

Crommey Castle

Marnoch, by Aberchirder, Banffshire

Historic Building Record and Analytical Assessment

for Michael Innes of Crommey

August 2011



Addyman Archaeology

Building Historians & Archaeologists

a division of Simpson & Brown Architects

St Ninians Manse Quayside Street Edinburgh Eh6 6EJ

Telephone 0131 554 6412 Facsimile 0131 553 4576

admin@addyman-archaeology.co.uk www.simpsonandbrown.co.uk

Contents

1.	<i>Introduction</i>	<i>1</i>
2.	<i>Historical</i>	<i>1</i>
i.	<i>Earlier history</i>	<i>1</i>
ii.	<i>Early cartographic sources</i>	<i>2</i>
iii.	<i>19th century modifications</i>	<i>4</i>
iv.	<i>Crommey Castle in the early 20th century</i>	<i>5</i>
v.	<i>Works of the mid 1930s</i>	<i>6</i>
vi.	<i>More recent works</i>	<i>9</i>
3.	<i>Description</i>	<i>10</i>
i.	<i>General</i>	<i>10</i>
ii.	<i>Exterior</i>	<i>13</i>
iii.	<i>Interiors – general</i>	<i>14</i>
iv.	<i>Lower level</i>	<i>14</i>
v.	<i>First floor</i>	<i>15</i>
	a. <i>Stair head</i>	<i>15</i>
	b. <i>Hall</i>	<i>15</i>
	c. <i>Chambers to E</i>	<i>16</i>
vi.	<i>Upper floor</i>	<i>18</i>
	a. <i>Chamber within the jamb</i>	<i>18</i>
	b. <i>Upper chambers to W</i>	<i>18</i>
	c. <i>Head of the turnpike</i>	<i>20</i>
4.	<i>Conclusion and recommendations</i>	<i>21</i>
Appendix A	<i>RCAHMS (CANMORE) entry</i>	<i>22</i>
Appendix B	<i>Earlier architectural drawings</i>	<i>23</i>
Figure B.i.	<i>John Wilson Paterson, HM Office of Works – as-existing plans (May-August 1933)</i>	
Figure B.ii.	<i>John Wilson Paterson, HM Office of Works – proposed scheme (1933)</i>	
Figure B.iii.	<i>Burnet & Reid – proposed roofing works (May 1984)</i>	
Appendix C	<i>Survey drawings (July 2011)</i>	
Figure C.1	<i>Ground floor plan (1:50)</i>	
Figure C.2	<i>First floor plan (1:50)</i>	
Figure C.3	<i>Second floor plan (1:50)</i>	
Appendix D	<i>Photographic record</i>	
	<i>Location plans</i>	
	<i>Contact sheets</i>	

Acknowledgements

Sir Malcolm Innes of Edingight for the kind loan of early plans of Crommey and for other historical information including the 1934 paper by his father, Thomas Innes of Learney.

Moragh Bowie for kindly assisting on site.

Unless otherwise stated, all content is the copyright of Addyman Archaeology.

Crommey Castle

Marnoch, by Aberchirder, Banffshire

Historic Building Record and Analytical Assessment

1. Introduction

Addyman Archaeology were commissioned by Mike Innes to undertake an historic building survey at Crommey Castle (historically alternatively spelt *Crombie*), near Aberchirder in Banffshire (NJ 59102 52250). The survey was in response to a condition placed upon proposed repair and refurbishment works to the old tower by Aberdeenshire Council (Application Reference : BB/APP/2009/1003). The proposed works are according to an architectural scheme prepared by Leslie Hunter, plans dated March 2009.¹

Site assessment and survey work was undertaken by Tom Addyman and Ross Cameron on 7-8 July 2011, with Tom Addyman returning to complete the survey on 13-14 July. Floor plans were newly surveyed at each level, see *Appendix C, figures C.1-C.3*. A systematic photographic survey was also made – see *Appendix D*.

This report contains several maps/Figures 1, 2, 3 and 5, reproduced by permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland (NLS). To view these maps online, see www.nls.uk.

2. Historical

i. Earlier history

A detailed account of the earlier history of the barony of Crommey and vicinity, from the mid 14th century to the late 17th century, was presented as a paper to the Banffshire Field Club on 17 April 1934.² This indicates Crommie Castle was in most likelihood erected by James Innes after 1543. As noted,

“No sooner had James in 1543 got possession of those lands of Cromy, for which he had paid money the July before, since their holding was of the King, and that Cromy had been his father Robert’s first designation, James immediately changed his title from Rothmakenzie to Cromy, as is evident by the charter of precept, both given under his seal and subscription 26 February 1543, to Andrew Moir upon the half of Newmill, so that in January he was designated Rothmakenzie, and in February, Cromy, which he ever afterwards kept”

It thus appears, although the charter is not extant, that the erection of Crommey as a Crown fief took place in 1543/4, and it was probably at this time that the old ha’ hoose [at Old Crommey] was replaced by the present Crommey Castle, erected at the Newton of Crommey, and which on account of its being further up the valley, was first known as the Overhall of Crommey. (Innes, p79-80)

James Innes died at the battle of Pinkie in September 1547, to be succeeded by his son Alexander, a minor. As Thomas Innes notes in a brief discussion of the castle towards the end of his paper,

The east “jamb,” or wing, seems a later addition, probably dating from 1570/80, when Alexander Innes, 3rd of Crommey had attained some opulence.

¹ Leslie F Hunter Architects, of Cullen, Moray

² and subsequently published in their transactions

This apparent supposition has coloured subsequent understanding of the castle.

The Innes' of Crommey retained the castle until 1630/1 after which it passed through a succession of proprietors. The latter included Urquart of Craigston (to 1664); Rev. George Meldrum (to 1692); James Duff and his successors (to the early 19th century); Earl of Seafield (to 1856); Forbes of Haddo (to 1932).³

It has also been long understood that the castle saw modification at an early stage. In 1882 Groome refers to the castle,

*Supposed to be very ancient, and looking to have been a place of some strength, it now consists of three stories, but formerly was much higher; and now belongs to the Earl of Seafield*⁴

This simply reiterates the text of the *New Statistical Account* of 1834-45.⁵

ii. Early cartographic sources

Beyond confirming the continuous presence of Crommey (spelt variously) from the late 16th century to the 19th earlier map sources provide little detail of the structures on the site with the possible exception of the later 16th century representation by Pont, *figure 1*. Here *Kromy* appears next to a diminutive sketch that perhaps represents a tower with a jamb.⁶ However its site seems clearly to lie on the E side of the Crommey Burn, and may therefore show the settlement of Old Crombie.



Figure 1 Detail of Timothy Pont's late 16th century manuscript map, showing the Deveron River (to the right) and settlements along its N bank (to the left), including 'Kromy' (Pont 9(1), The Coast to Banff) (NLS)

³ Innes, 1934, 103-5

⁴ *Ordnance Gazetteer of Scotland, Volume II*, 1882, 311

⁵ *New Statistical Account of Scotland - Marnoch, County of Banff*. Account of 1834-45, volume 13, 382

⁶ This suggested by Andrew Wright, 2010, 10.



Figure 2 Robert Gordon of Straloch, 1640 – ‘Crommy’ to top right (NLS)



Figure 3 Detail from Bleau's Atlas of Scotland of 1654, ‘Duo Vicecomitatus Aberdonia & Banfia’ (NLS)

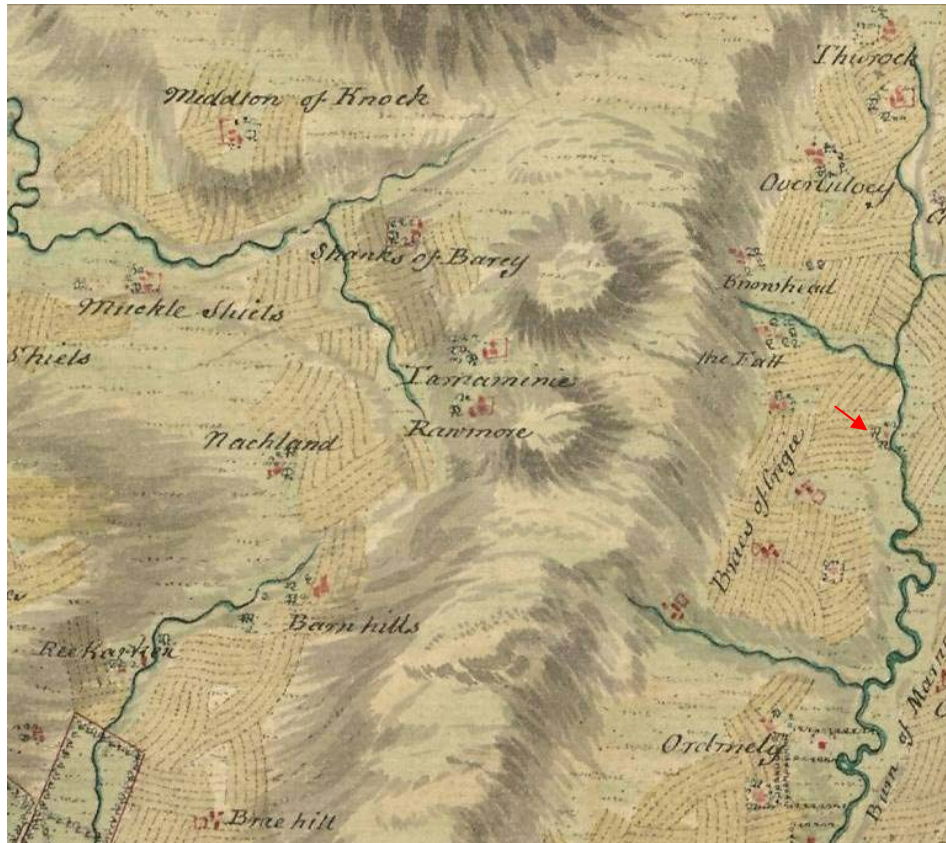


Figure 4 Detail from General William Roy's Great map of 1747-55 showing Crommey (indicated) © The British Library Board. All Rights Reserved (Roy Military Survey of Scotland)

iii. 19th century modifications



Figure 5 1st Edition Ordnance Survey, Banffshire 6 : mile sheet XV, surveyed 1867, published 1871(NLS)



Figure 6 Detail from the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey (25":mile), Banff Sheet XV.12 (Marnoch), surveyed 1867, published 1871 (NLS)

Early Ordnance Survey maps provide some significant information about the evolution of the castle. The 1st Edition, surveyed in 1867, *figures 5 and 6*, shows that the S and W wings were in existence by then, as were the lean-tos against the latter and the out-shot linking the two along the SW exterior of the tower (also see discussion of the as existing plans of 1933 in the next section). A small yard or forecourt exists at the re-entrant to the early tower, an entrance on the S side of this leading to the axial garden path beyond. This arrangement remains unchanged on the 1874 OS (1:5,600) for Banffshire. However by the time of the 1904 OS (1:2,500, surveyed in 1902) the E wing is in existence – see following section.

iv. Crommey Castle in the early 20th century

The first historic view of Crommey appears to be a postcard, post-marked 1908, *plate 1*. This shows the structure, appearing generally much as today, from the SSE. The E wing, which is dated to c1910 in the listing description, was clearly pre-existing, not newly built even in 1908 as suggested by the mature plant growth against the S wall and loss of whitewash on the E gable (as noted above the wing also appears on the 1902/4 OS). The early tower appears to retain extensive remains of lime harl. Notable is the absence of bartizans at the angles of the S gable; the structure has much of the character of a tall laird's house.



Plate 1 Early 20th century view of Crommey Castle – note the absence of bartizans; postcard post-marked '1908' (<http://www.foggieloan.co.uk/44library/picgallery/rural/pcvmcfall004.htm> - Copyright © 2002 – 2011 ADCA Aberchirder, North East Scotland)

v. *Works of the mid 1930s*

Helen Innes of Crommey acquired Crommey in 1932.⁷ An architectural scheme was developed shortly thereafter for the repair and reoccupation of the early tower by John Wilson Paterson (1887-1969), Chief Architect, H M Office of Works, Edinburgh during the period 1922-43.⁸ In this capacity Wilson Paterson had architectural involvement in the care of many of Scotland's prominent historic buildings and ancient monuments. In May 1933 he undertook a comprehensive general survey at Crommey, leading to the issue of a full set of as-existing drawings, these dated August of that year and issued under the H M Office of Works *imprimatur* (NMRS – B50146 and B50147, see *Appendix A.i*).

These drawings provide an important record of the tower in its long-un-restored state. They appear to demonstrate that the early roof structure still remained at that stage – a traditionally detailed rafter-foot assembly is illustrated for both the main range and the E jamb, see *figure 7*. However the upper surface had by then been re-roofed with corrugated iron. Elsewhere a number of existing windows and openings are shown as blocked and others as extant that are now blocked or altered. The latter include a small window lighting the intramural stair down from the hall (now blocked) and a gun-port within the N wall of the kitchen (subsequently enlarged). The existing dormers at the W wall head are shown with their lintels at eaves level.

These drawings also demonstrate that structural repair work had already been undertaken at the upper parts of the E jamb where the existing structural ties are shown as extant; it also records the considerable extent of existing structural cracking. A fireplace is shown at the N end of the hall, evidently itself secondary (and subsequently removed). A number of the entrances into the tower that are clearly secondary are shown as existing by that date; these include the two entrances from the

⁷ although the Disposition was not recorded in The Register of Sasines until 1937. *Pers. comm.* Malcolm Innes

⁸ 122 George St, Edinburgh

western cellars into the W wing and the southern entrance from the hall into the first floor of the S range.

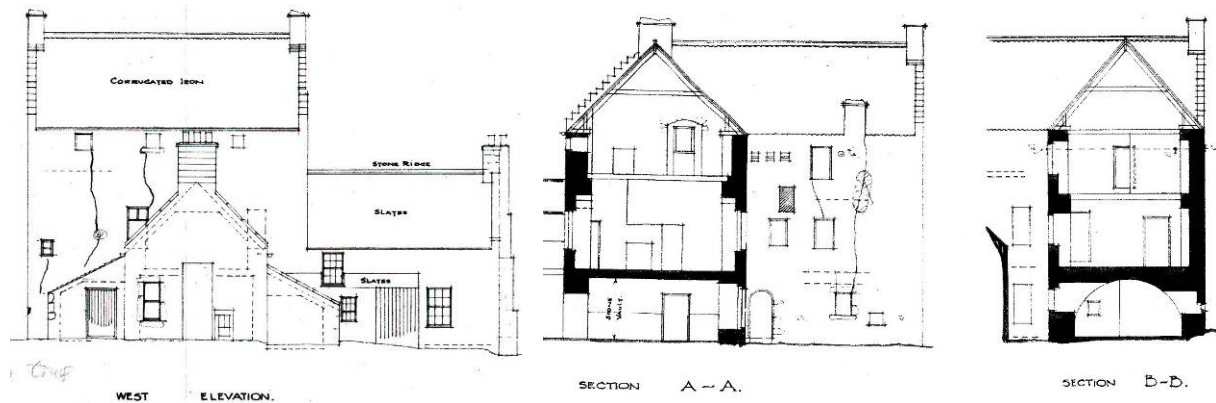


Figure 7 J Wilson Paterson – W elevation as existing in 1933, and sections showing the respective early roof structures of the principal range and E jamb (NMRS B50146-7) (Innes Family)

A further drawing by Wilson Paterson, only bearing the date 1933, proposed a scheme for the restoration of the castle. This advocated the addition of bartizans to the angles of the S gable, the improvement or reinstatement of wall-head dormers (suggesting alternative details), and a series of other modifications with the intention of the reoccupation of the early tower as a fully integrated part of a new dwelling (NMRS – B50148, *Appendix A.ii*). Significantly the scheme proposed the removal of the eastwards-running wing of c1900, this in order to reinstate the former aspect of the original entrance to the tower and its visual relationship with the walled garden ground to the S upon whose principal N/S axis it lay.

Wilson Paterson's handling of the 'reinstated' external features was scholarly and well detailed (and possibly based in part on evidence then visible externally); it is reminiscent of work of Robert Lormier (cf. Dunderave Castle, Formakin), combining a good understanding of traditional Scots architectural forms and an arts-and-crafts sensibility.



Figure 8 J Wilson Paterson – W elevation as proposed with new bartizans and pedimented dormers (NMRS B50146-7) (Innes Family)

Works did proceed at Crommey in the 1930s, though evidently to a reduced scope and apparently not involving Wilson Paterson. While remaining incomplete the new works evidently secured the preservation of the building. In summary the works undertaken included :

- underpinning of the E wall foot of the E jamb,
- general structural repairs particularly in relation to the E end of the E jamb,
- consolidation of the wall heads, re-roofing including the removal of the early roof structure and its replacement in machine-sawn pine, and roofed (in corrugated tin?),
- the addition of small concrete open round turrets to the angles of the S gable,
- the re-forming of the three dormer windows at the W wall head;
- general re-harling in cement;
- re-opening blocked early windows;
- insertion of new window openings;
- re-fenestration throughout (leaded lights within cast iron frames, sometimes with internal wooden framing),
- laying of concrete floors (western cellars, hall);
- areas of internal pointing in cement, particularly structural cracks;
- insertion of concrete safe lintels at points (E wall of E jamb), etc.

Within the hall the damaged lintel of the principal fireplace was consolidated, the major missing part being reformed in concrete and emblazoned with the Innes arms; the walls were also lined with thick fibre-board to the N, E and S.

The arch to the pend leading to the early entrance was also added at this time – of reinforced concrete, and similarly detailed with the Innes armorial.



Plate 2 Crommey in the 1960s, from the S (Malcolm Innes)



Plate 3 Crommey in the 1960s, from the SE (Malcolm Innes)

vi. More recent works

Removal of the corrugated iron roof erected in the 1930s and the provision of slates, which required reinforcement with extra rafters (an extra one between each existing one supporting the tin roof), took place in 1986. An associated plan by architects Burnett & Reid,⁹ titled *Proposed reslating of part of castle*, for MT Innes, is dated *May 1984*. This specifies the use of *Burlington* [Cumbrian] *new slates*. The architect who oversaw work was John Bruce.

In the mid 1990s further works of renovation took place, these principally concerned with the upgrading of the later wings. Within the early tower the western cellars and entrance area were replastered internally at this time. A new entrance was slapped through from the southern cellar to provide access to the ground floor of the southern wing; hitherto access between the two wings had been via an external out-shot. This work was supervised by Leslie Hunter, then of Douglas Forrest Architects (Acanthus Architects DF).

⁹ of 15 Golden Square, Aberdeen, AB9 1JF

3. Description

i. General

Crommey Castle is a comparatively well preserved L-plan tower-house with later additions that occupies a favourable position close to the western bank of the Crommey Burn, a minor tributary of the Deveron River. The structure's aspect is S-facing, enjoying an open prospect over the broad Glen of Crommey whose ground slopes gently away towards the Kirkton of Aberchirder, the view framed by the rising ground to the E and SE and low hills to the W and SW.

The area of ground immediately to the S of the castle is somewhat sunken, bounded by the remains of stone dykes that define what appears to have long been a formalised garden area, this more readily apparent on the 1st Edition Ordnance survey than now (*figure 6*); here the N/S axial path is aligned upon the principal entrance of the tower. This plan also demonstrates the former existence of structures bounding the E side of the garden enclosure and, to the E of these, a further long range – the structure that still exists, this of comparatively early date. The complex to the E of the garden seems most likely to have comprised an informally arranged court of ancillary buildings attendant on the early tower.

The principal frontage of the tower and its W side are now largely obscured by the later additions. These comprise a N/S aligned range of two stories extending southwards from the S-facing gable wall of the tower, of c1820; a further two-storied eastwards extension to this, gabled to the E, said to be of c1910, and a further 2-storied range extending westwards from the W side of the tower. The latter, said to be of c1860, is gabled to the W and had evidently contained a kitchen and other service arrangements. Until recently there had existed out-shot lean-tos against the S and N sides of this range (the W wall of the southern lean-to still remains). The dating of these subsequent additions, as presented above, comes from the statutory listing description. However, based on the detailing of its gable head, it is suggested that the westwards-running range is of the same approximate date as that to the S, i.e. of the early 19th century. Both ranges clearly saw some subsequent later remodelling, particularly the insertion of windows with squared arises of similar detail to those of the E wing of c1900 (into the W wing, N side of W gable wall; the, S wing, S end of W wall). This particular detail was also employed for some secondary window openings within the early tower itself (E-facing window to pend; stair window in NW cellar, N wall). However detailed study of these later wings falls out-with the principal requirement of the present report.

As will be noted in the following sections there are a number of modifications to the tower that are likely to be date to the 19th century – c1900. These include the entrances from the later wings to the early tower (S wing, first floor entrance to the hall; and the two ground floor entrances to the W wing), and structural works to the upper parts of the E jamb (structural ties). The as-existing drawings of 1933, discussed above, show all of these features.



Plate 4 General view looking NE



Plate 5 General view looking SE



Plate 6 General view looking SW



Plate 7 View of the upper works of the lower, looking NE

ii. Exterior

The exterior walling of the tower-house is presently overlain by an existing coat of cementitious harl, applied in the mid 1930s, *plates 4-7*. This obscures most structural and analytical evidence for the evolutionary history of the building that might otherwise have been apparent. Overall, and before the early 20th century addition of the existing open round turrets (see *figure 5*), Crommey Castle had had the appearance of a tall 17th century laird's house rather than a structure of earlier origin and a more martial bearing. Its chimney-surmounted crow-stepped gables and simple wall-heads leant the structure a more domestic character than had evidently existed originally. However this is belied by the presence of architectural detailing lower down – the windows, narrow stair and garbidge lights, all with broad-chamfered surrounds, and, particularly, a plethora of wide-mouthed gun ports and pistol loops beneath windows (not all of these now visible externally). The gun ports are generally oval in form though one, on the N elevation, is detailed with internal reticulation, *plates 8-10*.



Plates 8-10 Wide-mouthed gun ports

These defensive features suggest a mid 16th century dating, as does the overall form of the building, with principal (only) entrance set tight at the re-entrant angle, this of simple detail and protected by adjacent gun-ports, *plate 8*. Also very obvious are the three corbels set a little below the present wall head above the entrance, the remains of a protective over-sailing machicolated bartizan, *plate 11*. Immediately below these corbels exists a rectangular recess; not a blocked window, this aperture may have once contained an armorial, since removed, *plate 11*.



Plate 11 Corbelling and blank recess above principal entrance



Plate 12 Remains of window grille

The majority of original windows preserve evidence in the form of rectangular seatings in their jambs, lintels and sills for stout ironwork grilles. A number of the larger windows retain glazing grooves on the upper jambs, evidence for the fixed leaded glazing above framing containing shutters below that is a typical detail for the period. One of the windows actually retains the stumps of its ironwork – a pair of vertical bars, *plate 12*.

Other notable details visible externally include parts of the footing course, consisting of small projecting boulders. The western wall head is dominated by three tall dormers that break the wall-head, these with slated cat-slide roofs; though early features in part these saw substantial subsequent modification (as will be described below in *section v*).

A curious feature is the aumbry-like aperture with projecting sill on the S-facing elevation of the E jamb, towards its SE angle, *plate 13*. In early garden walls features such of this nature would constitute a *bee-bole* for the keeping of a *skep* (straw beehive); however in this position the opening may have had a more profound significance.



Plate 13 Recess on S-facing elevation of the E jamb

iii. Interiors – general (see plans at each level – Appendix C)

At the time of the present survey with the exception of the original kitchen the ground floor interiors had seen internal re-plastering onto the hard, this generally obscuring the underlying masonry fabric. Only the vaulted ground floor chambers to the W, now also concrete-floored, are effectively in active use, this permitting communication between parts of the present house – the additions to the early tower to the S and W – and employed for storage. Internally the remainder of the tower is largely in the state it was left following the works of the 1930s – part-restored or, with the exception of windows and isolated patching, wholly un-restored. In fact the upper interiors in general are remarkable for their un-restored condition, preserving in unadulterated state many early features and historic plastered and limewashed/distempered surfaces. These interiors demonstrate the length of time the upper levels must have remained uninhabited, perhaps for much of the 19th century.

No original window details remain within their early openings – frames, glazing or metalwork. Similarly all early doors have been removed though many of their early wrought iron *creuk-and-bands* still remain, to which are affixed replacement doors.

iv. Lower level

The principal and only original entrance lies at the re-entrant angle of the early tower, its door having been secured by a substantial draw-bar whose socket remains, running off to the E. This gives in to a vaulted, flagged vestibule area that is dominated by the straight stair rising to the N. The lower steps

of the stair are canted to either side to better facilitate access to/from the ground floor chambers to E and W. A well-preserved shot hole and associated recess exist on the E side of the main entrance.

To the E lies the original kitchen. This is un-restored and in most respects notably well preserved. The barrel-vaulted interior is lit by window openings to N and S, that to the N having been widened in the 1930s. The northern opening had evidently been a narrow loop, the southern – likely facing into an associated compound, considerably larger.

The principal loss within the interior are the dressings of the broad fireplace arch, the position of which is still evident. Adjacent to this at its N end is a well-preserved *stoup-* or *slop-sink* externally and internally, occupying the NE angle, the remains of a dome-vaulted bread oven, its opening into the fireplace interior now missing. At the S side of the fireplace is a larger recess, its function unclear. The W wall of the chamber is notable for the service hatch by which foodstuffs were then taken up to the hall; the hatch opening is rebated internally and there are remains of two fixings above – evidently the hatch was raised.

An entrance at the W side of the stair foot gives in to the first of two interconnected barrel-vaulted cellars of roughly equal size. The first, to the N, is lit by existing windows to the W and N. The former, if there had been an early opening, was subsequently widened and much modified. Externally below this exists a gun-port. The northern window lights the base of an intramural stair that rises to hall level; though a window had likely existed at this point to light the stair access to the cellar, the existing broad opening seems to be of later 19th century date, its arises coarsely dressed to the square. The stair rises in a straight flight to the W.

A secondary entrance was broken through the W wall at its S end into the early 19th century W wing.

A small entrance at the N end of the cellar's E wall provides access to a small arch-vaulted chamber beneath the principal stair. The chamber's only features are a small light to the N and a mural recess to the SW.

The southern cellar is accessed from the first by means of what may have been a relatively narrow opening. The dressings of the E jamb still remain though were much damaged when cut back by means of multiple drill holes, presumably work of the 1930s; the dressings to the W are missing.

The two other entrances to the chamber, to the W and S, and the large window to the E, are all subsequent modifications. The entrance to the S slapped during works in c.1996 [ref.] while the other openings seem likely to be of 19th century date. The entrance into the later wing to the W may occupy the site of a loop part of whose southern *splay* may still survive. The window to the E has squared arises and likely represents one of the later 19th century works at Crommey.

v. *First floor*

a. *Stair head*

The straight stair rising from the principal entrance provides access at a stone-flagged landing, to the W to the hall, to the E, to a commodious chamber, and to the N to the foot of a stone turnpike to the upper levels. A small window in the N wall provides the only light to the stair.

b. *Hall*

The hall is now accessed by means of a small vestibule. This is of modern work but may reflect an early arrangement (a diminutive tower-house equivalent of a screens passage?), as suggested by the continuation of masonry into the E splay of the adjacent hall window. Within the thickness of the N wall in this area is a substantial recess, curve-walled to the rear – perhaps for performing ablutions as one entered the hall.

The hall proper occupies the entirety of the principal block. This is now much obscured by later linings and plaster. A projecting chimneybreast occupies the centre-S part of the W wall, this containing a broad fireplace, its lintel in part now re-formed in concrete and emblazoned with a cast Innes armorial. On either side are large windows. The ingo of the northern of these does not extend to floor level; it is evident externally that the window itself had formerly been roughly square and set at high level, and had been enlarged subsequently by the considerable lowering of its sill. Perhaps this had originally been intended to light a display of plate. On the N side of the latter window is a large wall recess; the thinner walling in this area contained a gun-port, still visible externally. Broad ingoed windows also exist to the E and N though these are now much obscured. A further shot-hole exists below the window to the N, *plate 10*; others may be blocked.

A particular feature of the hall is the stone-ceilinged entrance vestibule to the cellar stair, whose masonry baulk protrudes considerably into the NW angle of the hall interior. The vestibule forms the upper landing of the stair, a small light to the W lighting both landing and, after a short dog's-leg, the stair itself. There exists a large recess within the southern walling of the stair. Within the hall in the walling above the stair vestibule exist a pair of *laird's lugs*, one to the S and another facing to the E, detailed with diamond-shaped surrounds. These served a concealed chamber above the stair vestibule that was accessed from the floor above – see *Appendix C, Figure C.3*.

Beyond the treatment of the walls and re-flooring in concrete, both works of the 1930s [?later?], other secondary modifications to the chamber include the existing entrance in the S wall, giving access to the upper storey of the later S wing, and, further W in the same wall, an inserted fireplace. Both these features are extant on the as-existing plans of 1933 that also demonstrate that wooden flooring survived at that stage. The hall ceiling / second floor floor structure is a replacement, its E/W aligned common joists of machine-sawn pine.

c. Chambers to E

In its un-restored state the chamber within the E jamb, and a smaller chamber that leads off it to the SW, preserve numerous early features including extensive areas of early lime wall plaster applied onto the hard. The latter retain a build-up of paint layers and, on the W wall of the main chamber, much historic graffiti, *plates 14 and 15*.

The principal features of the main chamber include a broad mural recess that occupies most of the N wall; to the W of this is an aumbry cupboard with door-frame rebate, and to the E a possible wardrobe recess, this formerly lit by a narrow light in the E wall (later blocked).



Plates 14-16 Chamber in E jamb – SW corner; paint and graffiti on W wall; early flooring and hearthstone to SE

The projecting chimneybreast of the kitchen flue lies to the E, on the S side of which is a larger window. From E to W the S wall preserves an aumbry whose door frame remains within its rebate, a small fireplace, and a large window. The fireplace outer hearthstone still remains and, on its E side a disturbed but surviving area of original timber flooring extending into the window into, *plate 16*. Broad pine floorboards of varying widths were affixed with wrought nails to a coarse jointed framework of rough-hewn pine timbers laid directly upon the rubble overlying the masonry of the vaulting below.

The principal secondary intrusion into this interior is a paired window arrangement inserted into the N wall; the 1933 plans demonstrate there had been no earlier opening in this area.

The inner chamber lies to the SW, this lit by a broad window to the S and heated by a small fireplace at the S end of its W wall, *plate 17*. The lower parts of the NW corner of the room are intruded upon by the lintelling of the principal stair below; plaster and paint traces suggest the former presence of boxing-in in this area, likely a bed occupying the length of the N wall. Curious paired recesses occupy the upper part of the N wall.



Plate 17 The inner chamber, looking W

The existing ceiling / second floor floor structure over these chambers is a replacement, its N/S aligned common joists of machine-sawn pine, this evidently parts of works in the 1930s.

vi. *Upper floor*

a. *Chamber within the jamb*

A stone turnpike provides access to the upper levels. From this the first chamber encountered is that lying within the eastern jamb. This interior also retains much early plasterwork. Its features include a broad mural recess within the N wall, a wardrobe chamber with small light to E at the NE angle, a fireplace at the N end of the E wall and a large window at the S end of the same wall. To the S are an aumbry, with surviving doorframe within its rebate (parts of 2 wrought butterfly hinges on its W side), and a large window. At higher level within the S wall exist three projecting corbels, these large unworked stones. The two larger windows, to SE and S, both retain shot-holes beneath their sills. A narrow rebated entrance in the W wall gives access to a small intramural chamber whose function is unclear; its thin W wall was subsequently broken through.

b. *Upper chambers to W*

After a few additional steps the turnpike reaches a further entrance that gives access westwards to the chambers above the hall. Now a unified interior this area had likely originally comprised two chambers as suggested by two small fireplaces, one in each gable wall and each with an adjacent large window with arched head internally. However no direct evidence for an original partition can now readily be seen. Within this area survive extensive remains of early wall plaster onto the hard. This plaster demonstrates the former presence of a number of similarly early features. At the NW, SW and SE corners of the room the plasterwork returns at an angle into the wall face, in each case likely signifying the former presence of a small chamber within a projecting roofed bartizan at the three external angles of the tower in this area.



Plate 18 General view

The early plaster also runs into the ingo of a former window, now blocked, just S of centre in the E wall. There still exist three dormer windows along the W wall, the early wall plaster also running into the ingos of these. Further large windows exist in the N and S gable walls, their ingos retaining arched

heads. Above the fireplace in the S gable two keys from a turnpike stair have been reused within the masonry fabric.

This chamber saw substantial remodelling at varying periods. The earliest may have been the blocking-off of the recesses at the wall angles with mortared rubblework, presumably following the removal of the bartizans. The evidence of the surviving plasterwork within the NW part of the room is particularly significant. Here the early plaster on the N wall runs into the bartizan recess to the NW. However this early plaster is overlain by a further coat that extends over the masonry blocking of the recess and continues around on to the W wall and into the ingo of the first dormer window and beyond. This would appear to suggest the window is itself secondary to the structure – and perhaps the other dormer windows as well.

Though the dormers to the W saw subsequent modification – the lintels of each were raised in the 1930s, with the jambs extended up in concrete – the northernmost retains its original lintel. Significantly this preserves angled raggles on its rear face, this demonstrating that this dormer (and presumably the others) had had small double-pitched roofs (opposed to single-pitched ‘cat-slide’ roofs); this roof form also implies the former presence of a stone dormer pediment. A single dormer pediment yet survives at Crommey, this built in to the E gable wall of the c1900 range, *plate 19*; it is very possible that this stone originated at one of the tower dormers.¹⁰ The stone bears the date 1678 and the initials MGM, the latter corresponding well to the documented proprietor of Crommey at that date, Revd. George Meldrum, who purchased the estate in 1664 (d.1692); he is referred to as *Mr George Meldrum of Crombie* on his monument in the Kirkyard of the Kirk of Aberchirder.¹¹



Plate 19 Detail of an ex situ dormer pediment, now within the E gable wall of the c1900 extension

On the basis of this evidence it is suggested the remodelling of the upper works of Crommey Castle occurred at about this time – i.e. c1678. The remodelling would thus seem to have involved the provision of a far greater degree of fenestration for this part of the upper floor than had evidently existed hitherto. A further possibility as to why this occurred may be suggested by a fragment of plaster still adhering at the upper W side of the interior of the N gable, this abruptly terminating at a horizontal top that lies considerably below the early ceiling level, *plate 20*. It is possible this may be

¹⁰ Although it is possible that an ancillary building at the site also displayed such a detail

¹¹ Innes of Learney, 1934, 104

evidence for a missing cornice and frieze; if this area had been decorated in such an ambitious manner then it is possible that the upper level had been formed into a single high status apartment, possibly a gallery.



Plate 20 General view of the second floor chamber to the W, looking N. The pink-painted wall plaster defines the extent of an internal subdivision (18th century?); on the N wall this abruptly stops at a horizontal well below collar level – possible evidence for decorative plasterwork above

Other evidence for early modifications to the wall head includes remnants of plasterwork upon the chimneybreast of the hall flue, off-set to the S on the W side of the chamber. Here part of an early plaster coat is present where the chimneybreast had stepped back, this now embedded beneath a later extension of masonry above. An external off-set on the S gable may signify the point of rebuilding. Reused turnpike stair keys appear above the second floor fireplace in the same gable, stones that may have been available following the reduction of the principal stair.

Later modifications include evidence for subdivision at the NW part of the interior (partition scars to N and W, with corresponding paintwork); a further partition scar exists mid-wall to the E, indicating an E/W aligned subdivision, possibly coeval with that to the NW and perhaps of 18th century date.

c. Head of the turnpike

The top of the turnpike now stops abruptly at second floor ceiling height. Here there is a platform formed of concrete that extends from the top surviving step southwards the side of an early arch that spans the S side of the stairwell. The remains of the early stairwell have every appearance of having extended higher. Certainly the existing upper flight provided access to a further chamber within the loft of the jamb; there is now no longer sufficient headroom beneath the existing roof structure sufficient for passage. This is the principal evidence that the wall heads of the early structure – the jamb at least – must have originally lain at a higher level.

The main evidence of the former existence of an early upper chamber within the E jamb comes from the interior of its E gable, which retains internal wall plaster, *plate 21*. On its N side this plaster returns at an angle to the NE (in a very similar fashion to the plaster returns seen in the upper chamber to the W); it seems likely that at this point there had formerly existed a further bartizan. Further S the wall plaster also returns, here angling to the SE and overlain by later masonry. Though less evidence survives here, possibly there had been yet a further bartizan at this point.



Plate 21 Interior of E gable of the E jamb, showing early plaster and returns to either side

4. Conclusion and recommendations

Crommey Castle is an excellent example of a 16th century tower house that preserves with little subsequent alteration (except to the upper works) a wealth of early features and details. It is also notable for the survival of interior plastered surfaces. The tower also preserves extensive evidence for an important remodelling, perhaps of 17th century date, that involved major modification of the roof structure and reduction and reordering of the original wall heads.

Crommey is also notable for the long history of repair, these for the most part benign. The works in the mid 1930s are particularly notable even though unfinished. The associated survey drawings by John Wilson Paterson include an important as-existing record of the building before these works began.

The principal loss to the fabric of the early structure is of woodwork and timber – floor structures, the roof and doors and other fittings throughout.

Recommendations

Augment the existing survey record during proposed works. Additional interior details when hall is emptied, following strip-out

Review of the analysis of the tower following removal of existing external harl, with particular attention to

- confirming openings and other features not presently visible
- a detailed examination of the upper walls to determine whether evidence remains for original wall head arrangements and for subsequent modification

Consider extending drawn record to the exteriors following harl removal. Consider recording selected sections through the building. Extend photographic recording during works.

Determine whether *ex situ* materials from the castle may still survive in storage (early doors in particular)

Appendix A RCAHMS (CANMORE) entry

Site type Towerhouse
Canmore ID 17898
Site Number NJ55SE 10
NGR NJ 59102 52250
Council ABERDEENSHIRE
Parish MARNOCH
Former Region GRAMPIAN
Former District BANFF AND BUCHAN
Former County BANFFSHIRE

Archaeological Notes

NJ55SE 10 59102 52250
(NJ 5910 5225) Crombie Castle (NR)
OS 6" map, Banffshire, 2nd ed., (1904)

Crombie Castle...has little or no appearance of a castle owing to the many alterations it has undergone. In the garden wall there is a stone which was taken from the castle bearing the initials and figures GM/MS 1678... but the date of its erection is unknown.
Name Book 1866.

The castle, which is generally in good condition, appears to have originally been a tall rectangular building, to which has been added several wings. The two wings on the east do not seem to be contemporary with each other and the southern one is probably quite modern as it incorporates the stone mentioned above in the East wall. There is nothing to date the other wings which surround the older building, on all sides except the North.
Visited by OS (JTT) 14 September 1964.

Crombie Castle is basically an L-shaped 16th century tower-house, which has been modified and enlarged probably in the 17th century, with modern additions.
Visited by OS (NKB) 22 January 1968.

Books and References

Bogdan and Bryce, N and I B D (1991) 'Castles, manors and 'town houses' survey', *Discovery Excav Scot*
Page(s): 26
Innes, T, of Learney (1934b) The Barony of Cromey, {s.l.}
Held at RCAHMS D.5.23.CRO
Ordnance Survey (Name Book) Object Name Books of the Ordnance Survey
Page(s): Book No. 23, 40 Held at RCAHMS Ref
Scottish Castle Survey (1988) 'A directory of the owners and occupiers of the castles, manors and 'town houses' {c.1050-c.1707} of Scotland: Grampian Region', Aberdeen
Page(s): 16, no.23/3 Held at RCAHMS B.2.1.CAS

Appendix B Earlier architectural drawings

- Figure B.i John Wilson Paterson, HM Office of Works – as-existing plans (May-August 1933)
(2 sheets)*
- Figure B.ii John Wilson Paterson, HM Office of Works – proposed scheme (1933)*
- Figure B.iii Burnet & Reid – proposed roofing works (May 1984)*

Appendix C Survey drawings (July 2011)

Figure C.1 Ground floor plan (1:50)

Figure C.2 First floor plan (1:50)

Figure C.3 Second floor plan (1:50)

Appendix D Photographic record

Location plans

Contact sheets

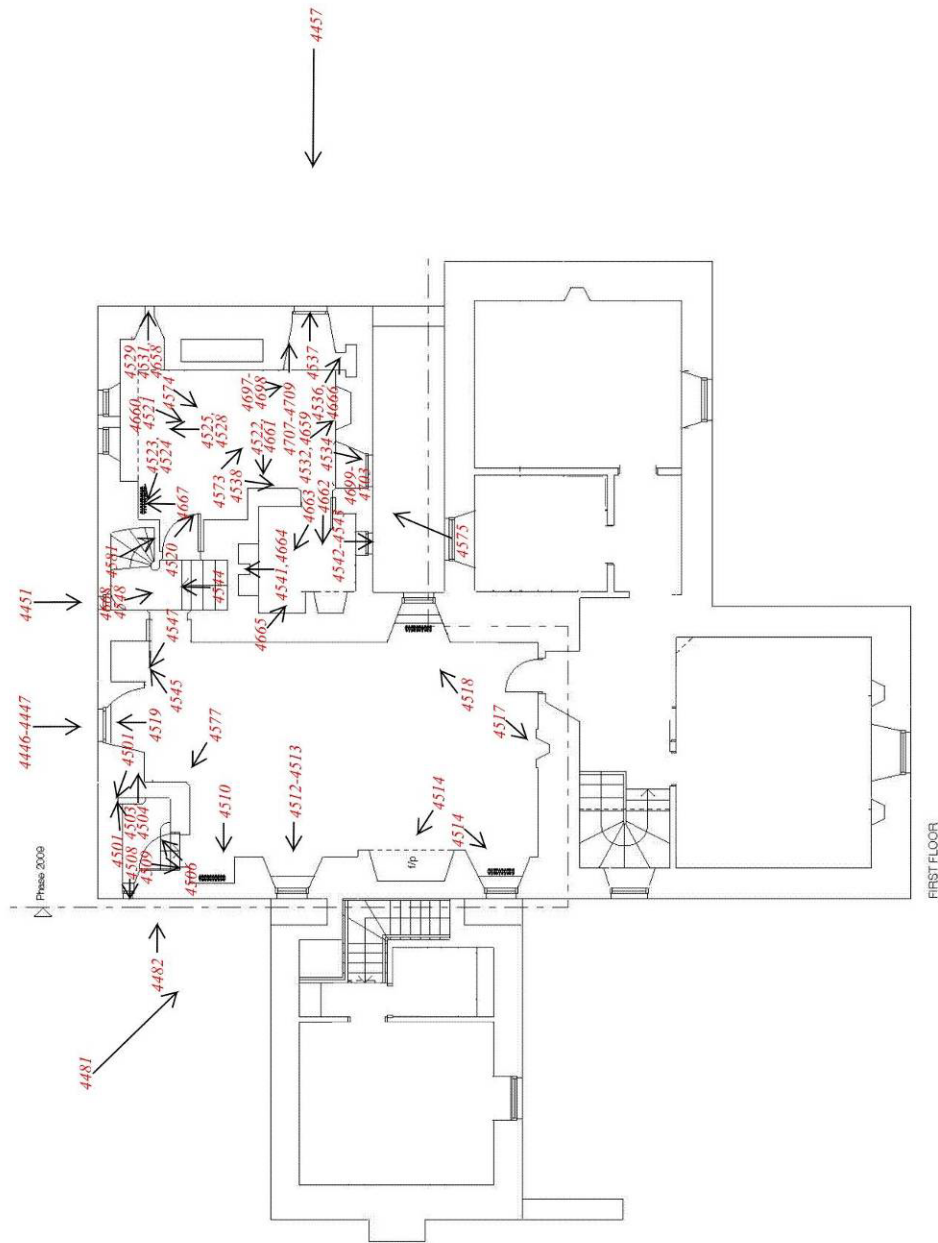


Figure D.2 First floor plan - photograph locations

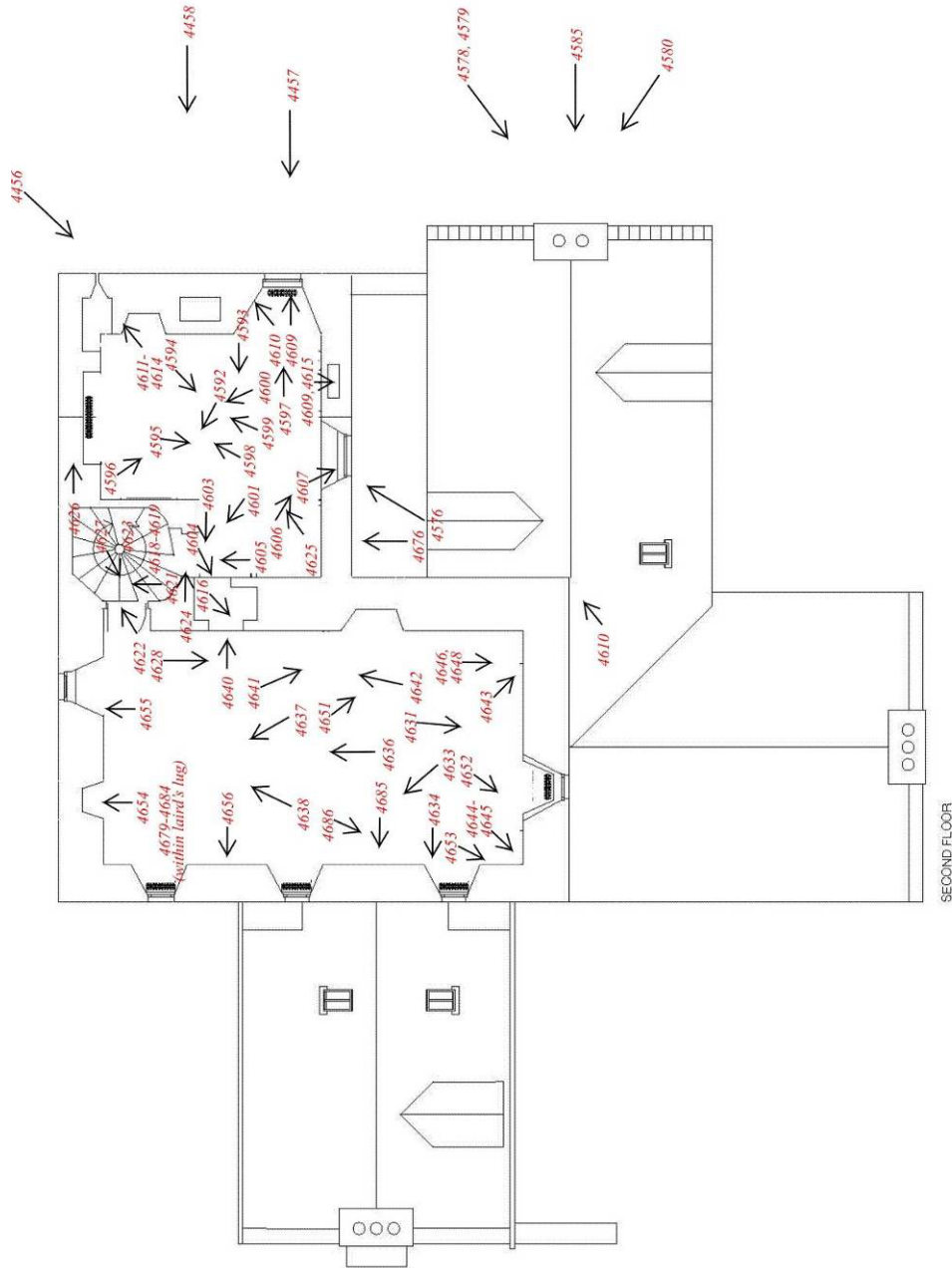


Figure D.3 Second floor plan - photograph locations

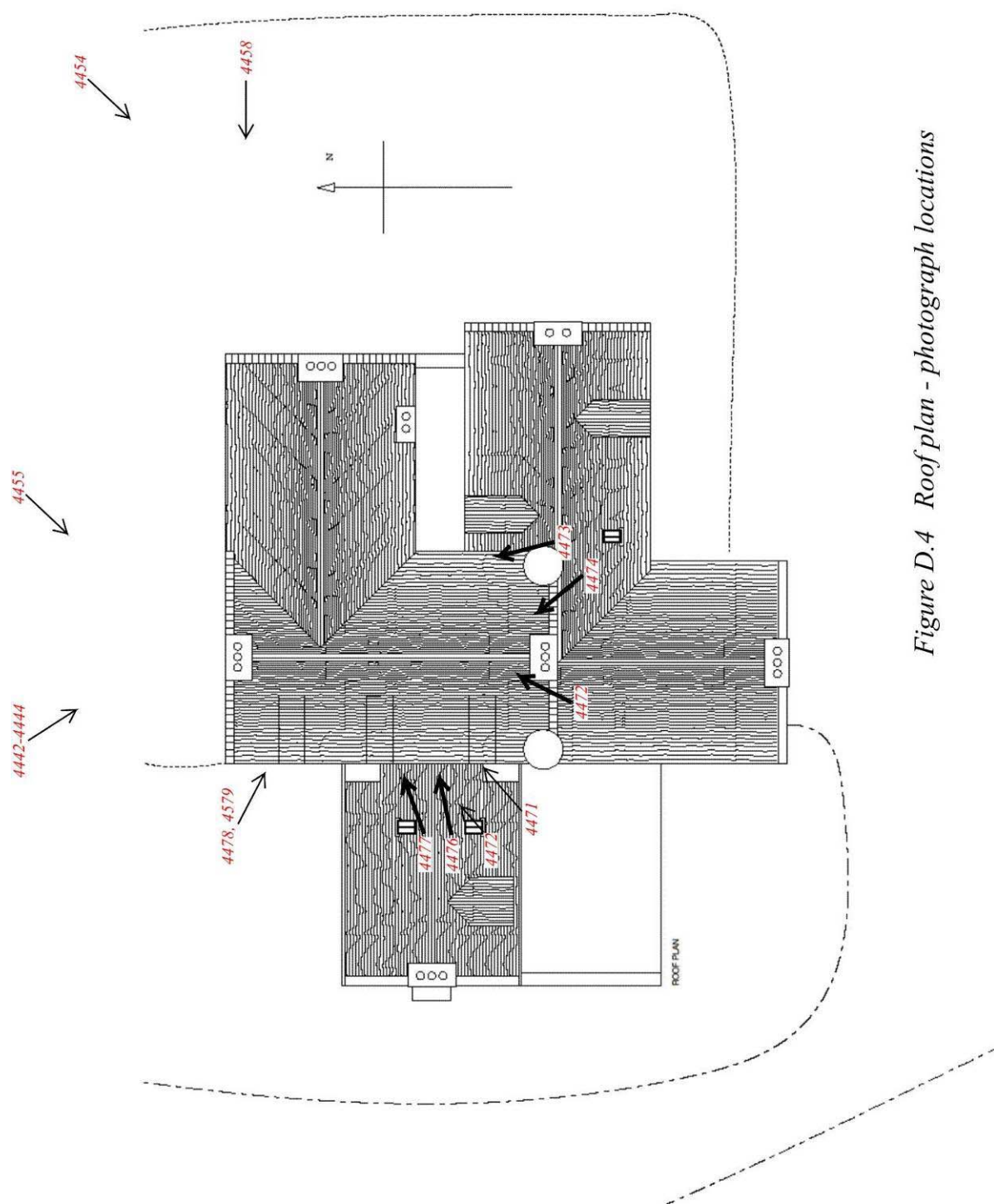


Figure D.4 Roof plan - photograph locations