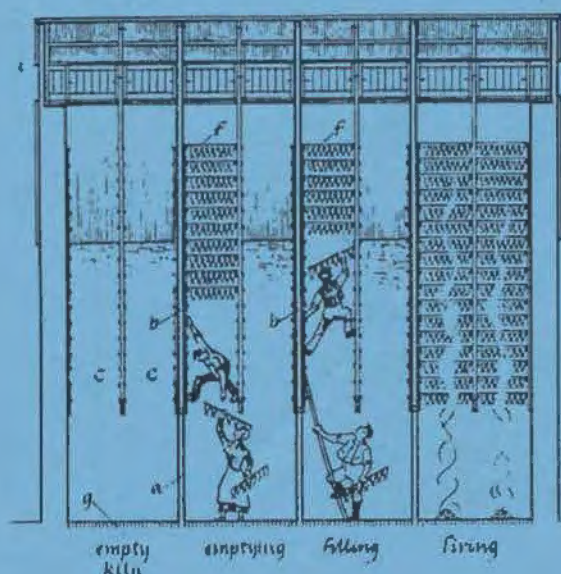
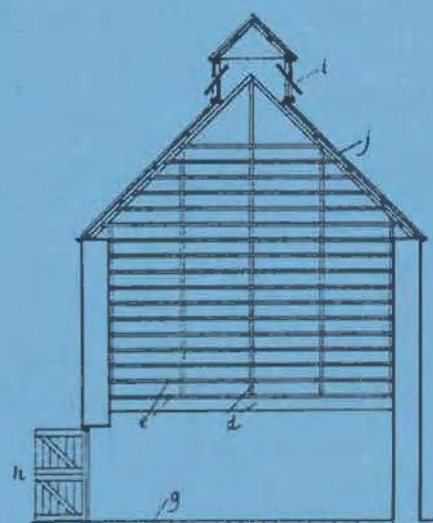


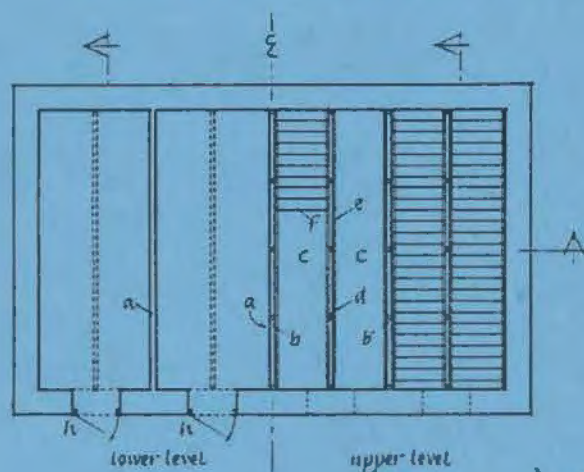
CAITHNESS
WEEKEND STUDY TOUR
16th - 18th May 1992



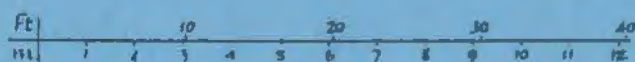
LONGITUDINAL SECTION



TRANSVERSE SECTION



PLAN OF KILNS



5'-9" x 1 1/2" x 1" tenter-stick

PRINCIPAL FEATURES

- a lower brick partition
- b upper boarded partition
- c voids
- d timber partition on bridge-beam
- e horizontal rails at 12" c/s
- f tenter-sticks
- g brick firing-floor
- h split doors
- i ridge ventilator
- j corrugated iron roof

GDH

Acknowledgements

The Architectural Heritage Society of Scotland would like to thank all the owners who have kindly given their permission for us to visit their property and to make this tour possible.

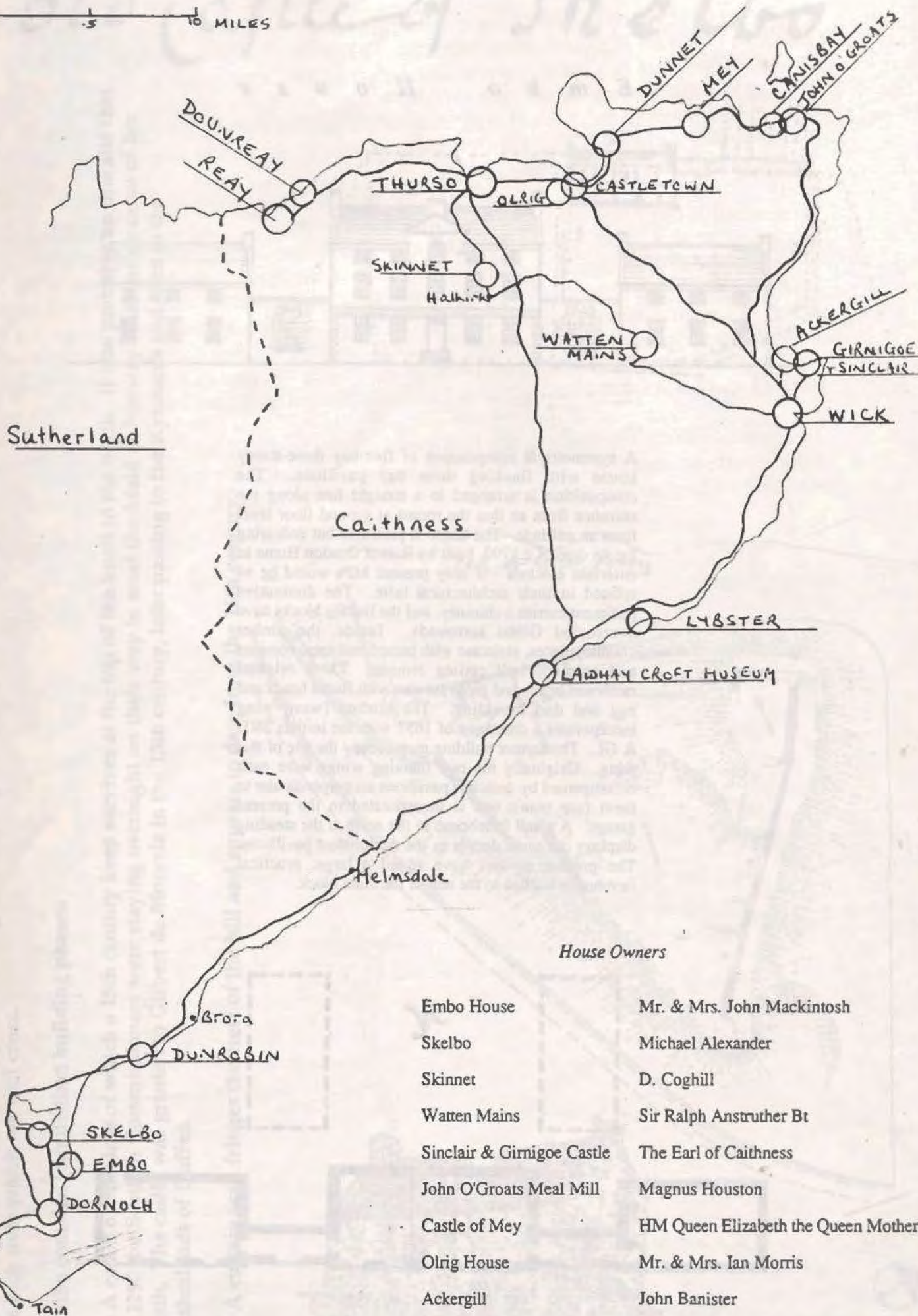
Much assistance with the planning has been generously given by Lyn Leet, architect in Thurso, Simon Montgomery and Andrew Kerr (the Kilmaichlie one).

The tour notes have been produced courtesy of Simpson & Brown and written by Marion Brune, Simon Green, John Sanders and Ross Sweetland, and culled from a variety of sources, especially the RCAHMS. The Society apologises for any errors or inadvertent infringements of copyright.

0 5 10 MILES

Sutherland

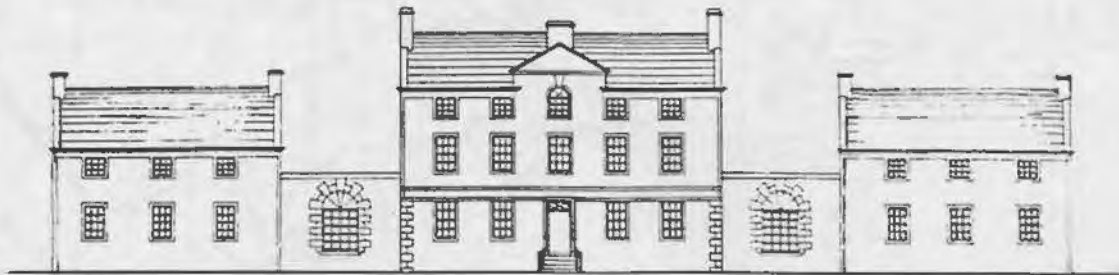
Caithness



House Owners

Embo House	Mr. & Mrs. John Mackintosh
Skelbo	Michael Alexander
Skinnet	D. Coghill
Watten Mains	Sir Ralph Anstruther Bt
Sinclair & Girmigoe Castle	The Earl of Caithness
John O'Groats Meal Mill	Magnus Houston
Castle of Mey	HM Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother
Orlig House	Mr. & Mrs. Ian Morris
Ackergill	John Banister
Dunrobin Castle	Lord Strathnaver

E m b o H o u s e



A symmetrical composition of five-bay three-storey house with flanking three bay pavilions. The composition is arranged in a straight line along the entrance front so that the rooms at ground floor level form an enfilade. The house is primitive but endearing for its date of c.1790, built by Robert Gordon Hume to entertain electors - if only present MPs would be so refined in their architectural taste. The diminutive pediment carries a chimney, and the linking blocks have overscaled Gibbs surrounds. Inside, the timber chimneypieces, staircase with turned balistres, cornices and entrance hall ceiling remain. Three original rainwater heads and pipes survive with fluted heads and egg and dart moulding. The kitchen (west) wing incorporates a datestone of 1657 with the initials SRD & GL. The former building may occupy the site of this wing. Originally the two flanking wings were each accompanied by detached pavillions set perpendicular to them (see plan); one is incorporated in the present garage. A small farmhouse to the north at the steading displays the same details as the demolished pavillions. The present owners have added a large, practical farmhouse kitchen to the rear of the main block.

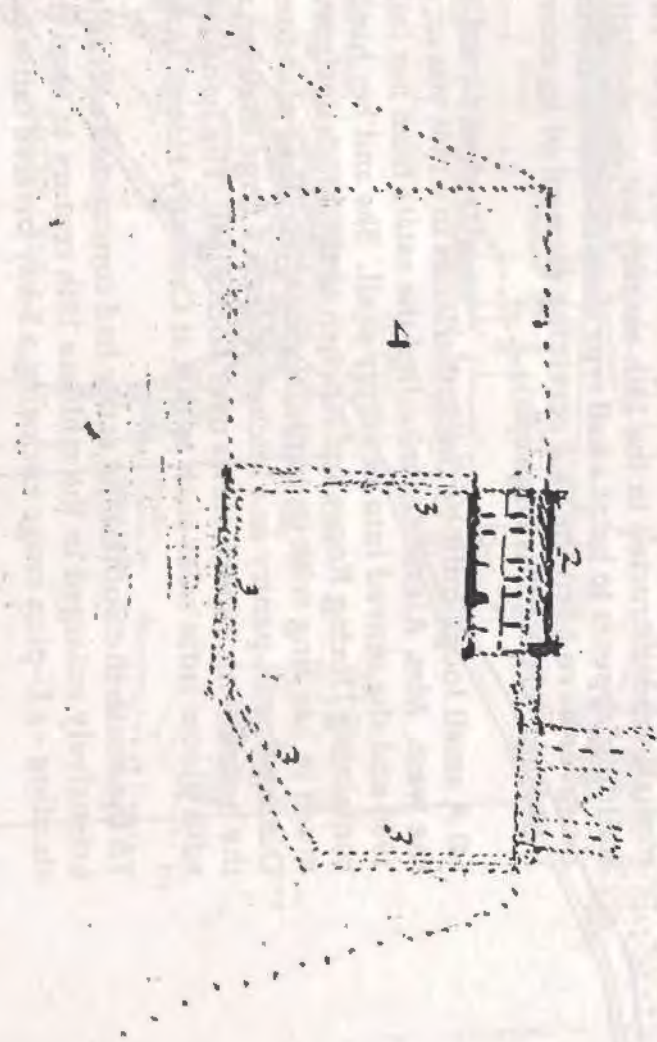
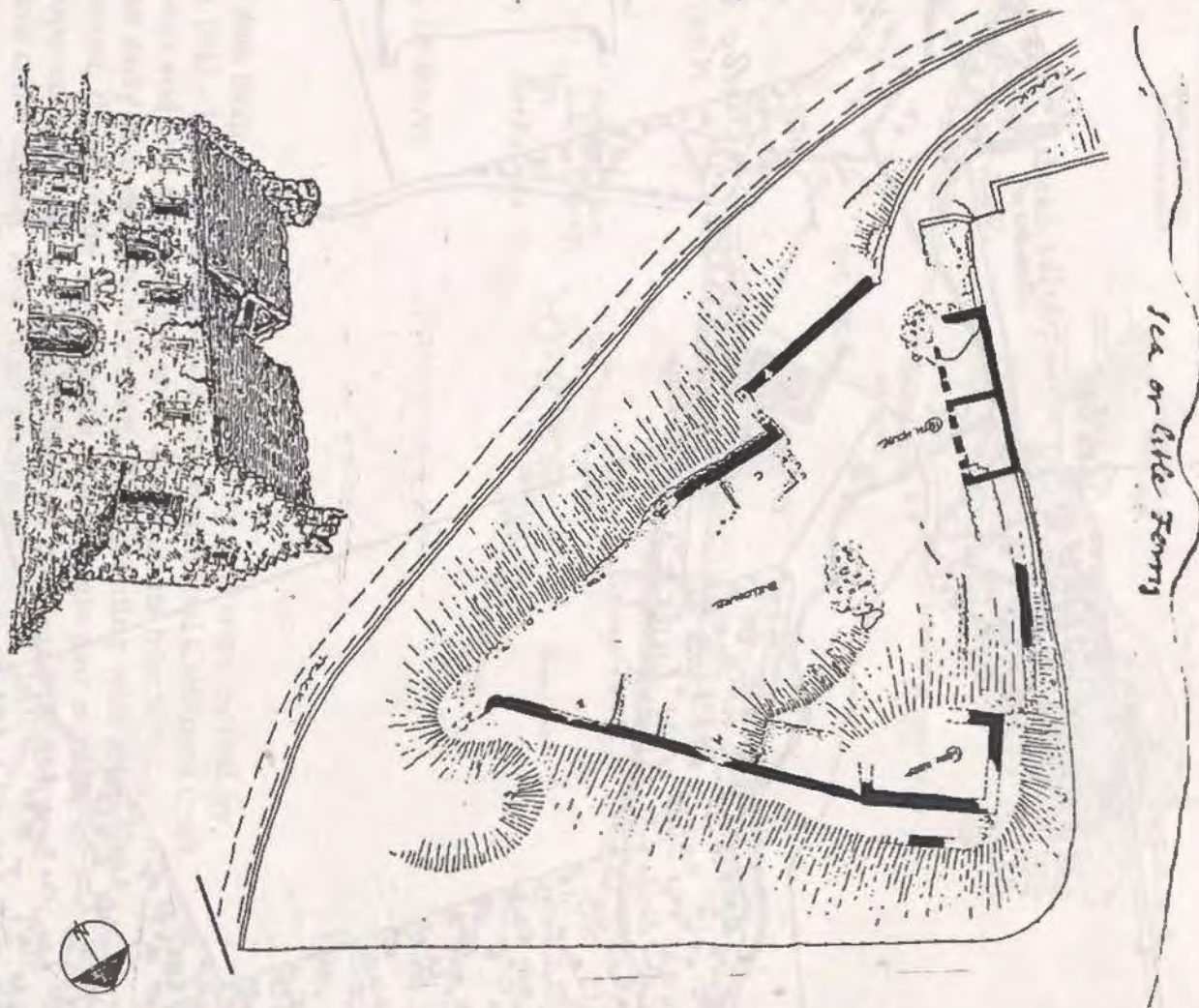


Skelbo occupies a prominent knoll commanding the important ferry crossing at Little Ferry over Loch Fleet on the route northward. The importance of this crossing was only superseded by Telford's construction of a causeway at the western shore of the loch over which we will cross.

Skelbo contains four distinct building phases:

(1) A castle of enceinte of which a 15th century keep survives at the top of the knoll to the north. It was probably on this site that in 1290 the Scottish Commissioners were staying overnight on their way to meet the Maid of Norway when news came of her death. The castle was granted to Gilbert de Moravia in the 13th century, later passing to the Kynnards and then to the Sutherlands of Duffus.

(2) A curtain wall fringes the crest of the hill and appears to date from the 16th century.



00 Castle of Skelbo

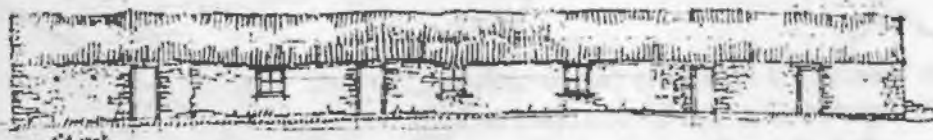
Mussel Scalp

(3) At the south west corner of the enclosure is a two storey and attic building of the 16th century with 18th century alterations. The ground floor consists of two barrel vaulted chambers originally only with external access. The upper floors were partially reconstructed in the 18th century but some original windows survive. The building appears to be of a hall type close to those found in the Borders. It may however have been the sole surviving element of an extensive range of courtyard buildings serving this large castle.

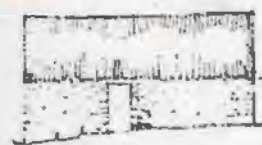
(4) A small lodge built by the Sutherlands in c.1866 sits on an adjoining hillside to the west. Mrs. Alexander inherited the estate from her father Colonel Wignall in 1966 and she moved into an empty shell. She and her husband added a new wing containing Dining Room and Kitchen to the south designed by a local architect very much in keeping with its baronial character. They also combined the existing Dining Room, pantry and kitchen to form a large drawing room on the west side of the house with superb views over Loch Fleet. The house was exquisitely furnished with pieces from sales such as that at Cromarty House and from London.

To the south the Sutherland estate had constructed a steading in c.1812 but this was extensively enlarged in the mid/late 19th century to form the magnificent 7-bay steading - a U-plan range enclosing a 5-bay covered cattle court.

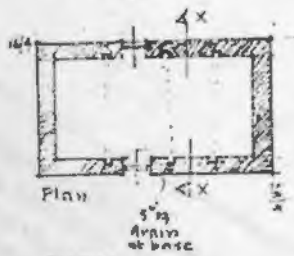




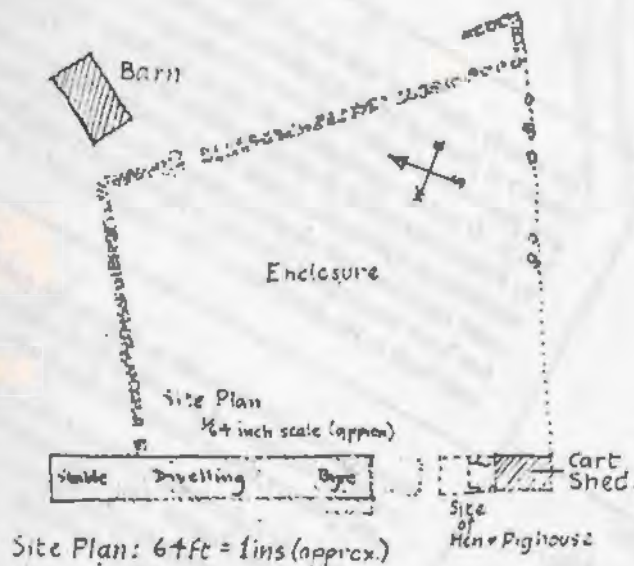
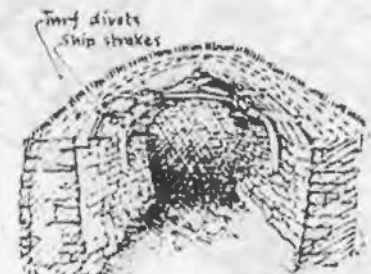
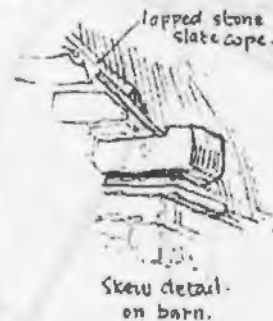
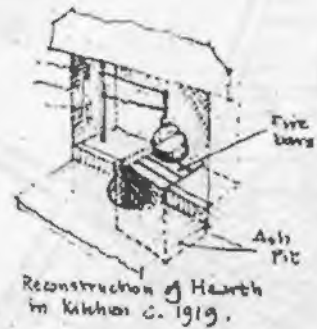
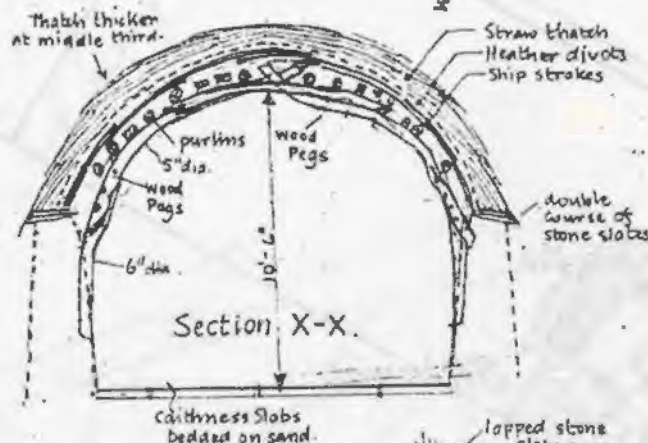
Plan to 1/24th scale



S.E. elevation



BARN.



Site Plan: 64ft = 1ins (approx.)



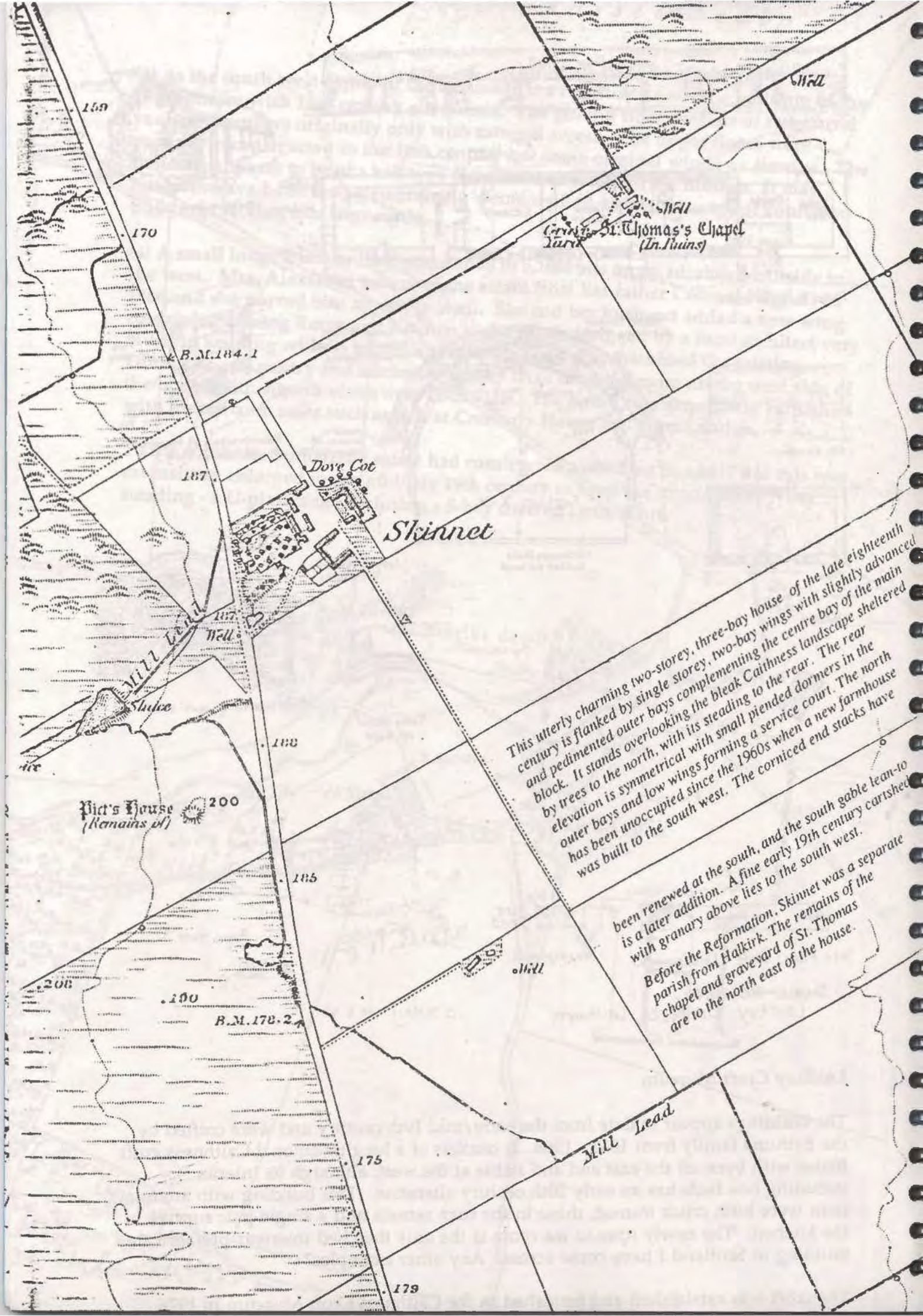
SMALL-HOLDING,
Laidhay, Dunbeath, Caithness

G.D.H. 18.6.68.

Laidhay Croft Museum

The buildings appear to date from the early/mid 19th century and were crofted by the Bethune family from 1842 - 1968. It consists of a long traditional Caithness croft house with byre off the east end and stable at the west, although its interior including box beds has an early 20th century alteration. This building with attendant barn were both cruck framed; those in the barn remain and a single pair survive in the kitchen. The newly opened tea room is the only thatched interwar prefabricated building in Scotland I have come across. Any other examples?

The croft was established and furnished as the Caithness Croft Museum in 1976.

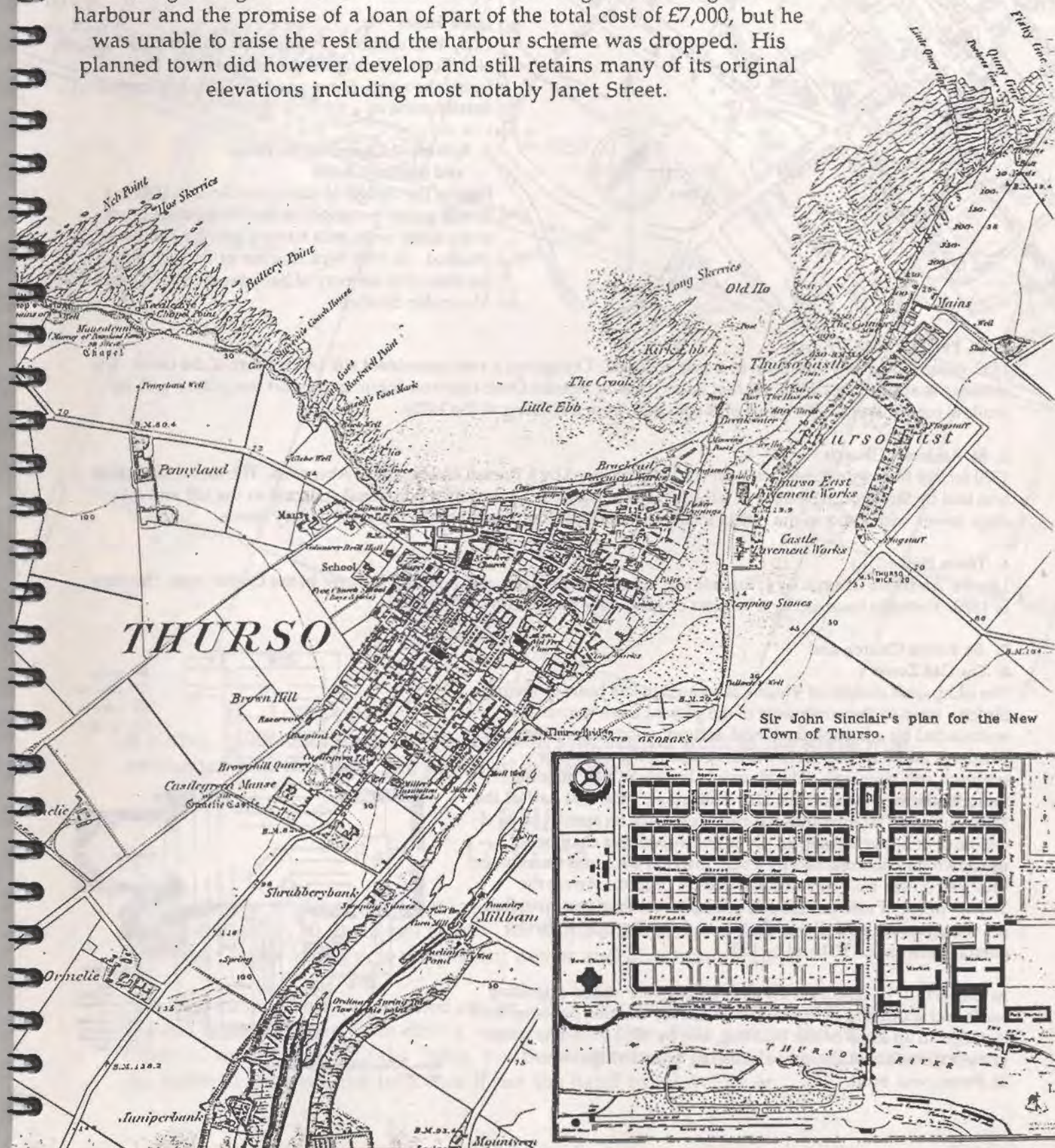


This utterly charming two-storey, three-bay house of the late eighteenth century is flanked by single storey, two-bay wings with slightly advanced and pedimented outer bays complementing the centre bay of the main block. It stands overlooking the bleak Caithness landscape sheltered by trees to the north, with its steading to the rear. The rear elevation is symmetrical with small piended dormers in the outer bays and low wings forming a service court. The north has been unoccupied since the 1960s when a new farmhouse was built to the south west. The corniced end stacks have

been renewed at the south, and the south gable lean-to is a later addition. A fine early 19th century carished with granary above lies to the south west. Before the Reformation, Skinnet was a separate parish from Halkirk. The remains of the chapel and graveyard of St. Thomas are to the north east of the house.

In the 18th century Thurso was the social centre of Caithness and supported a sizable market for the majority of the county's produce. Thurso dealt in corn from the land and in cod and ling, but the currents in the Pentland Firth did not facilitate fishing from the small boats then used. In 1735 it was described as "a neat fashionable little town with one principal street, several wynds and sufficient buildings in it."

In 1800 local landowners paid through subscription for a bridge over Thurso designed by Robert Tulloch. In 1802 Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster managed to get an Act of Parliament authorising the building of a harbour and the promise of a loan of part of the total cost of £7,000, but he was unable to raise the rest and the harbour scheme was dropped. His planned town did however develop and still retains many of its original elevations including most notably Janet Street.





1. St. Clair Hotel

2. Miller Institution

Formerly the Miller Academy, was built by W. Scott of Edinburgh in 1859. Its Roman Doric tetrastyle portico and peristyle drum tower form a fitting terminus to Sinclair Street. It was donated by Alexander Miller of Thurso and Free Church minister of Buckie, Banffshire at an approximate cost of £1,500. There is a late 19th century extension to the rear. Unfortunately the ashlar frontage is engulfed in a cloak of linostone.

Janet Street

Early 19th century development, part of Sir John's New Town forming the grandest street in Thurso facing the river. Some good fanlights and period details survive.

3. Episcopal Church of St. Peter and the Holy Rood

Built to the design of Alexander Ross in 1885 is a simple gothic rectangle, it has an entrance porch at the south west with narrow circular bell tower attached. In 1905 Mrs. Sinclair of Barroch gifted the chancel in memory of her younger son Norman Alexander Sinclair.

4. St. Peters Parish Church

1832, designed by William Burn at a cost of £6,000. Occupying a very prominent site in the heart of the town. The entrance is at the base of the 140 foot tower. Inside, Roman Doric cast-iron columns support the gallery with its shallow reeded front. The pews probably date from a refitting of the 1870s.

5. St. Andrews Church

1870 former free church, replacing one of 1844, designed by J. Russell Mackenzie of Aberdeen. The foundation stone was laid by Sir George Sinclair of Ulbster. The entrance is flanked by a polygonal staircase to the left and a 4 stage tower with spire to the right. Inside there are elegant ornate bombe cast-iron gallery fronts.

6. Town Hall

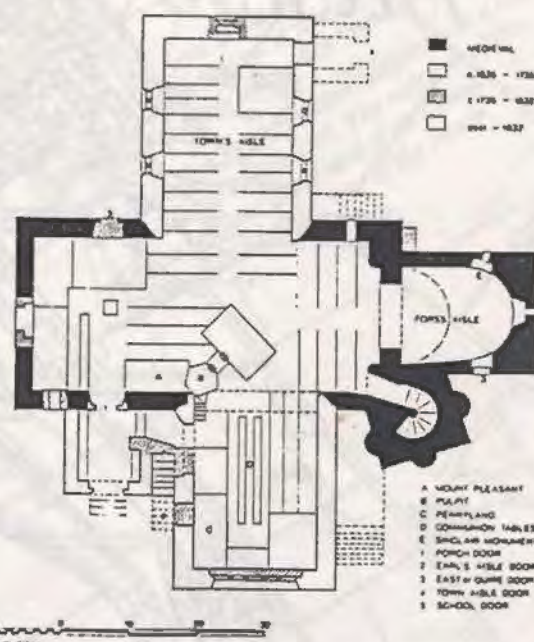
Like St. Andrews Church by J. Russell Mackenzie of Aberdeen, this building is again in the Gothic style, this time of 1870. Partially financed by a bequest of Alexander Henderson of Thurso.

7. St. Peters Church and

8. The Old Town

The old parish church of Thurso is located in the heart of the pre Sir John town to the north west of the present town centre. It is surrounded by accomplished local authority housing utilising old buildings and building new whilst retaining the vernacular tradition and language. The church is largely of two building periods: the first half of the 12th century and the first half of the 18th century. The Romanesque parts consist of an apsidal chancel and nave of about 21 metres. Over the chancel is a chamber of unknown function reached by a stair tower at the south west corner. This stair tower may have been a marker or lookout over the Thurso River. Professor Eric Fernie believes the closest parallels are the churches at Egilsay, Orphir and the Brough of Birsay, datable between c.1100 and c.1150.

In the early 17th century, two large aisles were added extending north and south and in the mid 18th century wooden galleries were installed in all arms of the building, but by 1832 even this failed to meet the needs of the ever expanding town and the new St. Peters was built.





A harled, two-storey, three-bay house with symmetrical front to the south with service wing to the rear. The pediment is initialled:

RHS
17 IS 63

and the house is recorded as having been improved by the late Sir Robert Anstruther about 50 years ago (1840). Sir Ralph Anstruther of Balcaskie, Equerry to H.M. the Queen Majesty, is the present owner and direct descendent.

The interior retains fine panelled rooms. The bow ended principal room on the ground floor - formerly the dining room - retains fine china niches; the two columns were inserted in the 1950s, but their capitals are original. The decoration of the stairhall suggests the influence if not the hand of John Fowler.



WICK

WICK BAY

Upper Pultneytown

Lower Pultneytown

Broadhaven

Hillhead

Louisburgh

Janetstown

Mill of Man

Pultney Mill

Pultney Distillery

Pultney Water Works

Pultney Mill

Pultney Water Works

Pultney Mill

Pultney Water Works

WICK

Wick is recorded in the sagas as Vik and appears on a map of about 1250. It was raised to the status of a royal burgh in 1589, the year after it was sacked by the Earl of Sutherland. Wick remained a "small town of little trade" until the boom in the herring industry. The harbour was built by Telford between 1803 and 1810. Across the river the British Fisheries Society commenced the construction of a new town, Pulteneytown, (after Sir William Pulteney, governor of the Society, a Johnstone of Westerhall who had married the heiress to the earldom of Bath) to Telford's designs. By the mid-19th century Wick was the herring capital of the world.

An advertisement in the *Aberdeen Journal* on 6th April 1808 read:

TO FISHERMEN, FISH CURERS,
MANUFACTURERS, &c.
PULTENEY TOWN N.E. Coast of SCOTLAND

NOTICE is hereby given, that the British Society for extending the Fisheries and improving the Sea Coasts, are now constructing and have considerably proceeded with a secure and commodious Harbour on the South side of the bay of Wick, which will be capable of containing above 100 Fishing vessels, and with such a depth of water as will enable vessels drawing nine feet water, to enter and depart at high water in neap tides and at half tides in spring tides; and immediately adjoining to the harbour the scite [*sic*] of a town has been laid out by Mr. TELFORD, with proper situations for Curing-Houses, an extensive Grass-plot for the repairing and backing of Nets, a sufficient space for the erection of frames to dry them, and a healthy walk for the inhabitants, commanding a full view of the Bay and Offing.

The Town and Harbour are within little more than half a mile of the populous town of Wick, and communicate with it by a newly erected Stone Bridge. The ground belonging to the Society is all flat and capable of cultivation. There is a regular and plentiful supply of Water, with a sufficient fall adjacent to the Village and Harbour, for several water wheels; and there is an excellent Spring within a short distance of the Town and Harbour. The Herrings have set in, on this part of the coast, for the last 30 years, without a single failure, about the 1st August; in the last season no fewer than 30,000 barrels were taken, and, in the opinion of the fishermen upon the spot, the quantity might have been doubled, had the harbour been then sufficiently advanced to afford shelter to the boats.

The Town is divided into Building Lots of 50 feet in front by 100 in depth, which may be feued in perpetuity at the easy rate of 25 and 20 shillings, according to the position of the Lots. The choice will be regulated by the priority of the application, the first year's rent remitted to those who shall have completed their Houses within the year; and the first 12 real fishermen who become settlers will receive other advantages. The Curing House Lots will be disposed of by auction in July next, and future notice will be given of the day and place.

Further particulars may be learned from the Society's Agent, James Williamson Esq., Upper Ackergill, Wick; from Lewis Gordon Esq., W.S. Edinburgh; and their Secretary, Gilbert Salton, Esq., Furnival's Inn, London.

Bridge Street

This street contains a concentration of interesting buildings. The Town Hall is dated 1828 with its prominent central tower but as yet the architect is unknown. The nearby Royal Bank of Scotland is of 1830, a freestanding bank house.

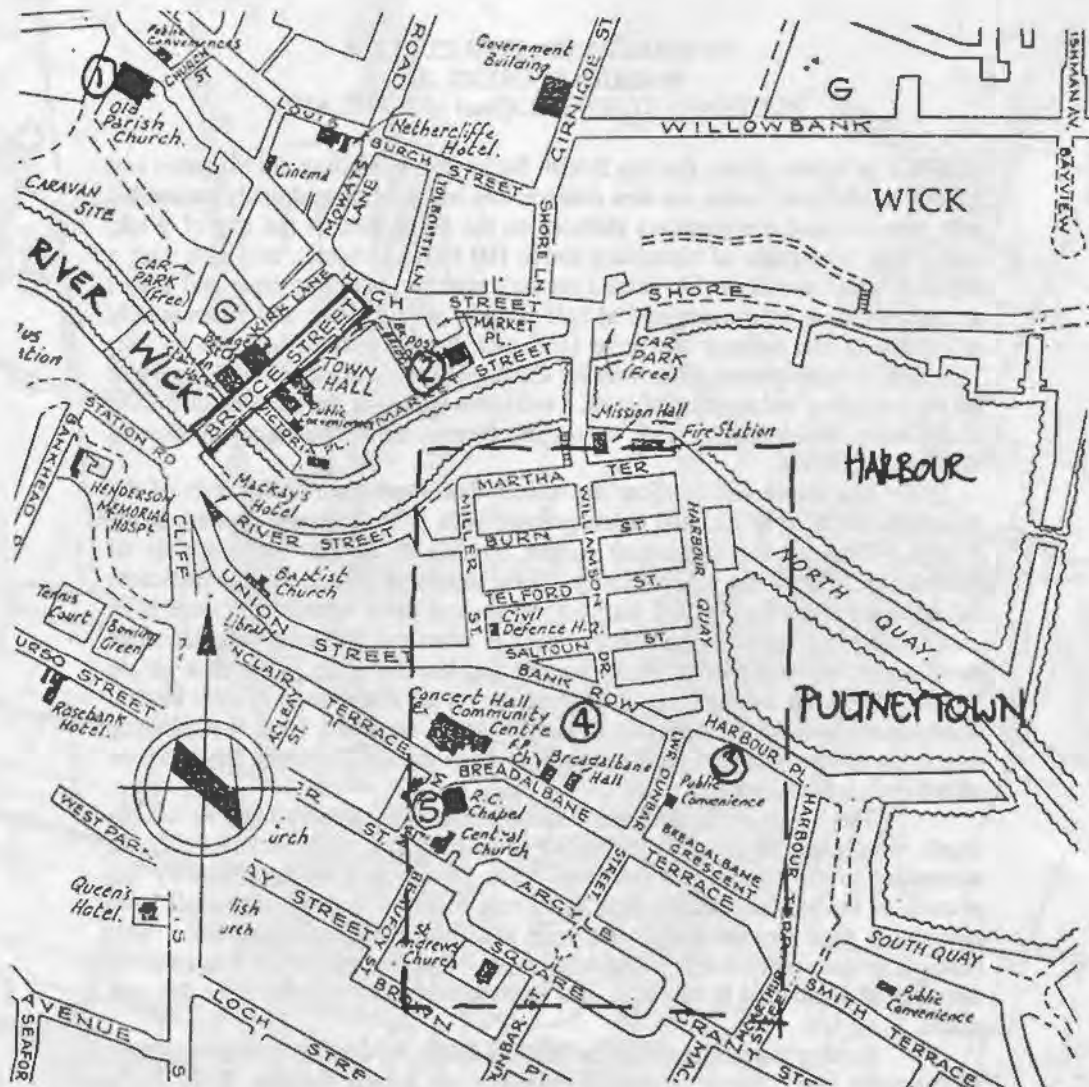
Sheriff Court is by David Rhind in the Italianate taste popularised by Queen Victoria and her consort, constructed 1862 - 66 and built on the site of the previous courthouse. Bridge Street Parish Church is perpendicular on a constricted site by William J. Gray of Berwick, 1862 - 64, formerly the Wick Free Church. Clydesdale Bank was built in 1875 by J. Russell Mackenzie, previously the Aberdeen Town & Country Bank in a Venetian Renaissance style. The Bank of Scotland was built in 1935 by John Keppie and Henderson Architects of Glasgow, reconstructing earlier premises for the British Linen Bank, whose crest it retains on its polished ashlar facade.

1. Old Parish Church

A simple rectangle with spire topped square tower to the south east. Its galleried interior survives. Foundation stone laid on 21st November 1822.

2. Post Office in the Market Place: a Scots vernacular revival of 1912 by W.T. Oldrieve.

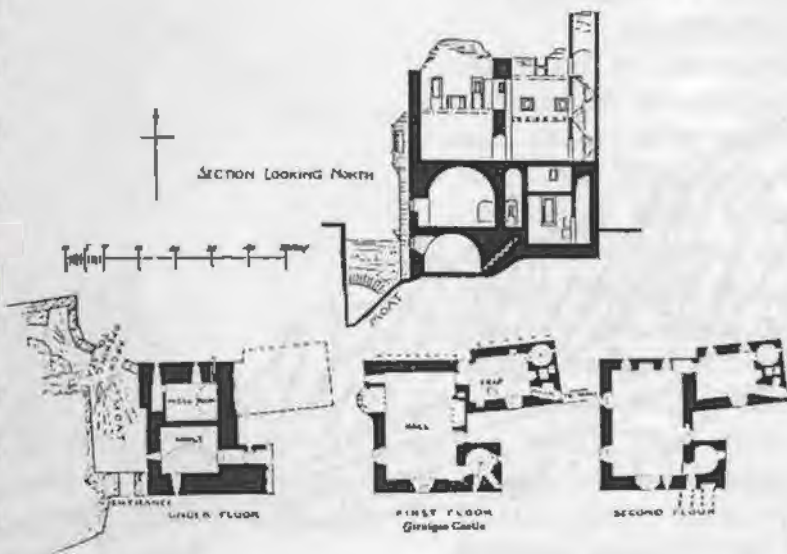
3. The Round House, Harbour Place is by Thomas Telford, 1807, with its shallow bayed front commanding an excellent view of his harbour.



4. Wick Heritage Centre: 19 - 27 Bank Row

Last surviving example of a once typical Wick curing yard. It is said to date from c.1830 and includes a curing kiln and numerous exhibits. It is being specially opened for us and gives a perfect introduction to the development and history of Wick.

5. St. Joachim Roman Catholic Church, Malcolm Street. Built by Father Walter Lovi in c.1835, the site being donated by a grateful community for his services during the 1832 cholera epidemic - a simple classical box interior recast.



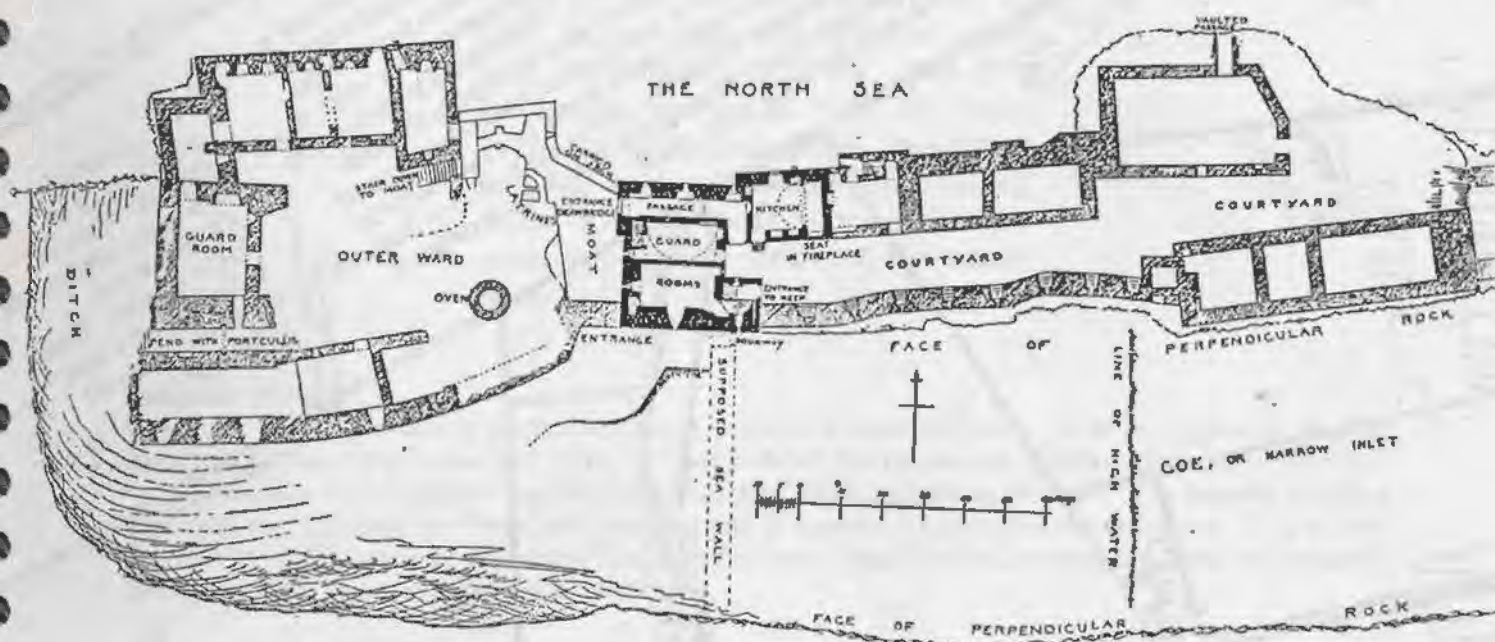
Castle Girnigoe (in ruins)



Castle Sinclair (in ruins)

Girnigoe Castle must be one of the most spectacularly situated in Scotland. Goe is the Caithness term for the deep narrow sea inlet on the south side of the rock on which the castle stands. The castle has an outer court forming Sinclair and an inner court forming Girnigoe separated by an artificial ditch (originally crossed by drawbridge) about fifteen feet deep cut through the rock which is extremely precipitous, shelving away into the sea to the north. The most significant remains are those of the keep, a U-shaped block which rises sheer from the inner face of the ditch. The keep at Girnigoe is of four storeys with the lower two storeys vaulted. The hall ran across the western block of the keep with an oriel window above the entrance passage. The illustration shown here is a restoration by McGibbon and Ross. The walls of the remaining courtyard buildings are very fragmentary and give little evidence to their date of construction; McGibbon and Ross assumed them to be secondary to the keep building.

The outer ward is the part properly called Castle Sinclair and seems to have been erected, in 1606, as a house independent from Girnigoe Castle forming three sides of a courtyard. There was a further ditch to the landward side of the western buildings, again with a pend and portcullis. McGibbon and Ross note that some of the buildings were of considerable quality with finely carved and moulded corbels for diagonally set windows. They also note that some of the interior walls are built with clay instead of mortar. The castle was abandoned in 1690.





Hang

B.M. 41.8

B.M. 29.3

26°

John o' Groat's Mill
(Corn)

B.M. 57.1

Footbridge

55

56

57

57

B.M. 58.7
Ha' of 1

The complex, originally of 1750 but rebuilt in 1901, comprises a large and a small mill, a wheel-house, a rubble range and a bridge. The large, south-facing, L-plan mill of three storeys boasts tooled rubble dressings. Of great interest is the three-storey kiln which takes up the outer two bays of the east wing. The entrance to the kiln is at its base, while the main mill entrance is to the right in the south elevation of the re-entrant. The lean-to wheel-house abuts the west rubble piers. The smaller mill of two storeys and three bays flanks the west side of the lade (which serves both mills). Water is deflected from here to serve the north gable wheel.

The complex, completed by irregular, single two-storey rubble. All roofs are of Caithness slate. There is also a small rubble bridge with a dressed rubble arch ring.

Well

CANISBAY PARISH CHURCH, ST. DROSTANS

Although of mediaeval origins, it has been much rebuilt in the 17th century and altered 1720 and 1724 with further work in 1833 and 1891. It is of cruciform plan with square tower with its distinctive saddleback roof at west gable with skewbutt dated 1720. There is the mural tomb of the Groat family under the south gable window. The south aisle is dated 1724. Inside the south aisle acts as an entrance porch to the T-plan church. The north aisle formerly housed the heritors gallery - the Sinclairs of Mey framed by giant reeded pilasters supporting a dentilled and corniced lintel. Largely a late 19th century interior including the square plan pulpit.

DUNNET PARISH CHURCH

A simple T-plan church with a possibly pre-Reformation core. The north aisle was added in 1837. A late 17th century two storey tower is situated at the west gable. The plain interior is furnished plain slightly raked 1837 box pews reminiscent of the near contemporary Glasite Meeting House. The pulpit in the centre of the south wall has an unusual upholstered buttoned back board. There is a memorial to Timothy Pont, Minister of Dunnet 1601 - 10 in the entrance hall; he was an early Scottish cartographer.

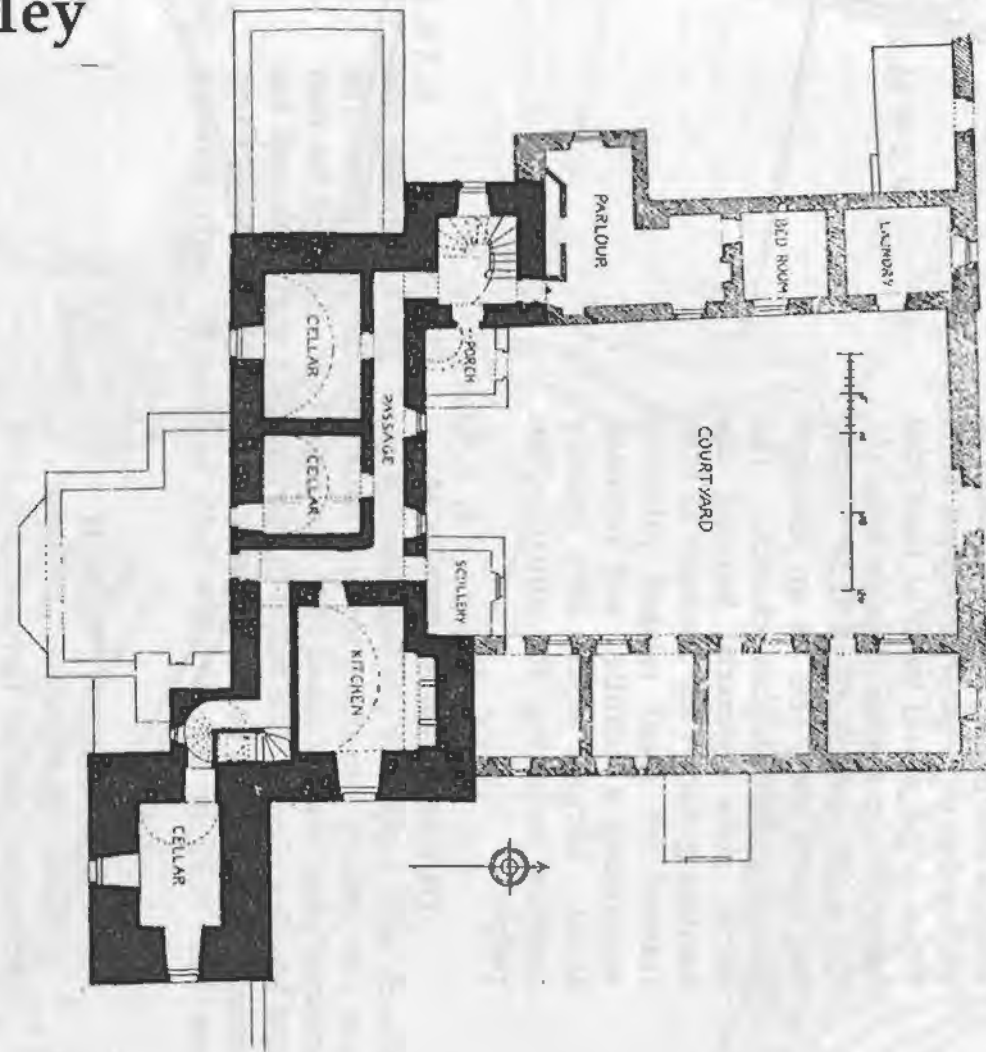
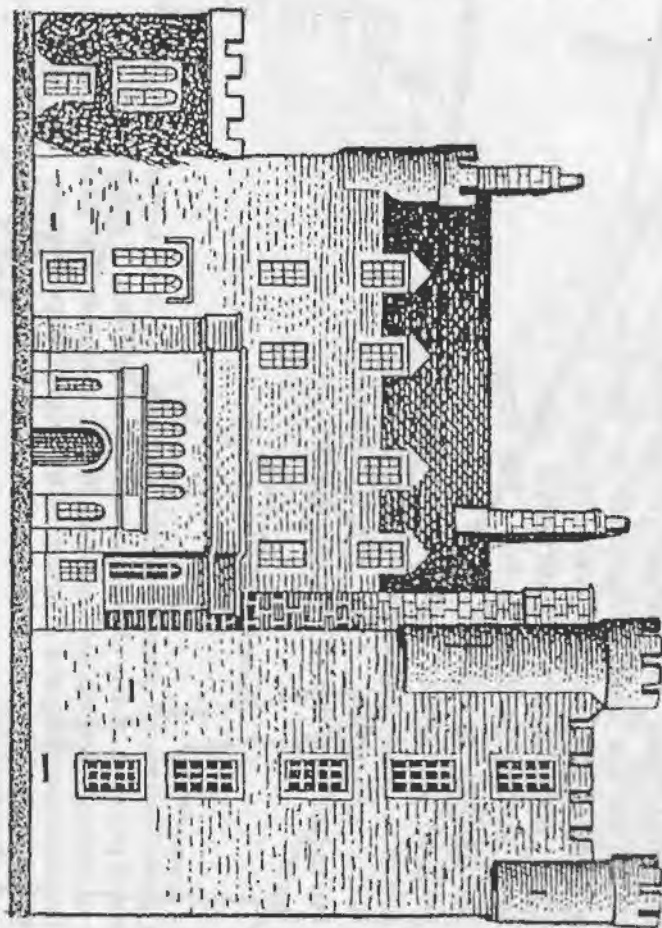
REAY PARISH CHURCH

A T-plan church dated 1739 with a projecting square tower at the east gable. A forestair in the tower lead to its first floor and another on the gable of the rear wing leads to the gallery. the interior was altered in 1933 but retains the original plan with communion table etc. The fine hexagonal pulpit of 1739 survives with its panelled sides moulded coping, and pilastered back-board with moulded and modillioned cornice near the centre of the south wall.

Westside, Dunnet

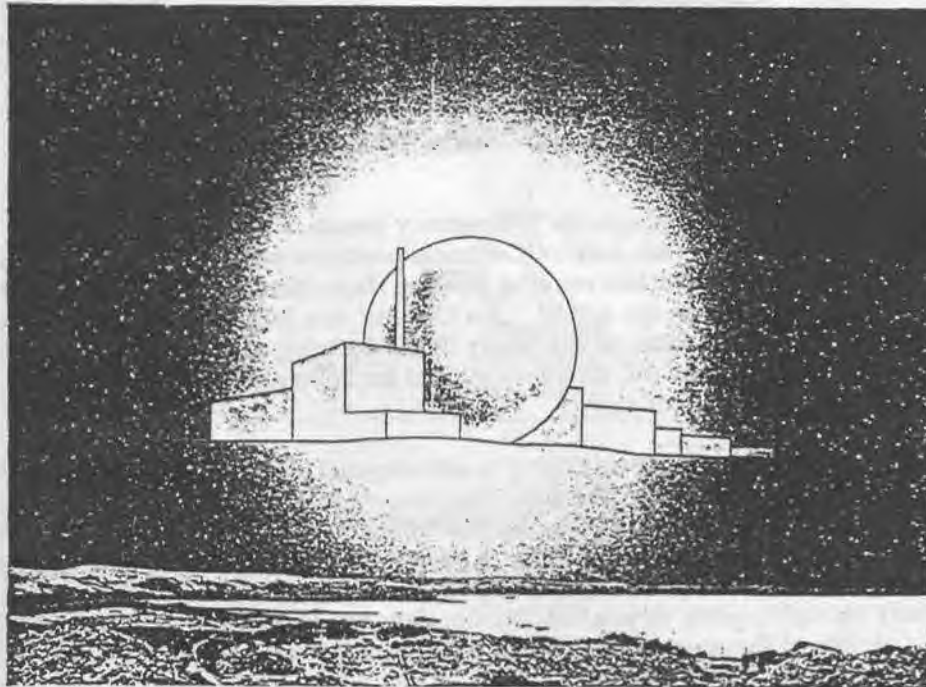
Internally and externally a particularly well preserved croft complex. It is of L-plan form with detached thatched pig house and privy. It clearly shows the vernacular tradition of using whatever is at hand with a wide variety of roofing materials for Caithness Slab to asbestos. The interior contains box beds and interesting v-boarded panelling and a wealth of traditional impedimenta. The sort of interior that the Laidhay Museum Trust would have liked to find before they had to create it themselves! Its future is as yet undecided.

Castle of Mey



The Castle of Mey was built in 1566 - 72 by George, Fourth Earl of Caithness. It was subsequently re-named Barrogill Castle but the name reverted to Mey when the castle was purchased by H.M. the Queen Mother in c.1953.

The root of the castle is an extended Z-plan, with the main block lying east-west and a courtyard to the north. The north west tower contained the familiar arrangement of broad stair rising to first floor level with a smaller stair corbelled out in the re-entrant to reach the upper storeys. The south east tower rises to five storeys and is given the appearance of a keep. It has a turnpike stair rising for the full height in the re-entrant angle. The courtyard buildings are secondary. The entrance was moved from north west to south in 1819 by William Burn, who added an extensive baronial porch on the south elevation and a two-storey block containing the dining room to the west. Further work by William Burn was removed during the alterations which followed the Queen Mother's purchase of the house. The crest of H.M. the Queen Mother over the first floor dining room window was carved by Hew Lorimer in 1954.



DOUNREAY—

to mankind will be the reward...

Millions of people, with only a glimmering of what the Atomic Age can mean to mankind, stand amazed at the fantastic prospect of heat, light and power issuing from a source that cannot even be seen. These people of the world, for whom the atom will be harnessed for service, gather their news of this great new power, day by day, from newspapers, radio and television.

These men and women can feel a sense of pride in the achievement of harnessing this power for peace. We who are building the atomic station at Dounreay, and have learned the stature of the project, are honoured to have been entrusted with this major work—this heralding sign of the new age in Scotland's industrial life.

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Formed 370 million years ago, the sedimentary nature of the inherent Old Red Sandstone which underlies most of Caithness produces material which is distinctly flaggy in nature. Created as a result of repeated deposition and drying out of the freshwater sediments on the bed of "Lake Orcadia" this material extended in a basin from the Shetlands to south of the Moray Firth. Splitting easily into large parallel sided slabs, the stone is hard, durable and ideal for building purposes and the manufacture of pavement stones.

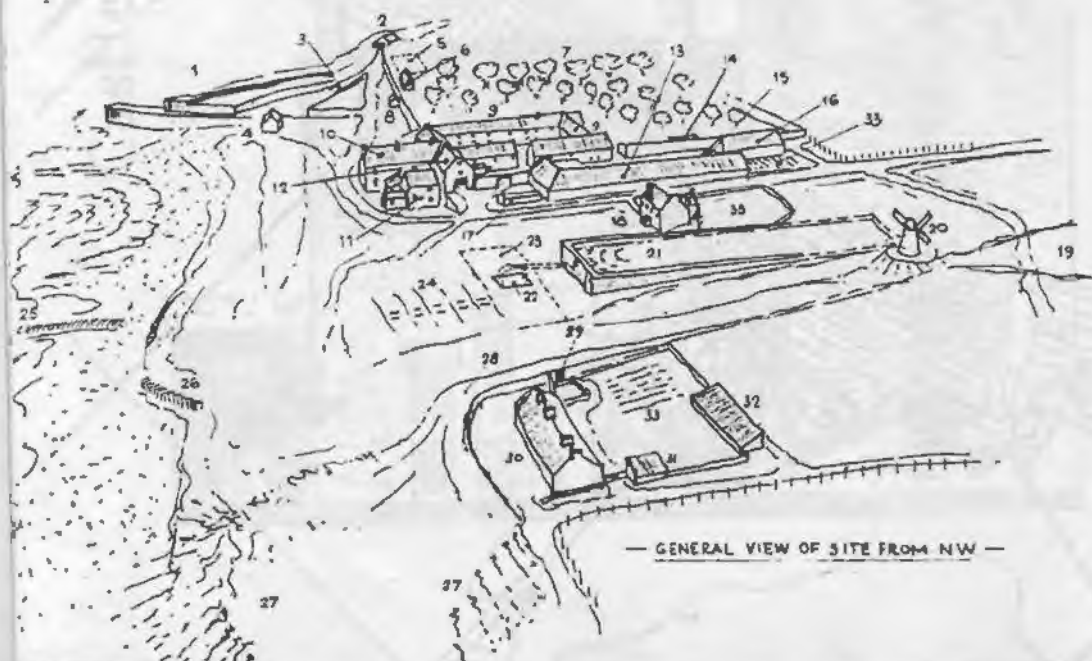
Consequently, it is perhaps surprising to discover that Caithness flagstone was only exploited commercially from the early 19th century and that the industry had a relatively short life span. It was established by Sheriff James Trail (1758 - 1843) when he moved to Castlehill House in 1824. Although several cargoes of stone had been exported from there in 1793, regular shipments only occurred from 1825 onwards. Initially carried to ports throughout Britain, slabs were ultimately transported to a wide variety of European and North and South American countries.

The Old Castlehill Harbour was considerably enlarged by Trail. He also set down a connecting bogey track from the quarries which lay to the north and west of Castletown. During this development the village population doubled within 15 years.

Using local stone in its construction, the harbour was designed to open to the north-east with its stilling basin lying in a north-west to south-east alignment to reduce the turbulence of the currents. The quaysides are extensive - being of large surface area to enable the ready stock piling and loading of pavement slabs. Nearby is a truncated conical windmill stump, 6.1m high, built of flagstone with a corbelled doorway. Most likely this provided power to drain the quarries to allow working. Six other windmills were constructed at neighbouring quarries in the immediate vicinity. Extensive stabling, office and a large steading were also constructed at the site to serve Trails House, which was destroyed in the 1960s, although a squash court constructed during the Army occupation still survives.

In 1895 the annual production stood at 15,000 tons overall, rising to 24,00 tons the following year and peaking at 35,000 tons in 1902, when over 1,000 men were employed. Production fell to only 5,000 tons by the outbreak of the 1st World War and, following the introduction of concrete pavement slabs in the 1920s, most of the quarries subsequently closed.

Castletown has both 19th and 20th century workers housing all using Caithness slab roofs.



DESCRIPTION OF ITEMS SHOWN ON SITE PL

- 1 Harbour.
- 2 Boat-house.
- 3 Slip-way.
- 4 Shed.
- 5 Site of Castlehill House.
- 6 Squash court.
- 7 Castlehill House grounds.
- 8 Harbour shed.
- 9 Steading for Castlehill House.
- 10 Dwelling house.
- 11 Harbour Office.
- 12 Water powered threshing barn.
- 13 Byre.
- 14 Kennels and pig-stys.
- 15 Pig-stys.
- 16 Cart shed.
- 17 Remains of earlier steading.
- 18 Pilots house.
- 19 Flagstone quarry.
- 20 Pumping windmill.
- 21 Pond.
- 22 Site of water wheel.
- 23 Site of flagstone works.
- 24 Site of flagstone saws.
- 25 Tail-race from water wheel pit.
- 26 Breakwater.
- 27 Spoil heap.
- 28 Tub-way track to spoil heap.
- 29 Access tunnel through tub-way bank.
- 30 Quarry workers housing.
- 31 Out building.
- 32 Out building.
- 33 Garden.

— GENERAL VIEW OF SITE FROM NW —

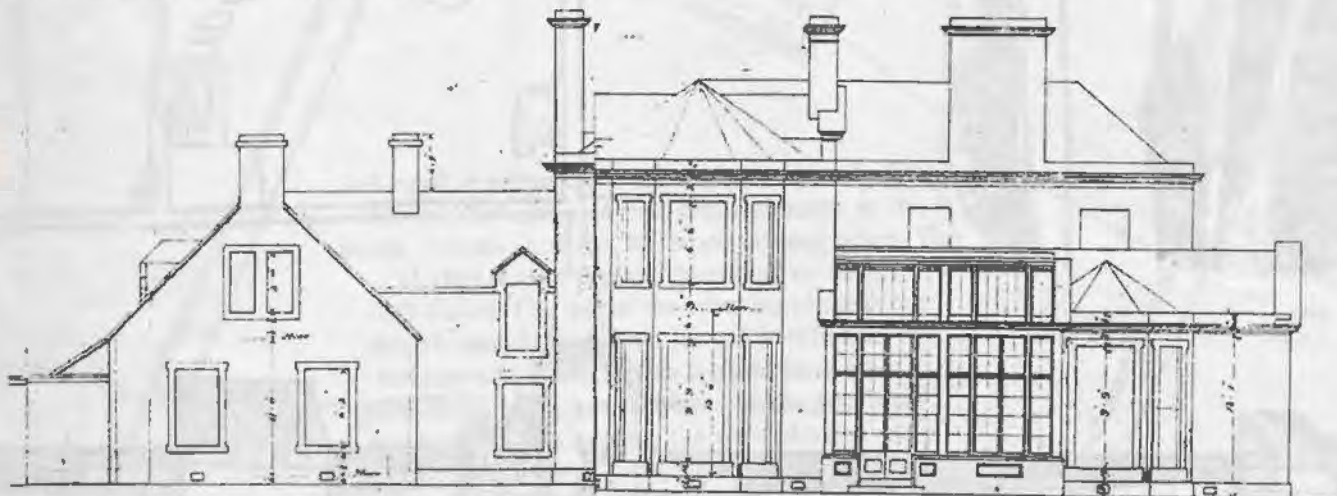
OLRIG HOUSE

East Elevation



The original house, built by Sir John Smith of Orlig, is of c. 1830-40 to which David Bryce proposed extensions in 1859 - 61. The earlier work is tooled ashlar with polished ashlar dressings and the Bryce and later work is harled with ashlar dressings. The original has giant pilasters separating the three bays of the principal east elevation. The elevations shown here are by Bryce and record his proposals of which few were executed. Bryce added the paired Roman Doric columned porch and refitted the first floor drawing room including enlarging the eastern window to a tripartite. A fair amount of the 1830 and 1860 work remains within. In the late 19th century the interior was exuberantly refitted in parts in the aesthetic taste, specifically the ground floor library and the suite of nursery rooms on the first floor. These contain unusual chimneypieces, panelling, tile work and curious ceilings. A Burmese inspired archway adds an idiosyncratic note to an otherwise plain service court, and appears to be of this latter period.

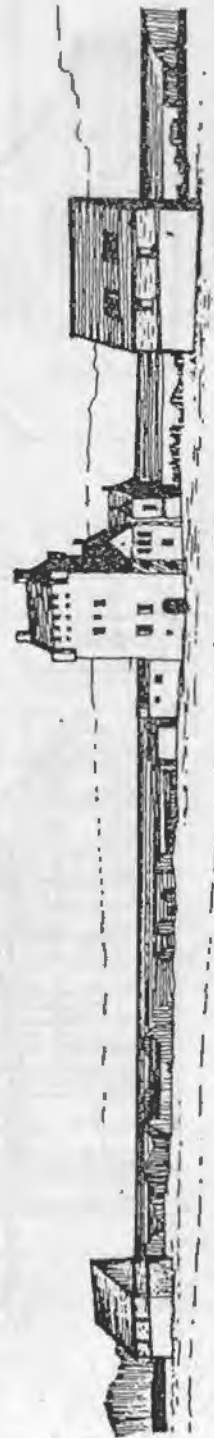
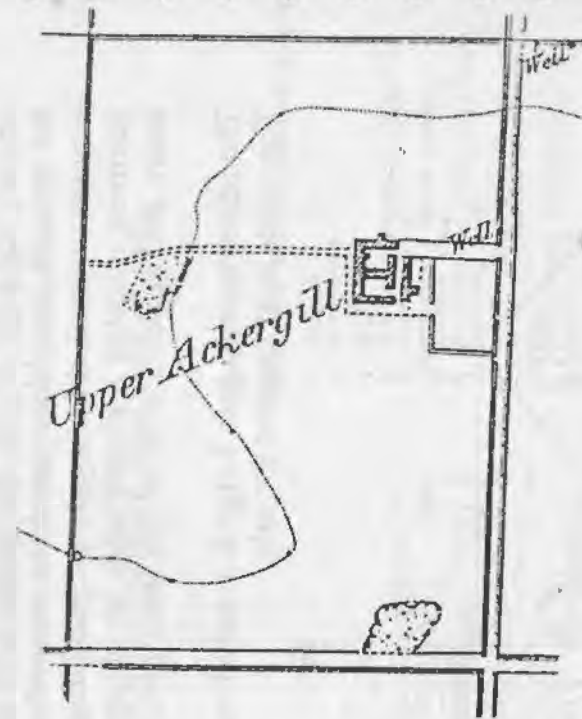
The idiosyncratic gate lodge is a polychromatic *tour de force* but is sadly vandalised. The estate is at present for sale.



J. Bryce 1861

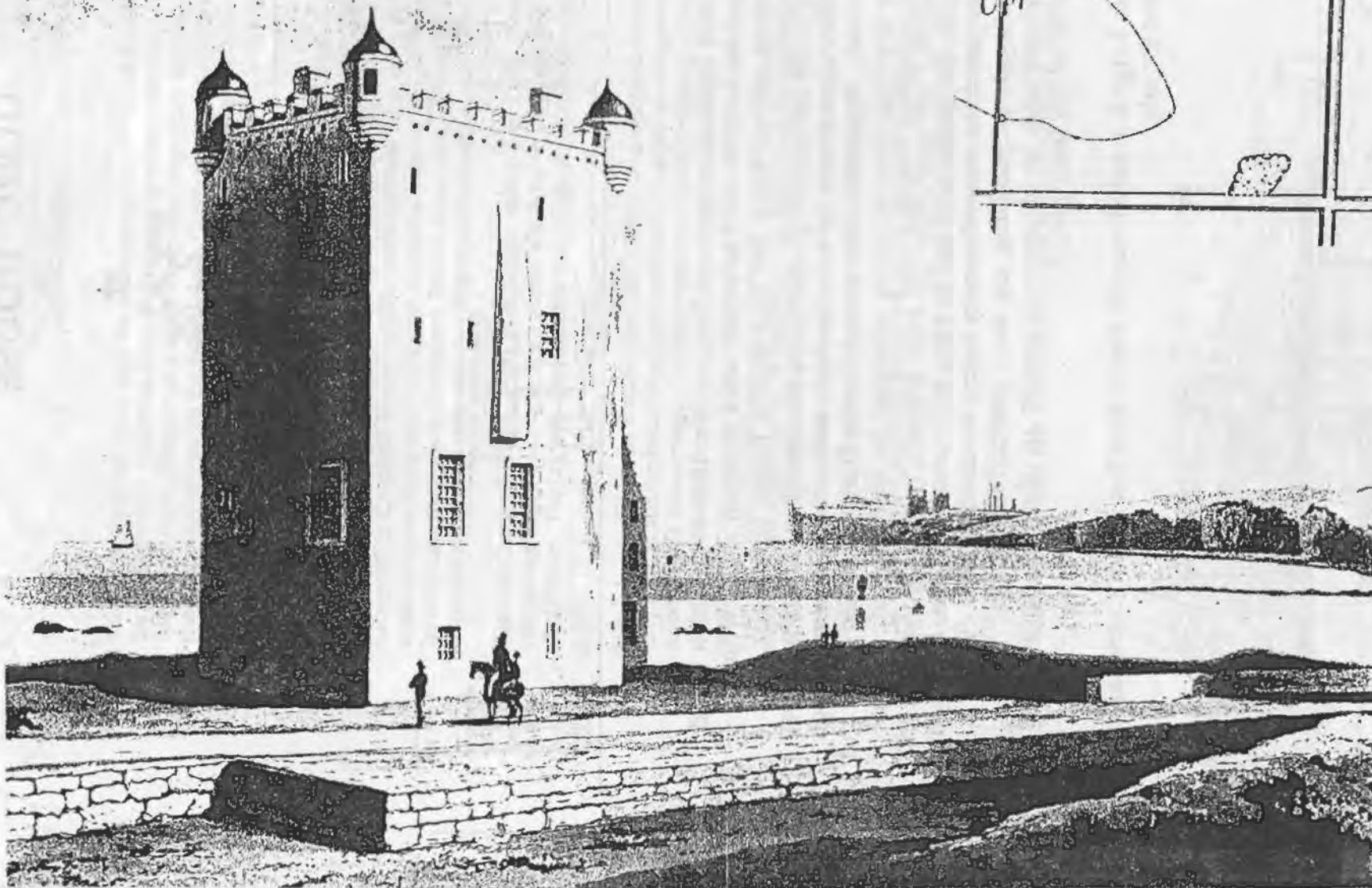
South Elevation

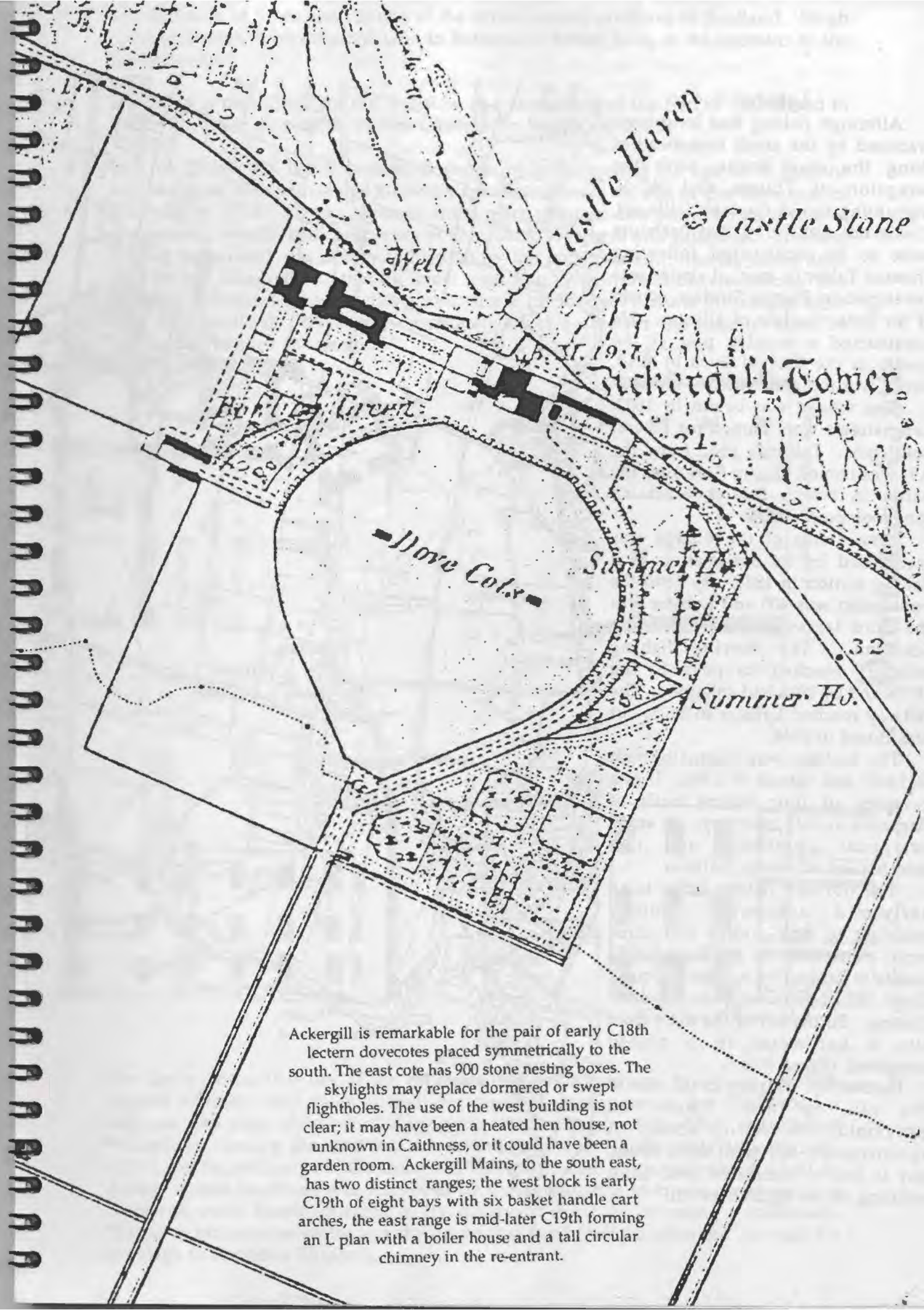
Ackergill is an unusually tall c.1500 five storey tower house with an early C18th wing to the north. In 1851-52 David Bryce made further alterations and added the extensions to the left and right of the main front. The caphouse, cable moulded decoration, the principal interiors including the creation of the dining room within the original great hall, and the stable range to the west are by Bryce. The house retains all the furniture and fittings associated with the C19th alterations. Most of it was made in Wick, a significant centre of furniture manufacture, by Traills of Wick.



Bruce Walker 78.

Ackergill Tower, Caithnessshire.





Ackergill is remarkable for the pair of early C18th lectern dovecotes placed symmetrically to the south. The east cote has 900 stone nesting boxes. The skylights may replace dormered or swept flightholes. The use of the west building is not clear; it may have been a heated hen house, not unknown in Caithness, or it could have been a garden room. Ackergill Mains, to the south east, has two distinct ranges; the west block is early C19th of eight bays with six basket handle cart arches, the east range is mid-later C19th forming an L plan with a boiler house and a tall circular chimney in the re-entrant.

Lybster

Although fishing had long been practised by the small communities along the coast (none, with the exception of Thurso and Wick, warranting use of the term 'village'), it was not until 1790 that harbours came to be constructed following Thomas Telford's tour. Lybster was developed by Patrick Sinclair, cousin of Sir John Sinclair of Ulbster. He constructed a wooden pier at the mouth of the Reisgill Burn in 1810, which was replaced in stone in 1832.

The village was begun in 1802. Later streets were named for Liberal politicians. Telford's road (now the A9) was named Quatre Bras after the battle in which Patrick Sinclair's sons took part.

The status of the village was recognised by its designation as a fishing station in 1817. By 1840 the population was 400 and Lybster was the third largest herring station in Scotland. The herring fishing industry reached its peak in the 1870s and by 1914 had collapsed. The railway reached Lybster in 1903, but was closed in 1944.

The harbour was originally built in 1849, and rebuilt in 1882. It is a complex of four basins built of flagstone rubble masonry. A small octagonal lighthouse and two storehouses adorn the harbour.

The (former) fishery office is an early-mid nineteenth century building of two storeys and three bays. The door in the east facing facade is flanked by two long ground floor windows with lying-pane glazing. To the left of the main door sits a barometer in a tooled margined, glazed recess.

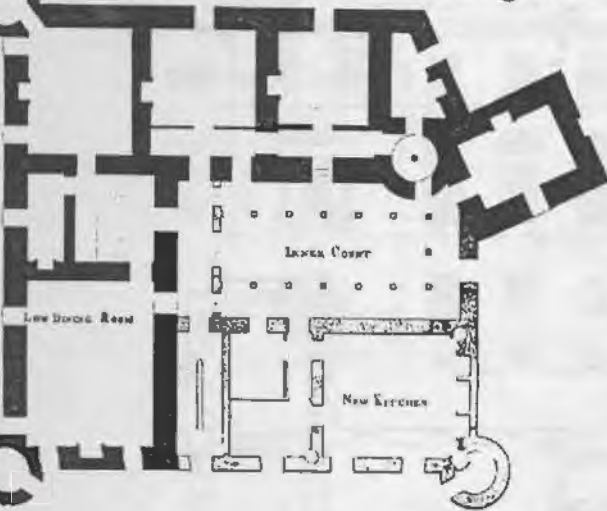
Further up, clinging to the side of the hill, is Inver House, an early/mid 19th century house. A symmetrical 3-bay front faces south, but it has a crenelated east front befitting its vertiginous perch.



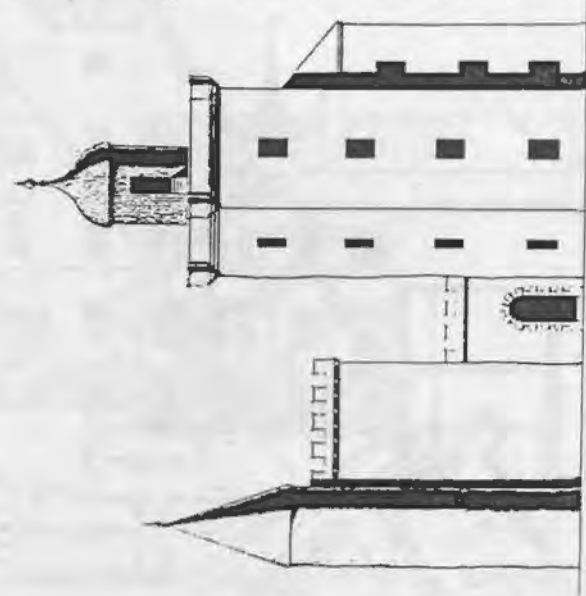
The Earldom of Sutherland is one of the seven ancient earldoms of Scotland. Hugh Lord of Duffus, who acquired land in Sutherland before 1211, is the ancestor of the Sutherlands.

Dunrobin is mentioned for the first time as a stronghold of the Earl of Sutherland in 1401 - the name may mean 'Robins Castle' after Robert, 6th Earl.

In 1766 Elizabeth Gordon became Countess of Sutherland at the age of 11 months and she later married George Granville Leveson-Gower, the son of the Marquess of Stafford in 1785. It was through their marriage that the Sutherlands amassed tremendous wealth with properties at Dunrobin, Trentham and Lilleshall. The new Earl of Sutherland was deeply influenced by the politician and theorist James Loch and Sir Iain Moncreiffe of that Ilk wrote regarding the horrors of the clearances, "like so many reformers he was willing to dedicate his life and fortune to making other folk do something they found desperately disagreeable for the sake of what he believed to be their future good."

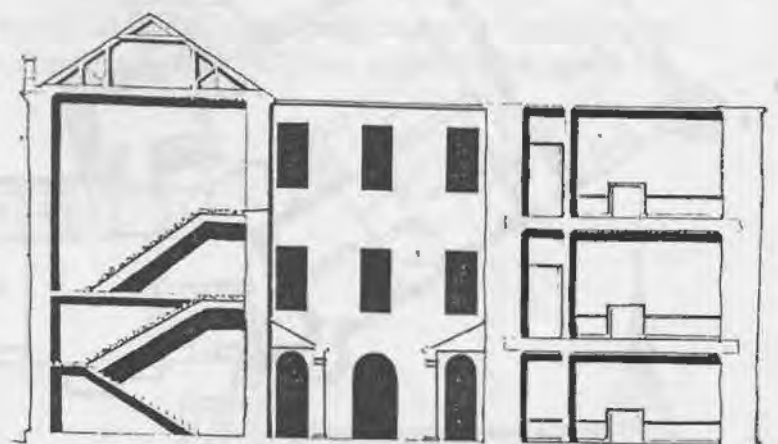
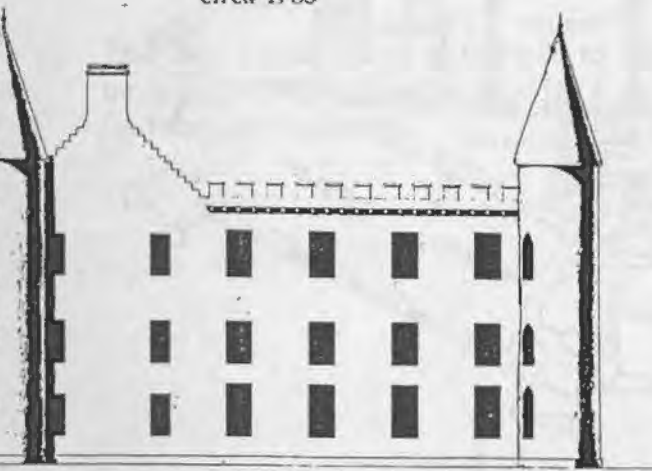


Ground Plan of Dunrobin Castle with new Improvements
During the time of the Countess of Sutherland
 circa 1785



Rare Elevation of Dunrobin Castle

Dunrobin Castle

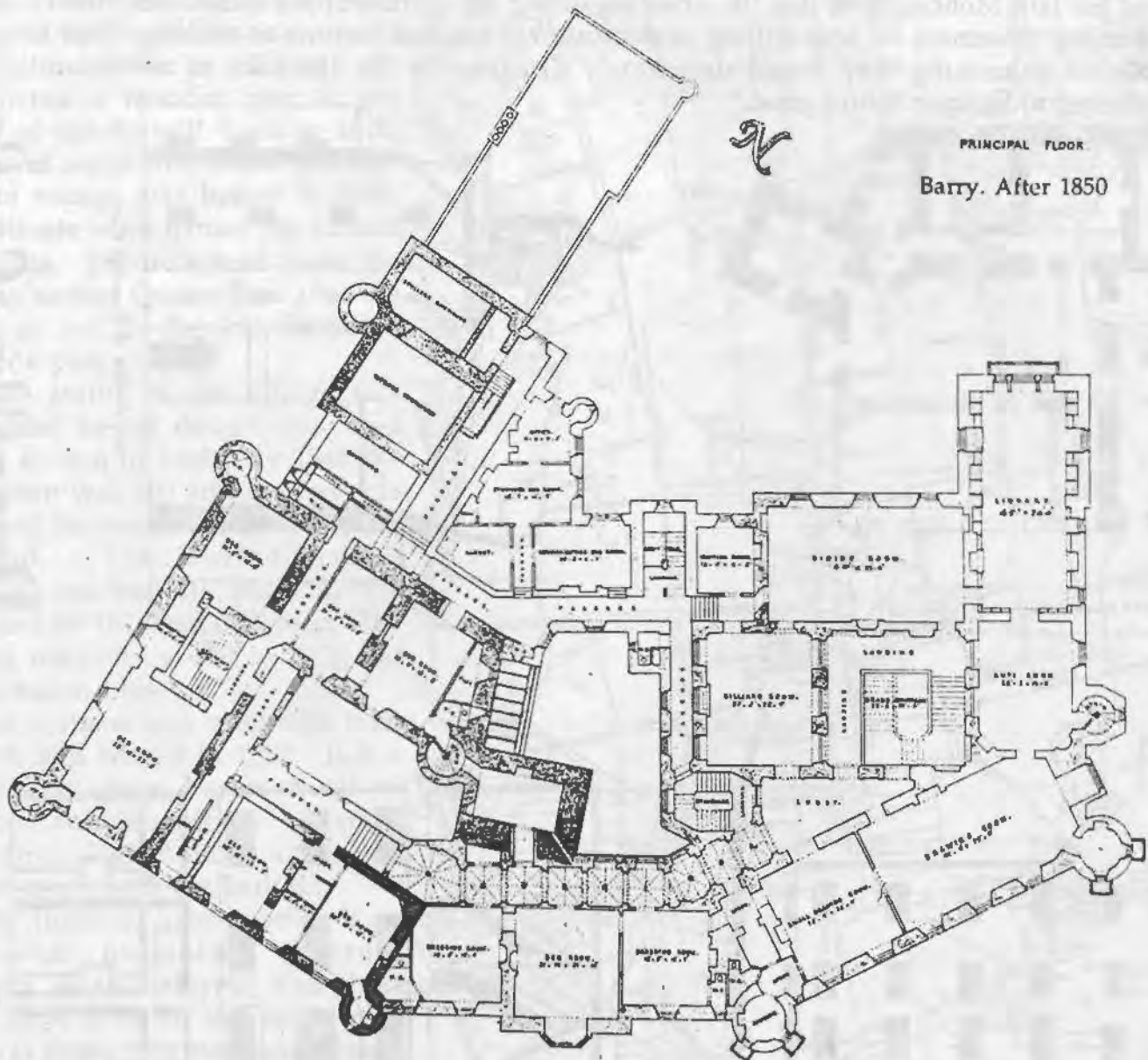


Section & Elevation of in Side of Court

The tower house that lies at the core of Dunrobin appears to date from the 14th century although very much altered; one corner is clearly seen in the courtyard. A staircase and wing were added during the 17th century by John Glas, 14th Earl of Sutherland, forming the northern side of the courtyard. In the early 18th century, c.1735, the Eastern range of the courtyard was constructed - reputedly the work of an Adam. James Maccleran was employed by the Sutherlands to create a new kitchen wing and other rooms finishing of the courtyard in c.1785 including a colonnade. This very picturesque castle was the house that Lord Stafford inherited through his marriage to Countess Elizabeth.

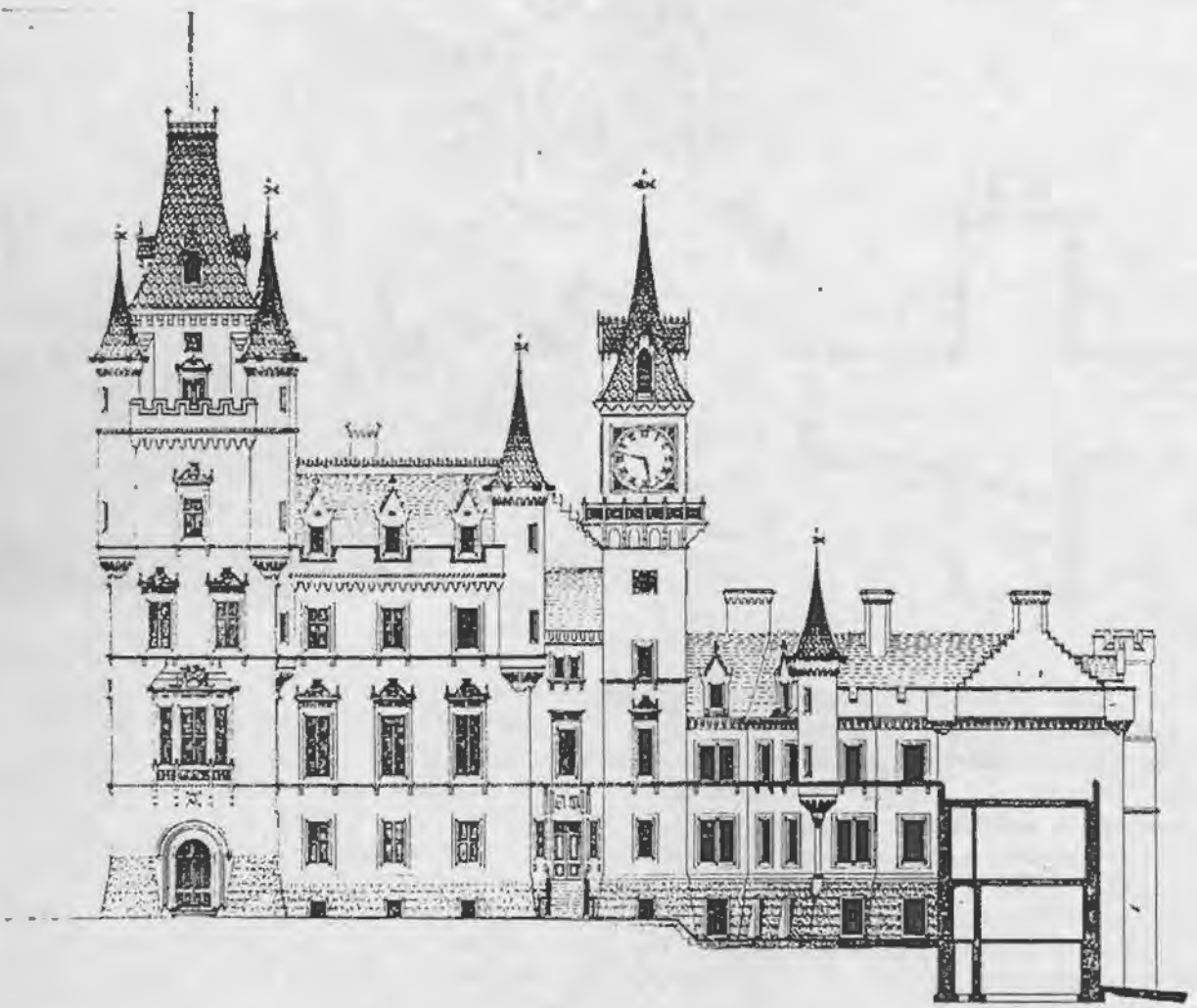
Between 1835 and 1850 they employed Sir Charles Barry, who not only built the Houses of Parliament but also their Staffordshire home on a similar gargantuan scale: Trentham Hall. Barry created *Schloss Dunrobin*.

Barry's plans relegated the existing castle to bedroom and service accommodation. A suite of state rooms was constructed to the east of Dining Room, Library, Billiard Room and Drawing Room with the principal bedroom suite forming the link between the original castle and the reception rooms. This schloss was capped with a fantastical tower and attenuated witches hat turrets. Service accommodation was added to the north.



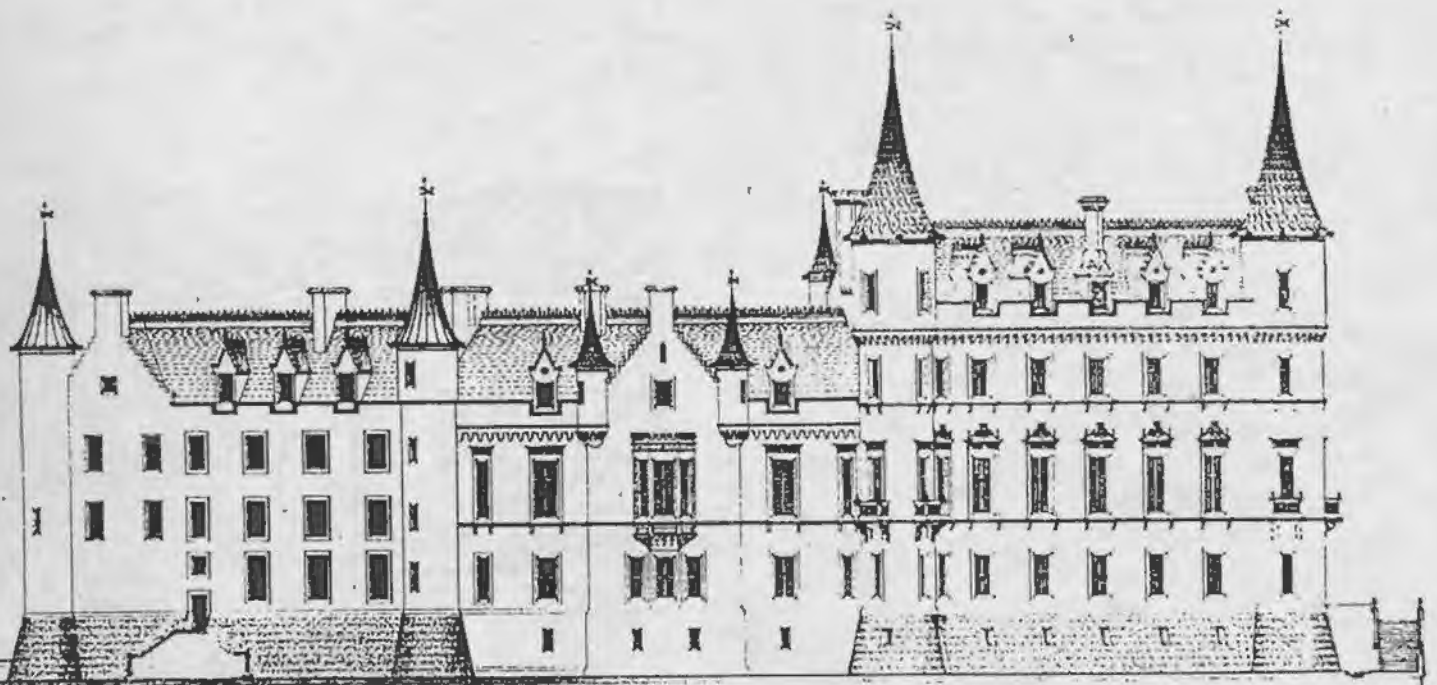
The Barry work was gutted by fire in 1915 while the castle was being occupied as an Auxiliary Naval Hospital, and after the end of the war Sir Robert Lorimer was employed taming some of Barry's exuberance and recreating the interior. His major structural alterations were to throw the two drawing rooms into one, creating a saloon and to turn a bedroom and dressing room (used by Queen Victoria on her visit in 1872) into a library. He also carried out an extensive interior decoration scheme.

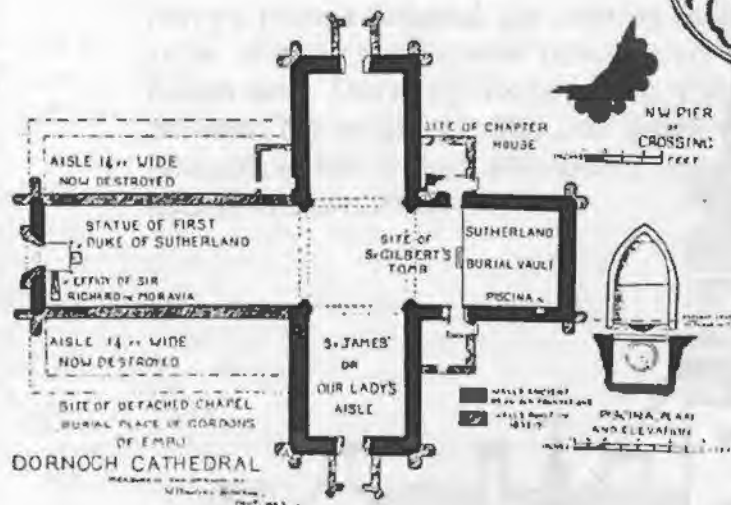
The original approach to the house was from the sea, Telford being employed to rebuild the pier since eroded away, maximising the full drama of the magnificent site. The gardens were laid out by Barry and are very similar to those at Trentham. In 1732 William, Lord Strathmore built the elegant summerhouse with his coat of arms above the doorway by William Adam (?). The interior was destroyed and the



building extended in 1874 to create a museum of great importance having a wide variety of exhibits relating to Sutherland from Pictish stones to stag heads, from a stuffed whale to exquisite ferns etched on the windows.

The 4th Duke built a station to the north at what was originally a branchline terminus. This log cabin of c.1874 was reconstructed in 1902 but still retains much of its interior charm.

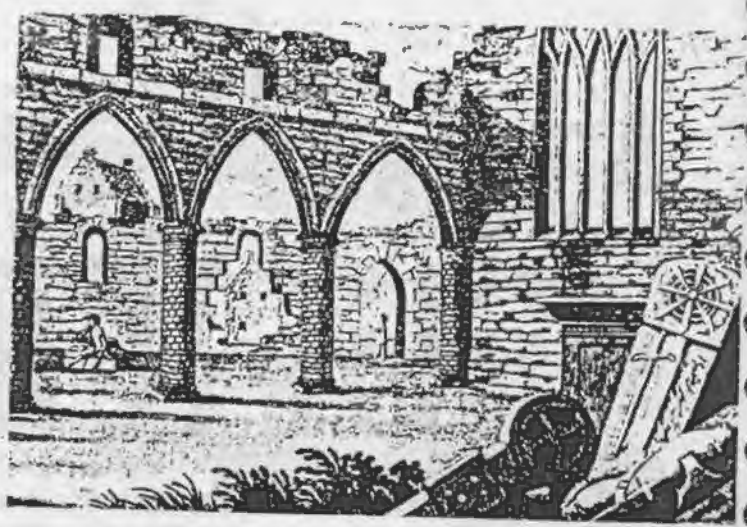
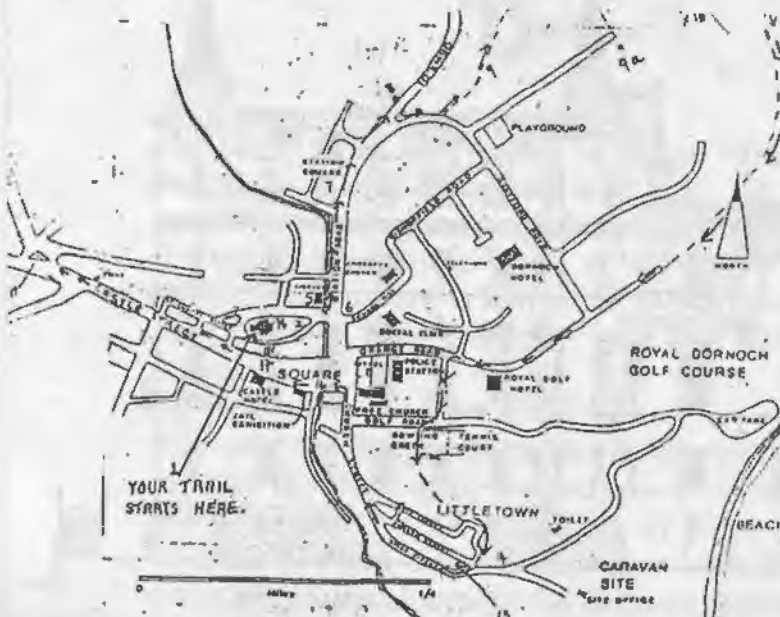




Gilbert de Moravia, bishop between 1223 and 1245 refounded the high church of Caithness at Dornoch after the bishops of the previous church, at Halkirk, were subjected to some particularly gruesome treatment at the hands of the half Viking population there. Building seems to have begun soon after bishop Gilbert's arrival. The church assumed roughly its present extent and plan form at that time with the exception of aisles to the nave which were omitted in William Burn's rebuilding of 1835-7. The tower arches survive from this original build and are an important example of transitional architecture in Scotland. The church was dedicated to the Conception of the blessed Virgin Mary but popularly became known as the church of St. Gilbert. The town of Dornoch was sacked by the Master of Caithness and the Wild Mackays of Strathnaver in 1570. The damage to the cathedral was considerable, all of the roofs were burnt apart from the tower where the burghers held out. The nave was left in ruins in the repairs of 1614-1634 by Robert Gordon of Gordonstoun. The present steeple dates from 1728. Burn's work involved a new nave, incorporating the shortened west window but removing all trace of the surviving south aisle arcade, plaster rib vaults in the nave, chancel and transepts, lath and plaster internal walls (stripped out in 1929), the external ashlar masonry including buttresses, window reveals and the vestries. The work was paid for by Elizabeth Duchess Countess of Sutherland.

Dornoch Castle, the Castle Hotel, was the episcopal palace. It was built in c.1500 but reconstructed with the present tower and angle bartisans after the fire of 1570. The tower was the south west tower of the castle complex. The building was further altered in 1813-14, when it was adapted to form the county court house and jail buildings, and in 1880 when the 1813 work was removed, the north-south facing range and the south west block raised and given new dormers, the conical roofed stair turret added and the three storey east tower built.

The County Buildings and Courthouse were built in 1840-50 by Thomas Brown on the site of part of the former castle. The court room on the first floor is galleried and has its original fittings. The jail is also by Brown 1842-50, the drill hall of the Seaforth Highlanders, to the west, is of 1896-97.



CAITHNESS WEEKEND STUDY TOUR

Saturday 16th May

7:30	Coach leaves Edinburgh - Rutland Square	
10:15	Arrive 'Landmark' Carrbridge	Coffee
11:00	Leave "	
11:30	Inverness (Kessock Bridge)	
12:30	Arrive Embo House	
1:15	Leave "	
1:30	Arrive Skelbo	Picnic Lunch
2:30	Leave "	
3:45	Arrive Laidhay Croft Museum	Tea
4:45	Leave "	
5:30	Arrive Skinnnet	
6:15	Leave "	
6:30	Arrive St. Clair Hotel, Thurso	
7:00		Dinner
8:00	Reception in Thurso Library Short talk by Lyn Leet	

Sunday 17th May

8:30	Thurso Town Walk	
9:30	Leave Thurso	
10:15	Arrive Watten Mains	Coffee
11:15	Leave "	
11:30	Arrive Wick	Picnic Lunch at Wick Heritage Centre
12:45	Leave "	
1:00	Arrive Sinclair & Girnigoe Castle	
2:00	Leave "	
2:45	Arrive John O'Groats Meal Mill	Tea
3:30	Leave "	
3:45	Arrive Canisbay Church	
4:15	Leave "	
4:30	Arrive Castle of Mey	
5:15	Leave "	
5:30	Arrive Westside, Dunnet	
6:15	Leave "	
6:30	Arrive Thurso	
7:00		Dinner
8:00	Evening visit to Dounreay and Reay Church	

Monday, 18th May

8:30	Leave hotel	
8:45	Arrive The Castletown Flagstone Centre	
9:45	Leave "	
10:00	Arrive Olig House	Coffee
11:00	Leave "	
11:45	Arrive Ackergill (including stading)	Picnic Lunch & Coffee
1:15	Leave "	
2:00	Arrive Lybster - harbour etc.	
2:30	Leave "	
3:30	Arrive Dunrobin Castle	
4:45	Leave "	
5:00	Arrive Dornoch	Tea
5:45	Leave "	
10:00	Arrive back in Edinburgh	

All times are approximate and if for any reason time is lost visits may have to be curtailed or omitted.