seen by the way the rigs run up the extant banks. The three enclosures show no evidence of ploughing within them and are most likely stock enclosures for sheep. Furthermore, their disposition relative to one another shows they were used as stock movement control forming roadways between them and leading downhill to the main farm complex.



Plate 28 (left). Showing the door lintel in the burn.

Fig 11 (below). Showing lintel shape and size.



There appears to be at least two open ended sheep milking buchts at the SE of the complex, these are situated near a track and smaller enclosures or yards, and it is here that the outline of a rectangular stone building may be seen.

Of particular interest is the building (on plan) to the SW of the bastle and on the opposite side of the burn. This feature has no known parallel in Upper Clydesdale and without recourse to excavation little may be said about it. It is possibly a defensive site which pre-dates the bastle house.



Plate 29. Showing later lazy beds overlying field banks.



Plate 30. Showing building outline in snow.

Metal detecting Appendix I

Prior to the site becoming a Scheduled Ancient Monument, it was metal detected by BAG volunteers. Since publicly recording such sites for the first time, BAG adopted the policy of metal detecting them to militate against unauthorised detecting. The finds were plotted to a survey plan by BAG and although not to a finite accuracy, the find spots are relatively accurate.

The finds add little to the story of the site, various coins mostly indeterminate copper denominations probably date to the 17th century while the silver sixpence of William III is probably a defunct coin, deliberately bent and re used as a love token theoretically to be placed in the shoe of a suitor to remind him of his true love! Such items are commonly found. See appendix.



Plate 31. Metal detected buckle finds from Glengeith.

History

Maps

Pont's manuscript map of Clyddsdall 1596 gives Glengith and it is repeated in Blaeu's work of 1654. The estate map of the Barony of Hopetoun, originally given by James Wells in 1760 and repeated by Joseph Udney in 1791 [RHP 6875] gives Glengeith as four buildings.

Register of the Privy Council

1607

On 15th October in Edinburgh the Privy Council recorded the following;

Johne Williamsoun in the Overhall of Glengeich for Robert Williamsoun, called of the Mid Onset, and Thomas Williamsoun, called the Borderer, 500 merks each to answer before the Council when charged for demolishing the materials of his Majesty's gold mines in Crawfordmure.

The occupants.

The following has been gleaned from testaments by Ann Mathieson of Biggar Museum.

Who lived there?

Glengeith is dominated by the WILLIAMSON family.

1620s

1622: Janet*(Williamson) and Matthew Williamson and 2 children, John and Elizabeth.

Also, Janet and Margaret Williamson, Matthew's children by his first wife, Jonnet Gillespie

1626: Janet* and Jon Williamson, one son Matthew

Also: John Williamson elder who owed money in 1622

1660s/70s

1664: Jon Gibsone*

1668: Margaret (Baillie)* & Thomas Williamson with servants,
Marion McQueen and James Bell

1669: Symeon Bryden* & wife Rebecca (nee Vetch)

Also 3 servants: Mary Affleck, Marion Moffat, James Moray

1675: Janet (Brown)* & husband Thomas Williamson

1676: John Williamson (son of Thomas, above, who was still alive in 1676)

Also, servants James Williamson, Isobell Gun, John Williamson, Joanes Wood, Grissel Menzies, Janet ----

1693: Thomas Williamson

It is tempting to suggest that the 1660s/70s were difficult years for the people of Glengeith as only two of the above were not in debt when they died: Jon Gibson left only £37 and Symeon Bryden £98.

1620s

Janet and Matthew Williamson could be described as 'average' in terms of bastle settlement people who left testaments, i.e. they had 100/150 sheep, 10-15 cows and left between £200-£300. This 'average' has not been accurately calculated, but is a reflection of the findings.

When Janet died, £300 from Matthew's first wife's legacy was still owed to her two daughters.

Janet and Jon Williamson were also 'average', but they had many more debts and credits which balanced each other out, so that Janet too left between £200-£300.

1660s

John Gibson had nothing at all, except a residual £67 owed to him from a loan he had given Jon McMirran in Glencaid. As Jon himself was dead, his heirs and executors had to pick up the tab.

After £30 was deducted from this to bury him, he left £37.

Symon and Rebecca (Vetch) Bryden left just under £100. They obviously lived carefully, owing only £120 rent and fees to their 3 servants. They owned a mare and filly, 3 cows and 140 sheep.

In terms of possessions, **Thomas & Margaret (Baillie) Williamson** were well to do, with 2 mares, a horse, 30 cows, 380 sheep and oats in the barn in June (which indicates a surplus).

They were owed interest £30 on a heritable bond from one of the landowners, William Hamilton of Gilkerscleuch.

But, were they living beyond their means and borrowing to pay for it? They owed about £800 backdated interest on 4 loans, as well as £437 in rent and tithe, not to mention servants' fees of £40. Their wealth amounted to £944; their debt to £1,700.

Thomas and Janet (Brown) Williamson had even more massive debts of £2,080. Their assets amounted to only £746! £667 of the amount owed was for rent, with bonds (6) and interest amounting to £972. They owned more cows than most people – 28 with 16 calves. However, the testament was made in August and perhaps the sale of cows before winter would help to make good some of the debt. They also had 2 horses, an old one worth £20 and a 'Vyr'¹ one worth £60, suggesting it was a very high-quality beast: their 'lithe'² nag was also valued above average at £24, as were the household and personal effects (£20). Can we conclude that they too were living beyond their means?

John Williamson, who died in 1676, owed £1412 and had assets of only £598. He owed the Laird of Hoptoun nearly £400, mainly for rent, but also interest, suggesting he had been failing to pay his rent. Four bonds with accumulated interest (including overdue interest) amounted to £554 and he owed his 6 servants about £50 in fees. He must have died fairly young as his father Thomas was his executor. His brother in law, Rolland Thomson from Glenochar, was nominated to see to his creditors and look after his children.

The only remaining testament is that of **Thomas Williamson** who died in 1693, maintaining the tradition of debt. Mungo Williamson of Bidhouse, Thomas's grandson, was his executor as he was owed £1,500, along with 22 years of backdated interest, and had made two attempts to recover the debt in court, as the debt had been incurred in 1671! The legal transactions are too complex to unravel, but the debt remains!

Summary

Although the Williamsons were obviously the main tenants, they were on a downhill slide, with debts far exceeding their assets for the best part of the 17th century.

* Person who left a testament

The Williamsons figured in several records regarding the lawlessness of the times.

¹ Scottish National Dictionary has no meaning for this.

² gentle, pliant

Testament finis.

Discussion

Glengeith is surrounded by the entire suite of features which make up a typical 17th century fermtoun, and shows some similarity with neighbouring Glenochar, the next post medieval farm site to the south.

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Appendix I. Metal detected finds list

GLENGEITH BASTLE HOUSE APRIL 1989.

Numbers in parenthesis = original finds plot.

NO.	ITEM	MATERIAL	SIZE (mm)	DESCRIPTION
GG.1 (58)	Coin	Silver		Sixpence, 1695-1700. William III date illegible. May be bent as love token?
GG.2 (19)	Coin			Turner of James VI or Charles I Circa- 1614- 1629
GG (70)	Coin	As above.		
GG.4 (63)	Coin	Copper	Indeterminate.	
GG.5 (23)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.6 (32)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.7 (59)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.8 (39)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.9 (9)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.10 (47)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.11 (29)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.12 (37)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.13 (31)	Coin	Copper	"	
GG.14 (54)	Coin	Copper	"	Found in stone building.
GG.15 (14)	Coin	Copper		Penny. Edward VII 1909).
GG.16 (62)	Medallion?	Lead		45 diam' Reversed impression of a coin on both sides
GG.17 (56)	Button with stemless		C/A 17diam'	Button back loop.
GG.18 (61)	Button in		C/A 21 X 6	Front, domed, 2 rings relief decoration.
GG.19 (43)	Buckle		C/A 28 X 14 X 3	Part of, centre piece.

GG.20 (55)	Buckle	C/A 44 X 20 X 2	Shoe buckle, part of, rectangular.
GG.21 (27)	Buckle	C/A 36 X 23 X 1	Double row raised diamond decoration. Rectangular frame with central bar and pin. Curved profile at centre. Perforated decoration along the frame.
GG.22 (5)	Buckle	C/A 49 X 44 X 1	Rectangular frame, curved profile at centre. Decorative.
GG.23 (36)	Buckle	C/A 38 X 24 X 3	Rectangular frame. Decorative.
GG.24 (52)	Buckle	C/A 33 X 29 X 3	Rectangular frame, incised decoration.
GG.25 (41)	Buckle	C/A 40 X 27 X 1	Decorative rectangular frame.
GG.26 (64)	Buckle	C/A 50 X 44 X 3	Rectangular frame with central bar, curved profile at centre.
GG.27 (57)	Musket Ball	Lead.19 diam	Unfired.
GG.28 (45)	Musket Ball	Lead 19 diam.	Spent.
GG.29 (30)	Musket Ball	Lead 16 diam	Unfired.
GG.30 (48)	Musket Ball	Lead 16 diam.	Unfired.
GG.31 (7)	Pistol Shot	Lead 12 diam	Unfired
GG.32 (72)	Pistol Shot	Lead 10 diam	Unfired.
GG.33 (21)	Bullet	Lead 26x11x11	Bullet unfired
	Bullet	Lead 23x19x4	5bullets spent
	Bullet	Lead 26x19x4	1 bullet part of
	Bullet	Lead 28x14x6	19-20 C
	Bullet	Lead 31x11x9	
	Bullet	Lead 29x22x10	
	Bullet	Lead 25x17x15	
	Bullet	Lead 14x15x5	
GG.34 (33)	Ring	Lead Ext 29dia Int 14x11	Ring
GG.35 (25)	Object	Lead Ext 31dia	possible weight. Internal 3dia
			semi-circular with small central hole
GG36 (69)	Object piece.	Lead 32dia x12	Possible gaming
GG.37 (51)	Object	Lead 26x23x5	Conical shaped. possible gaming piece
GG38 (3)	Object piece.	Lead 37dia x12	Conical shaped. Possible gaming
GG.39 (46)	Object	Lead 74dia x5	Conical shaped
GG.40 (12)	Object	Lead 49x60x20	Semi-circular slightly domed
GG41	Object	Lead 184x155x27	slightly domed cast
GG42 (6)	Object	Lead 51x47x4	Cast
GG.43 (11)	Object	Lead 58x51x8	Cast
GG.44 (18)	Object	Lead 20x26x3	Cast
GG.45 (24)	Object	Lead 31x12x3	Cast
GG.46 (26)	Object	Lead 63x12x4	Cast
GG.47 (28)	Object	Lead 28x15x1	Cast

GG.48 (32)	Object	Lead 44x12x4	Cast 2 of 12x7x4
	Casts		
GG.49 (34)	Object	Lead 34x25x10	Cast 2 of 16x15x3
	Casts		
GG.50 (40)	Object	Lead 48x43x4	Cast
GG.51 (50)	Object	Lead 31x35x6	Cast
GG.52 (53)	Object	Lead 33x25x3	Cast
GG.53 (60)	Object	Lead 32x27x11	Cast
GG.54 (66)	Object	Lead 16x19x1	Cast
GG.55 (67)	Object	Lead 24x14x5	Cast
GG.56	Three linked Iron 1.65x60	3 linked rings	2.118x118 iron rings
			3.75x42 2 circular 1 pear shaped
GG.57	Swivel rings Iron 60x54		Small ring from harness
	65x75 Large ring		
GG.58 (10)	Piece of	Iron 100x92	peat spade
GG.59 (49)	sickle?		Piece of horseshoe or
GG.60 (44)	Nail	Iron length 68	Roundhead 18x15 Square
	shaft 3		
GG.61 (4)	Object	Iron length x6	
GG.62 (13)	Object	Iron 63x31	
GG.63 (7)	Object	Iron 44x21	
GG.64 (22)	Part of	Iron 150x90	cauldron
GG.65 (15)	Bush	Iron	outside 33 inside 14 Modern, length 43 76x50 53x42
GG.66	Pot	Iron 122x66	4 parts of
	80x122		
GG.67	Sherd		Random finds pipe stem
GG.68			
GG.69	Spoon	Pewter 32x17x4	Handle missing
GG.70	Sherd		Random find

Items GG41 and GG59 missing?

SNAR

Snar Bastle House

The ruin described here as Snar Bastle House is insubstantial in nature but nevertheless the site does not defy interpretation as a bastle.

Located at Snar Farm in the Parish of Crawfordjohn in South Lanarkshire at NS 862 200, the site is 4km SW of the village of Crawfordjohn, and the remains lie south of and behind the farm buildings and adjacent the Snar Water.

Very limited excavation was carried out in what was obviously a double chambered building, the walls of which were c1m thick. Three small trenches were opened in the main chamber, the outline of which was visible. The

second, smaller chamber on the south side was completely excavated down to a cobbled floor surface which was not disturbed.

Trenches 1 and 2 revealed only the corners of the chamber and with a bedrock floor surface. Trench 3 attempted to locate entrances into the two rooms since it was clear that no interconnecting doorway existed. Although no definite features of doorways existed the entrance to the smaller room could only have been where indicated on the plan, while the entrance to the larger room is supposed to have been at the place indicated, but this is by no means certain. Similarly, no floor features were revealed.

Trench 4 exposed the entire area of the smaller room and it was shown to be floored overall with random stones laid flat side uppermost to give a reasonably comfortable walking surface, however at the northern end of the room and against the dividing wall a much better-quality surface had been made and this was shown to be a drainage surface which discharged through a drain tunnel in the west wall. The small room must have been used as a byre at some stage in its history.

It was evident that the building was made in two stages with the first being the large room as a free-standing building and with the smaller room simply abutted against it. The plan shows the visible masonry, and this was random rubble with local greywacke rock and lime mortar. The plan also shows each

room as vaulted, there was no evidence for that at the site, but it is recorded that this was a double roomed building with vaults in each chamber and was used until the 19th century.

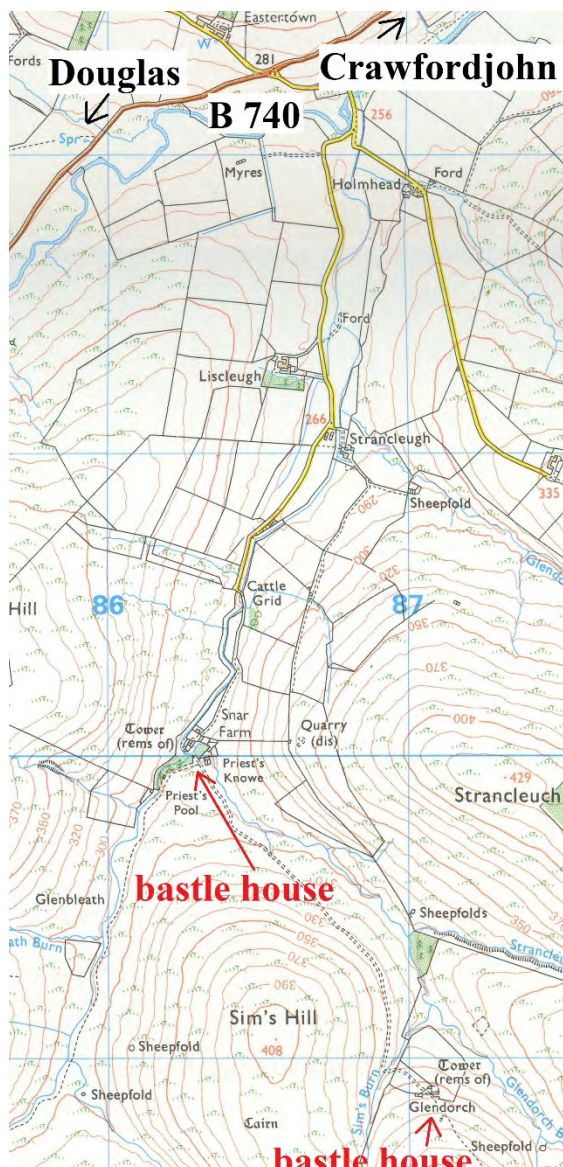


Fig 12.

OS Explorer Map Sheet No 329. Lowther Hills, Sanquhar & Leadhills. 1: 25,000.

The site can lay no claim to history other than a tradition that one Jock o' Snar came home to find his house invaded by strangers, after evicting them forcibly, one protested he was a priest and should not be man handled, to which Jock took him by the scruff of the neck and threw him into the river, the spot is still recorded as 'The Priests Pool'. What truth can be given to such tales is difficult to say but it does reflect the type of situation which did prevail among the bastle houses of the

late 16th/17th centuries. The very fact that these buildings were the last defensible houses to be built in Britain and during the turbulent period of Border Reivers testifies to that.

The only finds were a few small sherds of un-diagnostic green glaze pottery.

The farming economy of Snar has always been with sheep, although perhaps a few cattle were kept. Nearby and to the south is an impressive array of enclosures formed by turf banks, including good examples of sheep milking buchts and these are thought to have been in contemporaneous use with bastle.



Plate 32 showing trenches and Snar Water



Plate 33 showing small chamber



Plate 34 showing floor of small chamber



Plate 35 showing bedrock surface in Trench 1



Plate 36 showing open ended sheep milking buchts

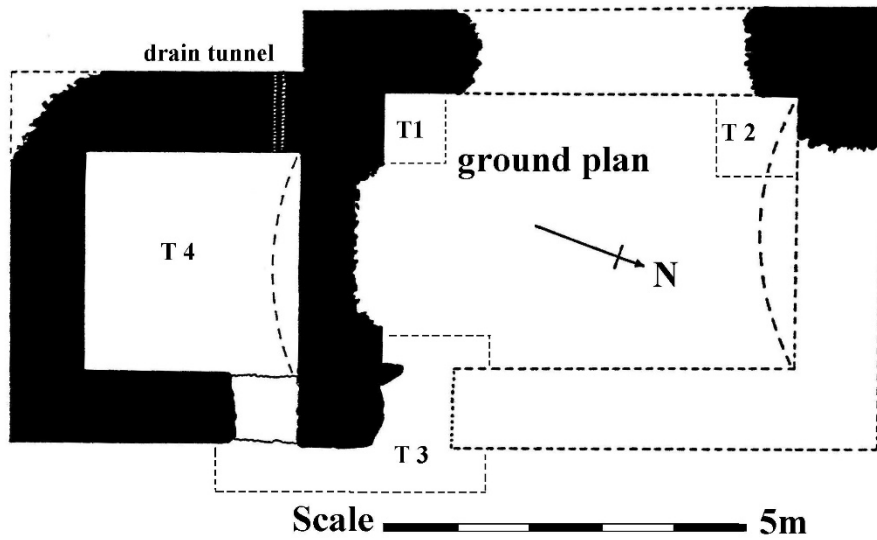
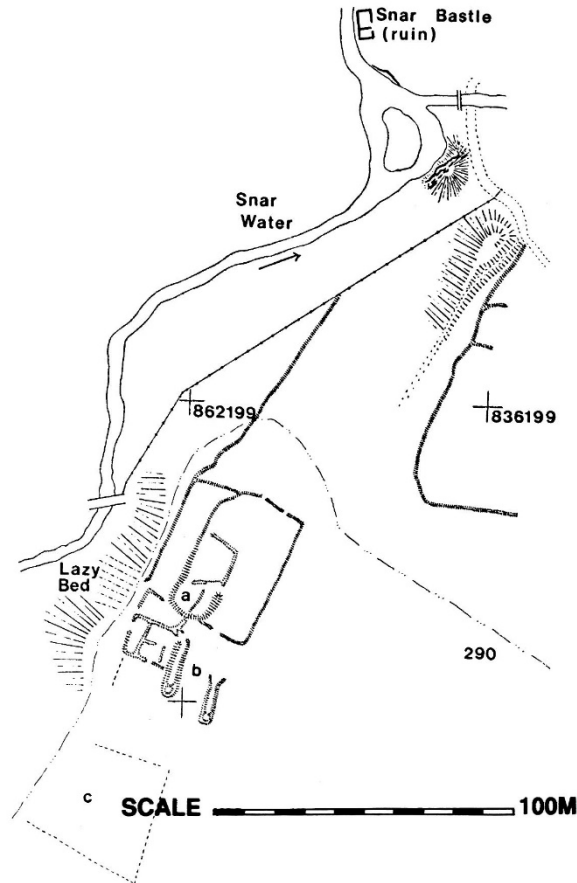


Fig 13. Snar ground floor plan.



Figs 14. Showing site plan.

The nearby bastle house of Glendorch (Fig 12) was partially excavated and produced significant results, it is recorded as a stand-alone report (Ward 2015).

Discussion

While the local fieldwork concerning The Bastle Project by BAG is nearly complete, research will continue, especially into primary sources. Between survey, excavation and research beginning in 1981, a considerable data has now been gathered concerning bastle houses and associated landscapes in Clydesdale and elsewhere. Nearly all of the findings are now available on the BAG web site in various reports (below). In 1981, such a topic did not exist in Scotland beyond the immediate environs of the Anglo/Scottish border. A major *new* chapter in the architectural and social history of southern Scotland has now been presented, almost uniquely by BAG.

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