

## *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*

<b>LOCAL AUTHORITY:</b>	Aberdeenshire
<b>PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:</b>	Barra Castle
<b>PROJECT CODE:</b>	BC09
<b>PARISH:</b>	Bourtie
<b>NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:</b>	Gordon Ewart, David Murray
<b>NAME OF ORGANISATION:</b>	Kirkdale Archaeology
<b>TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:</b>	Standing building recording
<b>NMRS NO(S):</b>	NJ72NE 7.00
<b>SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):</b>	Castle
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<b>NGR (2 letters, 8 or 10 figures)</b>	NJ 792 257
<b>START DATE (this season)</b>	29 June 2009
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<b>PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)</b>	
<b>MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION:</b> (May include information from other fields)	<p>Kirkdale Archaeology was commissioned by Historic Scotland to record some alterations that had been made to the fabric of Barra Castle. This castle has a complex history of building, reconstruction and modification. Early 17<sup>th</sup>-century date stones, with the monograms of the Seton family, mark the first securely dated part of the castle, although this is thought to represent the upgrading of an existing structure or structures.</p> <p>As it stands today, Barra Castle comprises a U-shaped plan, comprising three wings of three or four storeys each, open to the east. The north wing is thought to be an 18<sup>th</sup>-century addition, perhaps replacing an earlier range on this side. The south wing is the highest part of the castle, possibly incorporating an early tower at its east end, although transformed by the addition of a newel stair which connects it to the west range. The west range may incorporate an earlier structure at ground floor level, although recent analysis suggests that much of it may actually be of early 17<sup>th</sup>-century date. The north and south ends of this range differ significantly in architectural details on all three floors; this could have been caused by the rebuilding of much of the north end. This is perhaps best indicated by the stump of a round tower surviving in the northwest corner of the range, surviving only to ground floor level, while towers at the southwest corner and two others in the south elevation run the height of the building.</p> <p>In the second half of the 15<sup>th</sup> century the lands of Barra are recorded as being held by a Blackhall, known as 'the Goodman', who was a hereditary Forester and Coroner of the Garioch'. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the lands were held by the Blackhalls and the King family. The King family lost Barra as a result of a feud with their neighbours, the Setons of Meldrum. In 1590 James King of Barra and others attacked and killed James Seton of Meldrum '<i>with schottis of hagbuttis and muscattis, committed upon the landis of Barra</i>'. The feud resulted in the Kings and the Blackhalls forfeiting their rights to the lands and in 1599 George Seton was granted both halves of Barra. A charter of 1599 to George Seton, tutor of Meldrum mentions the erection of the lands of Barra as a free barony and another to George Seton of Barra, in 1615, ordained that the 'fortalice of Barra' was to be the chief seat of the barony (RMS, VII., 460). On George Seton's death (c 1630), Barra passed to his nephew's family, the Setons of Pitmedden. By 1658, James Seton of Pitmedden had sold Barra to James Reid, an Aberdeen advocate.</p>

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Updated on 15/06/2007

	<p>By 1672, James Reid had been succeeded by his son, John, who in 1703 received a Nova Scotia baronetcy. He married Mary Abercrombie (of Birkenbog), son Alexander &amp; three daughters. Sir John died c 1723, succeeded by Alexander, who died in 1750 and was succeeded by his third son, James. James sold Barra to in 1754 to John Ramsay, a 'Russian' merchant. John Ramsay lived at Barra until 1766, but thereafter retained part of the building for residential use but sublet the remainder.</p> <p>In 1909-10, John Ramsay's great-grand daughter, Mary, who had married Alexander Irvine of Drum, restored the older part of the castle. The architect was George Bennet Mitchell.</p>
<b>PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:</b>	
<b>CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:</b>	
<b>SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:</b>	Historic Scotland
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<b>ARCHIVE LOCATION</b> (intended/deposited)	Archive to be deposited in NMRS

# Historic Scotland

Barra Castle,  
Oldmeldrum,  
Aberdeenshire

## Standing Building Recording



Kirkdale Archaeology  
07 August 2009

<b><u>Site</u></b>	Barra Castle
<b><u>N.G.R</u></b>	NJ 79223 25756
<b><u>Project Description</u></b>	Standing Building Recording of interventions into the fabric of the castle.

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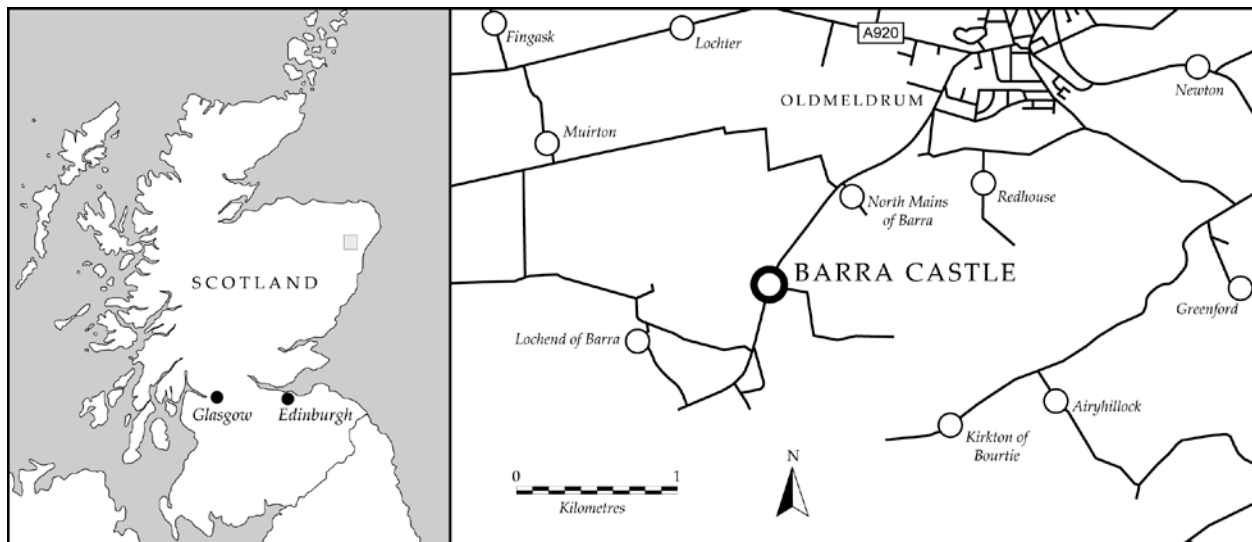
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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Kirkdale Archaeology was commissioned by Historic Scotland to record some alterations that had been made to the fabric of Barra Castle. This castle has a complex history of building, reconstruction and modification. Early 17th century date stones, with the monograms of the Seton family, mark the first securely dated part of the castle, although this is thought to represent the upgrading of an existing structure or structures.



**Figure 1: Location Map**

As it stands today, Barra Castle comprises a U-shaped plan, comprising three wings of 3 or 4 storeys each, open to the E. The N wing is thought to be an 18th century addition, perhaps replacing an earlier range on this side. The S wing is the highest part of the castle, possibly incorporating an early tower at its E end, although transformed by the addition of a newel stair which connects it to the W range. The W range may incorporate an earlier structure at ground floor level, although recent analysis suggests that much of it may actually be of early 17th century date. The N and S ends of this range differ significantly in architectural details on all three floors; this could have been caused by the rebuilding of much of the N end. This is perhaps best indicated by the stump of a round tower surviving in the NW corner of the range, surviving only to ground floor level, while towers at the SW corner and two others in the S elevation run the height of the building.

At ground floor level the range is split into three rooms (G3, G6 and G7), with the two smaller rooms (G6 and G7) at the S end. Access to the SW corner tower (G8) is from G7,

which also preserves the traces of a now blocked stair leading to the first floor. A corridor (G13) runs up the E side of, and provides access to, these two rooms, with a door at its N end leading to the larger room (G3). This was evidently a kitchen, with a large fireplace in the N wall, whose enormous chimney flue runs up this N gable. In the NW corner of this room is a kiln/ oven occupying and probably recycling the reduced stump of the NW corner tower.

At first floor level the W range is split today into three spaces. At the S end is the "drawing room" (F7) which is panelled. A door in the W wall leads to the SW corner tower (F8), while one in the E wall leads to the S range (F9) and the only current access to this level in the W range. The wood panelling had been removed from almost the entire N wall of this room, and a door in this wall leads to F4. This room occupies all but the W side of the range, and is covered by lath and plaster, which has been removed in two small areas on the S wall. A door in the E wall leads to F5, little more than a corridor, with a dumb waiter (which feeds up from the ground floor kitchens G3) at its S end.

The second floor is reached again from the S range, but at this level a short flight of steps runs up from the S to the W range. This leads to N- S corridor S6 against the E side of the S end of the range. At the S end of this, a door leads W into bedroom S9, from which a further door leads into the SW tower (S10). To the N of S9, separated by a thin partition wall is bathroom S8, which is accessed from corridor S6 to the E. At the N end of S6, within the thickness of a thicker E- W partition wall a short flight of steps leads down into a further bedroom (S5) at the N end of the range. This has a fireplace in the S wall, although in the attic space above (T5) its chimney breast can be seen on the other side of this wall. It is noticeable that the floor level for rooms S5, S6 and S9 is slightly higher than that in the rooms to both N and S.

All the recent interventions had been carried out in two rooms at first floor level, F4 and F7, with a minor area stripped in F5. The N room F4 evidently served recently as a dining room and has two window bays in the E wall with false lintels above them externally and a fireplace in its N wall, feeding into the flue for the ground floor kitchen fire. A door in the E end of the N wall leads to small intra mural space (F3), from which access to the N range is possible. A door in the W wall leads to F5, while a centrally placed door in the S wall leads through to F7. Small areas of plaster had been removed at the E and W ends of this S wall.

F5 is a narrow N- S corridor separated from F4 to the E by a thin partition wall through which a door connects the two. At its S end is the dumb waiter feeding up from G3 below, and a small area has been stripped at the E side of this, exposing the masonry of

the back of the E side of the cupboard in the N wall of F7 (see below).

As well as the three doors noted above, F7 has a large central window in the S wall with stone window seats, for which a relieving arch is visible externally. In the W wall is a similar window (without the seats) roughly central, while just to the N of this is a recess of similar dimensions to the window, but today filled with shelving. Externally both the window and the position of the cupboard can be seen to have lintels and relieving arches at the same height, although that to the N (i.e. for the recess) has no margins or sill surviving. A further window in the E wall also has an external relieving arch and no window seat, while just to the N of this is a large fireplace. The N wall angles at its E end to the N to avoid running into it. A smaller bolection moulded fireplace has been inserted into the original, but placed off centre - to the S, away from the N wall. As well as the central door in the N wall to F4 there is a cupboard, with a stone chamfered lintel and margins visible at the W end of the wall, which today contains shelving and a radiator.

The entirety of the room is covered by wooden panelling, except for the N wall where it has mostly been removed. This panelling appears to date from 1909, but an earlier fragment above the door in the E wall, which carries the Reid family initials (late 17th and early 18th century owners of the castle) hints at an earlier arrangement of panelling in this space.

The current owner of the castle (Mr David Stevens) has completed some work on the wall separating F4 from F7, namely the removal of the upper wall surfaces in both these rooms to investigate the wall fabric. It was these interventions that Kirkdale Archaeology was asked to record. A graphic and photographic survey was undertaken as well as a written analysis of the wall and all its features, recorded onto pro- forma context sheets. A scoping survey of the whole castle was also achieved, involving the assignation of a unique code number to each space within the castle complex as well as a brief description of each.

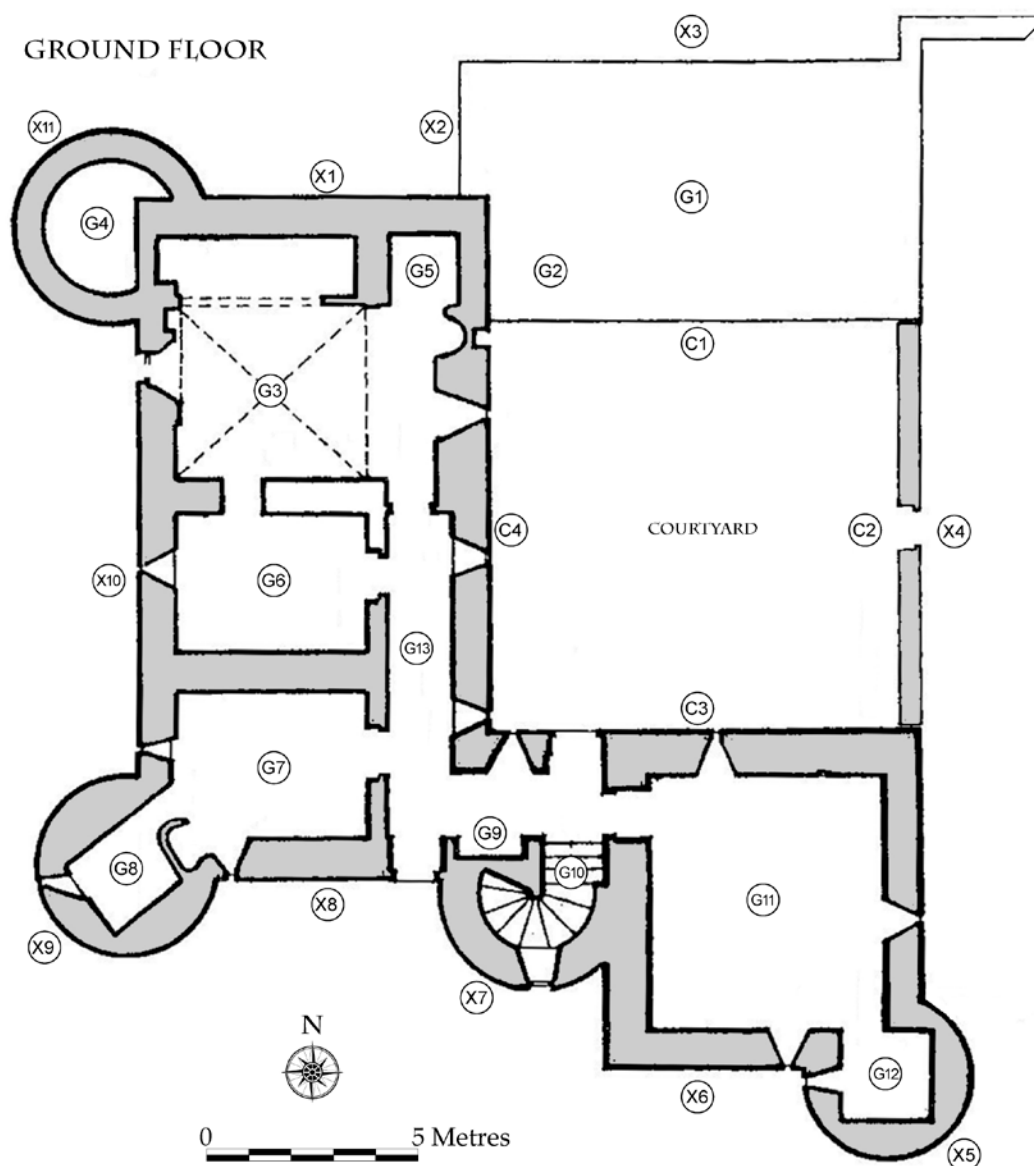


Figure 2: Ground Floor Components, Exterior Elevations and Courtyard Elevations



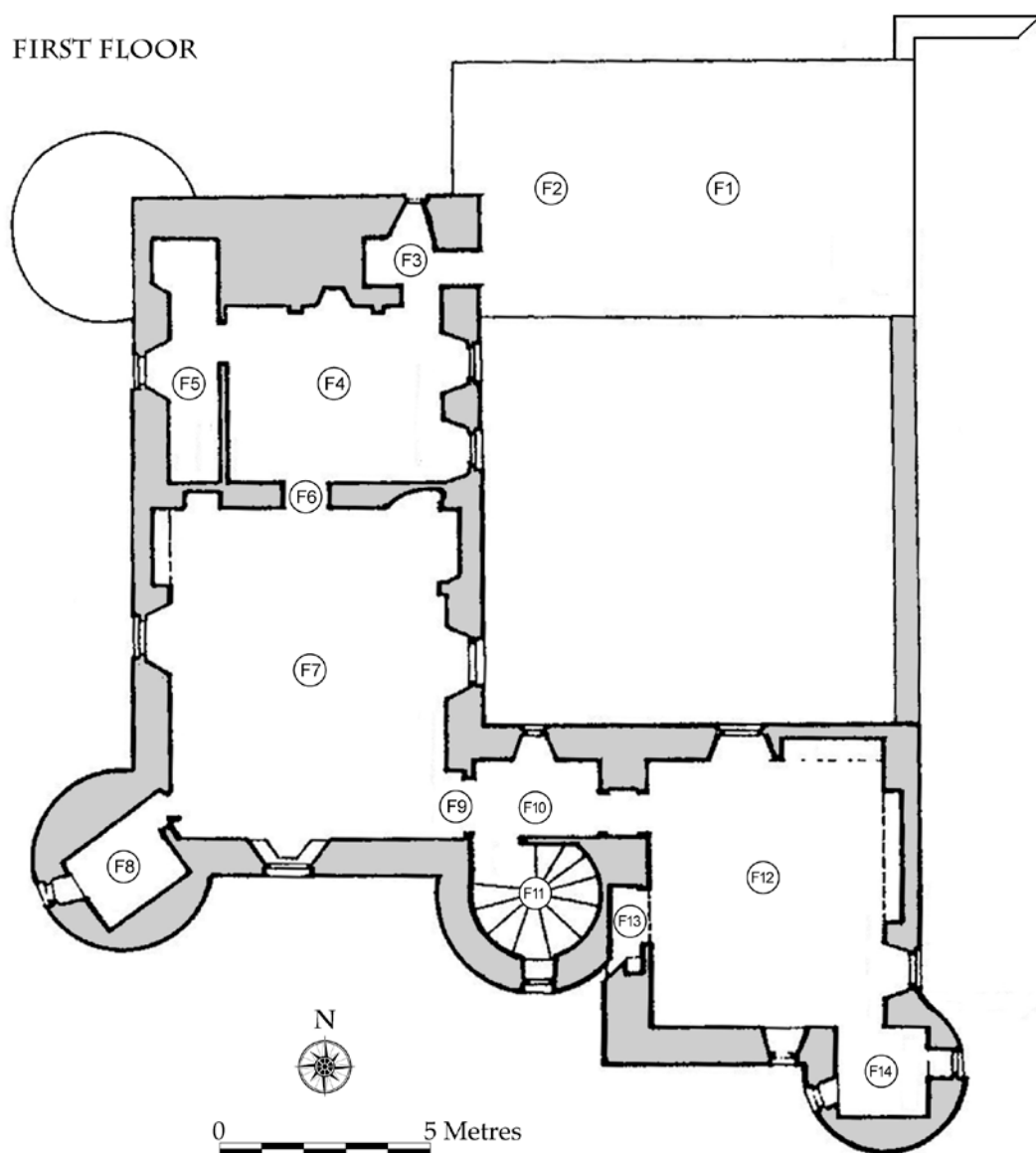


Figure 3: First Floor Components

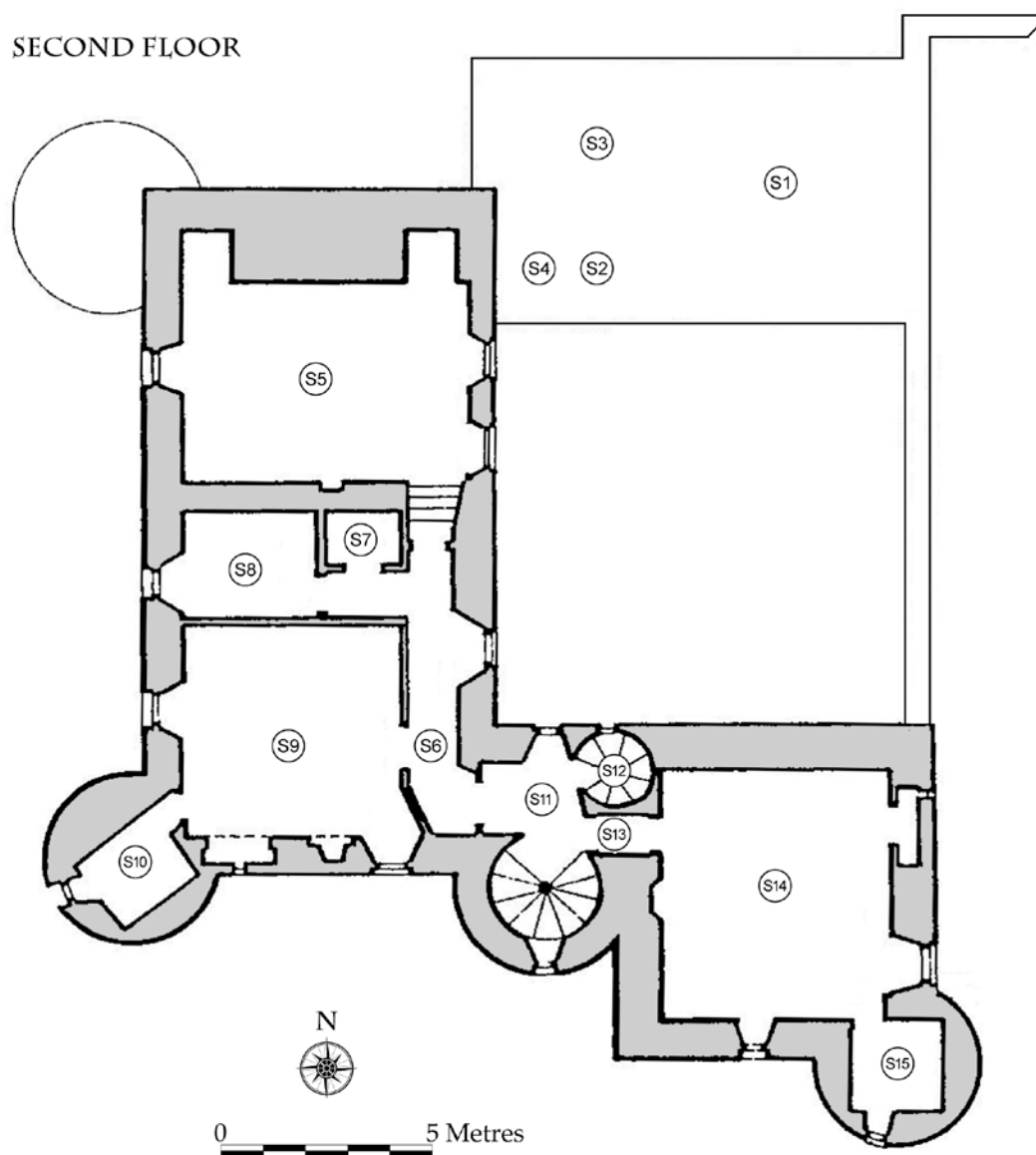


Figure 4: Second Floor Components

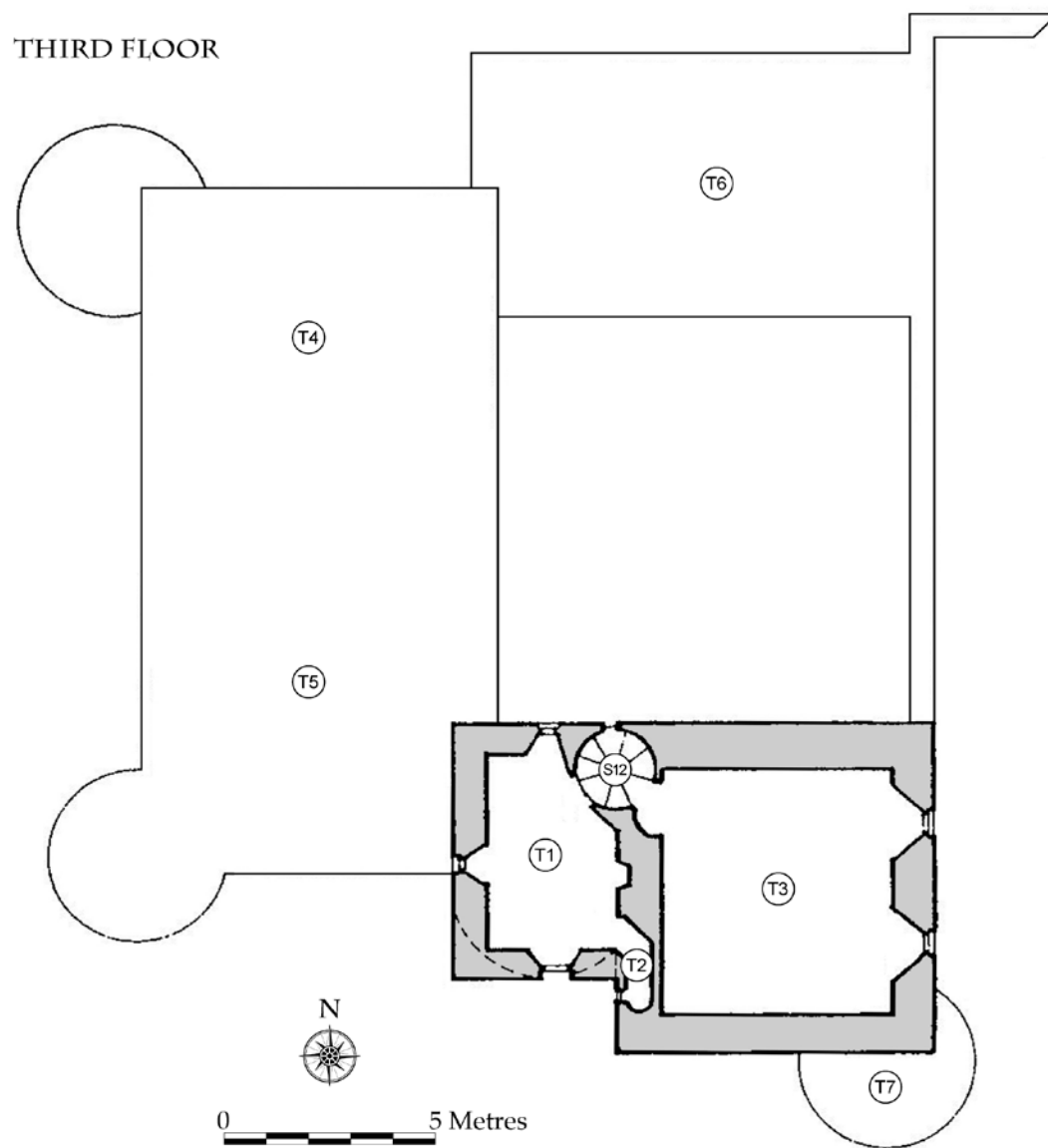
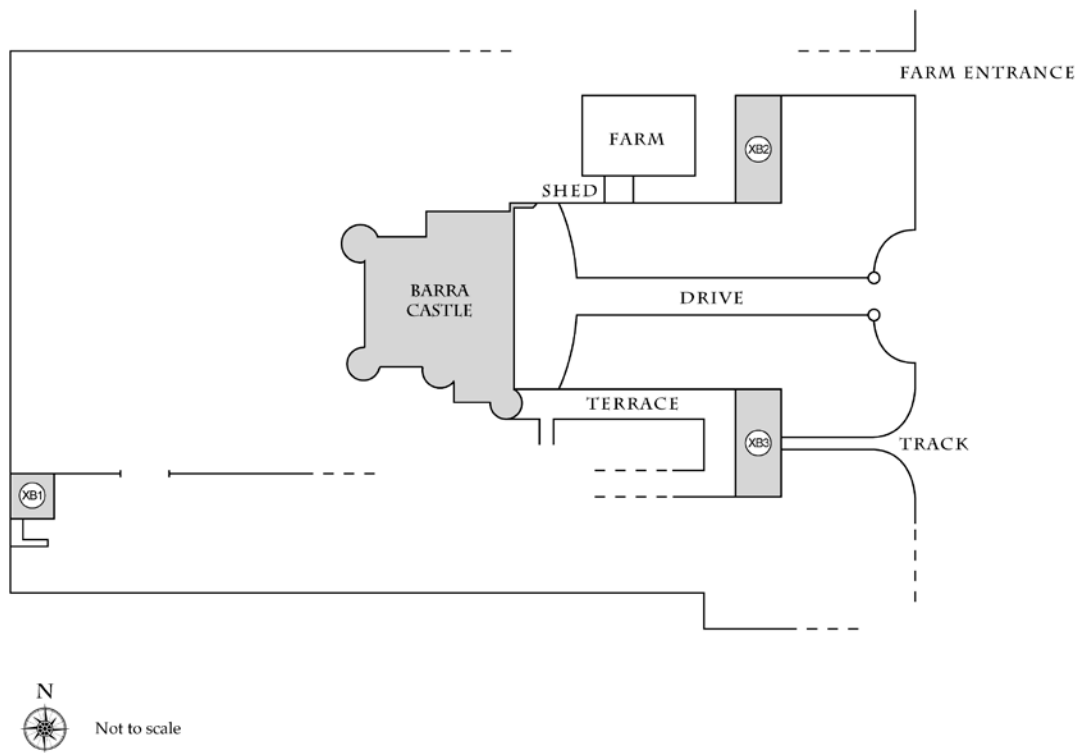


Figure 5: Third Floor Components



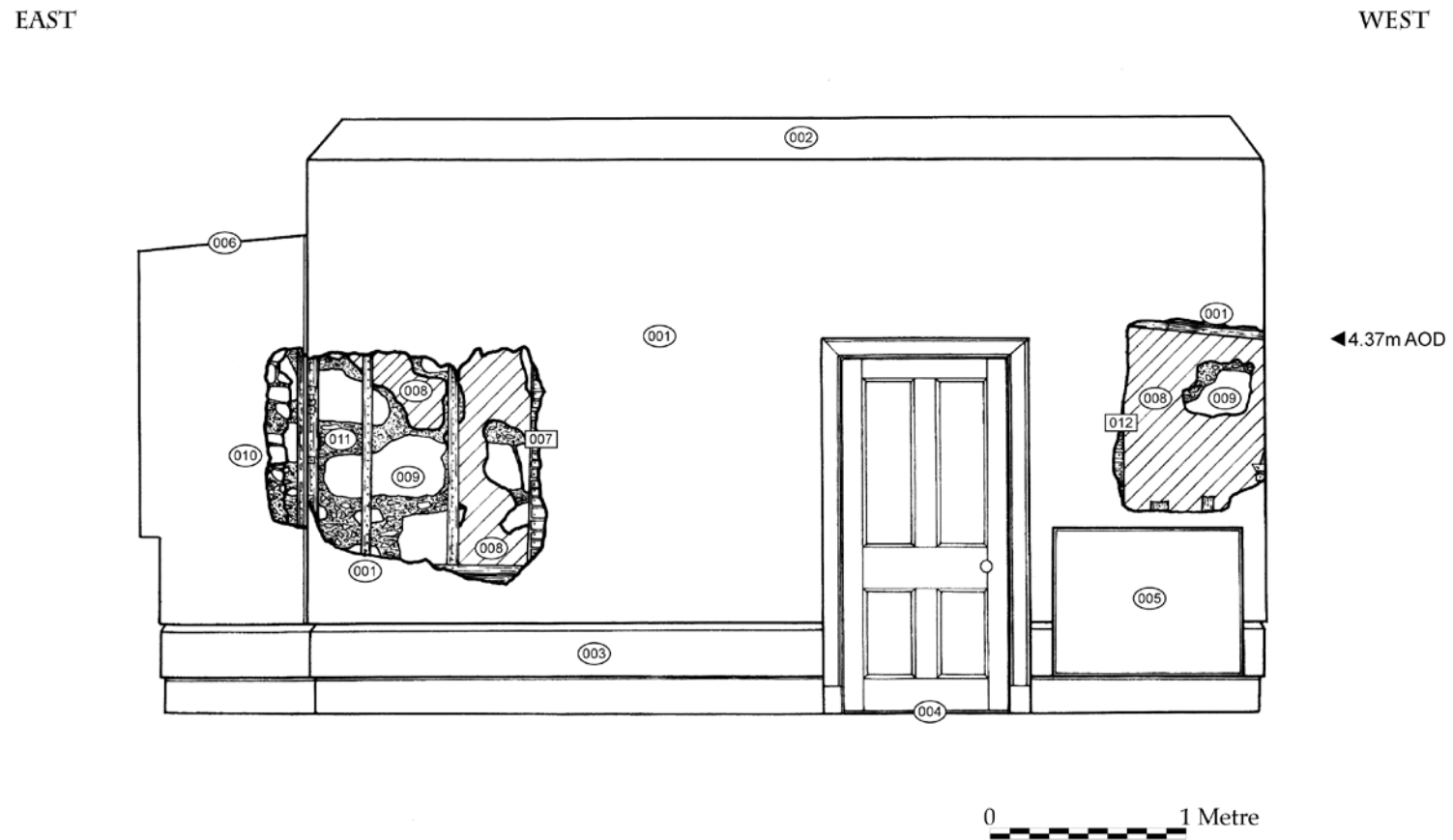
**Figure 6: Exterior Buildings**

## 2 SURVEY OF INTERVENTIONS

### 2.1 SOUTH WALL OF ROOM F4 (F4.3)

As noted above two small areas had been stripped either side of the central door to F7. Both these were cut through lath and plaster **F4.3.001** which was formed of pine strips with plaster over these, and which had brought the wall face forward (to the N) by c 110 mm from that behind it. At the top of this is a moulded plaster cornice (**F4.3.002**), and at the base a two part timber skirting board (**F4.3.003**). The intervention to the W (numbered **F4.3.012**) was roughly 1 m high and 760 mm high, and had exposed a smooth white outer plaster face **F4.3.011** with fine vertical brush marks on its outer face. The laths of **F4.3.001** had been driven through this, and a small hole through **F4.3.011** exposed a rough yellowish plaster **F4.3.008** 10 mm thick behind **F4.3.011**. This seemed to lie directly on masonry **F4.3.009** forming the wall behind, of which too little could be seen here to describe.

The removal of **F4.3.001** at the E end of the wall by cut **F4.3.007** in an area 1.4 m wide by 1.2 m high ran partly across the E end of the wall, and partly into the S side of the window bay for the S window (**F4.3.006**) in the E wall. Here the plaster surface (**F4.3.008**/**F4.3.011**) only survived in patches, allowing some details of the fabric of wall **F4.3.009** to be recorded. It proved to comprise mostly large rounded blocks of grey granite, with some smaller dark grey angular whinstone between these which, although exposed in a limited area gave the impression of being roughly coursed and provided a good N face. This was bonded by a hard yellowish lime mortar, rich in small angular inclusions. At its E end **F4.3.010**, the slightly angled (roughly ENE- WSW) masonry of the S side of window bay **F4.3.006**, abutted **F4.3.009**. This was built of small- medium sized whinstone chunks which formed a rough N face, and a very ragged W end. This was bonded by very pale grey mortar rich in large inclusions, and although exposed in a very limited strip no trace of plaster over this was seen.



**Figure 7: Drawing of S4.3**

## 2.2 SOUTH WALL OF ROOM F5 (F5.3)

At the S end of this room a small patch of lath and plaster had been removed. This area was constrained by the dumb waiter occupying all but a thin vertical strip at the E edge of the wall, as well as shelving that was still in- situ at the time of our visit. Due to these issues this room was not subject to a formal graphic record, with a photographic survey and notes being undertaken instead.

At the extreme E end of the affected area masonry was observed in the form of an E- W wall, which turns to run to the S. This corresponds with the back of the position of the aperture in F7.1 which today is a cupboard. Although in F7 this has a roll moulded lintel and margins, within F5 this was simply a return to the S with no formal lining, or even evidence for larger quoins at the corner. A plaster surface could be seen on the E face of this return, with no trace of this on the main E- W wall section. This was sealed behind the lath and plaster lining to the E side of this cupboard in F7. The gap between where the wall turns and the W wall of the room is occupied by further laths, with plaster on both their N and S faces. This forms the back of the cupboard in F7 and the S wall of F5.

## 2.3 NORTH WALL OF ROOM F7 (F7.1)

This elevation incorporated the entire S face of the N wall as well as the N ends of both the E and W walls of the room. The main wall fabric **F7.1.001** was mostly obscured by plaster **F7.1.019** (described below) as well as some panelling (**F7.1.017**) still in- situ at the top of the W end of the wall. In spite of these limitations it could be seen to be of random rubble construction comprising small to medium sized rounded blocks of whinstone with many small pinners used. It presented a reasonably flush S face although with many cracks (the largest numbered **F7.1.026**), was bonded by fine pale yellow mortar and was 3.5 m high by 5.8 m long by 800 mm thick. It could be seen to postdate both the E and W walls of the room (described below). Integral to its build was aperture **F7.1.002** at its extreme W end and the curious spay at its E end. This involved the wall line angling to the N for its final 800 mm for a distance of 300 mm.

WEST

EAST

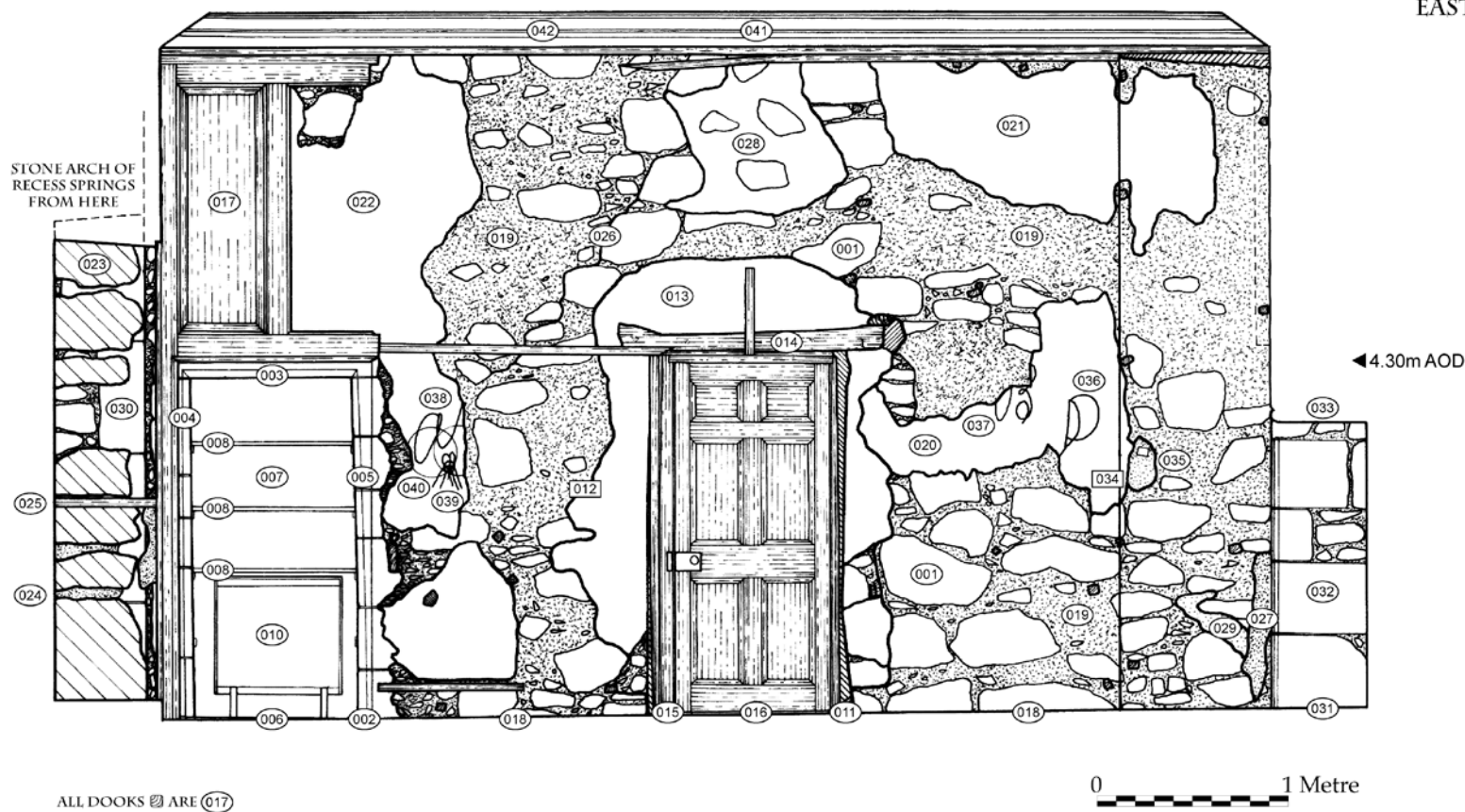


Figure 8: Drawing of S7.1



Aperture **F7.1.002** at the W end of **F7.1.001** was framed by stonework displaying roll moulding on its lintel (**F7.1.003**) as well as its W (**F7.1.004**) and E (**F7.1.005**) margins, with a plain sill. Both margins displayed unusual traits, with **F7.1.004** having a very rough irregular W edge where it was against the W wall **F7.1.030**, and the E margin **F7.1.005**'s E edge not being flush with **F7.1.001**, but rather angling, in smoothly dressed masonry, slightly to the N. Overall it measured 850 mm wide by 1.79 m high. This aperture forms a cupboard with lath and plaster lining **F7.1.007** running across the masonry of its E and W sides, as well as across the back where it was unsupported by stonework. Wooden framework **F7.1.008** supported three shelves within this, with a final basal shelf evidently removed to allow the insertion of radiator **F7.1.010** sitting directly on its wooden floor **F7.1.009**.

Roughly central to **F7.1.001** was aperture **F7.1.011**, the current door into room F4. This seemed to be inserted via ragged cut **F7.1.012**, in filled by **F7.1.013** which stood out against the fabric of **F7.1.001** due to the presence of copious amounts of fine pale yellow mortar. This left a neat rectangular aperture 1.8 m high by 800 mm wide through the thickness of **F7.1.001**. A wood lintel **F7.1.014** was built into **F7.1.013** directly above this aperture and it was lined with wooden door frame **F7.1.015** from which door **F7.1.016**, wooden and made of six panels, was suspended. Crack **F7.1.026** (mentioned above) was above, and slightly to the W of **F7.1.011**.

Adhering directly to the masonry of **F7.1.001** was **F7.1.019** a hard rough off- white plaster typically 10 mm thick with occasional small stone inclusions as well as some apparent organic material (straw?) throughout. This survived in extensive areas across the wall, and was sealed by three discrete but similar patches of smooth pale grey plaster: **F7.1.020**; **F7.1.021** and **F7.1.022**. At the E end plaster **F7.1.020** was cut by **F7.1.012** for the insertion of aperture **F7.1.011**, while at the W end **F7.1.022** seemed to go with aperture **F7.1.002**, with a good formal lower limit to **F7.1.022** over its lintel **F7.1.003**.

Graffiti was recorded in two discrete areas across these plaster surfaces. At the E end, **F7.1.036** and **F7.1.037** were recorded over **F7.1.020**. **F7.1.036** comprised faint red lines making two loops, while **F7.1.037** was a series of silvery grey loops. At the W end of the wall, over plaster **F7.1.022** was a series of three designs **F7.1.038**; **F7.1.039** and **F7.1.040**, partially superimposed over each other. **F7.1.038** was a further silvery grey swirl, while **F7.1.039** was a very faint design in red of apparent loops at the top, with sinuous lines leading away from these to both E and W. Both these ran over **F7.1.040**, although their relationship could not be determined. **F7.1.040** took the form of a compass drawn circle (270 mm diameter), with a second circle drawn to the E, using the first circle's centre point as its W edge. Faint traces of part of a third circle form a crescent shape at the E

side of the first circle.

Two areas of repair to **F7.1.001** were recorded: **F7.1.028** and **F7.1.035**. **F7.1.028** was directly above door **F7.1.011**, and was an area of smooth very pale grey cement c 900 mm wide by 800 mm high. **F7.1.035** at the E end of the wall filled cut **F7.1.034**, which was dug through the E end of plaster **F7.1.020**. This measured 350 mm high by 150 mm wide, and it was filled by a coarse pale grey mortar with a single small fragment of handmade brick within this.

Faint vertical silvery grey lines could be seen running up the wall, particularly where these crossed a plaster surface. The position of these coincided with vertical lines of dooks, which had evidently held timber strips to which panelling **F7.1.017** was attached. This survived intact on the other three walls of the room, as well as for a single panel at the top of the W end of this wall. The recessed area of this was 350 mm wide by 1.2 m high, and it was varnished dark brown. Both aperture **F7.1.002** and **F7.1.011** were exposed through this panelling. On the W wall this supported the shelving in the cupboard at the N end of this wall, while in the E the fireplace (**F7.1.031**) was fully exposed outside the panelling.

Having described the N wall of the room, **F7.1.001**, attention must now be paid to the E and W walls both of whose N ends were included in the current exercise. Where the E end of **F7.1.001** reached the E wall it splayed some 300 mm to the N of the walls alignment elsewhere. This meant that it reached the E wall just to the N of the N margin (**F7.1.032**) to the fireplace **F7.1.031** in the N end of this wall. This fireplace had a lintel **F033** formed by sixteen stones laid horizontally with a 50 mm wide roll moulding running along their base. These stones had a thin wedge shaped central “keystone” which the stones either side sloped away from slightly to form a “flat arch”. Below this the N margin was formed by 4 large stones with a good W and S face with a 50 mm wide roll moulding between them. A matching S margin (not numbered in this exercise) formed a fireplace 2.35 m wide by 1.5 m high by 480 mm deep. A smaller (1.15 m wide by 1.05 m high) bolection moulded fireplace sat within this, towards its S end.

The W wall had a niche at its N end, and only the N margin of this was stripped, with the rest filled by elaborate shelves, which seemed to be part of panelling **F017**. The N wall **F7.1.001** (actually the W margin **F7.1.004** of aperture **F7.1.002**) was very crudely placed against the E wall, with a significant gap between the two, with the stones of **F7.1.004** seeming broken off where they reached the W wall. The actual masonry of the W wall **F7.1.030** could be little seen due to plaster **F7.1.023** covering its surface, but behind **F7.1.001** it turned a right angle to run N- S, and at its top (still behind **F7.1.017**) the start of an arch (whose shape is copied in the panelling **F7.1.017** at the top of the

recess) heading S could just be seen.

The masonry of **F7.1.030** was covered by **F7.1.023**, smooth pale grey upper plaster surface over 15 mm of rougher pale grey plaster directly on stonework **F7.1.030**. This seemed chipped off at its E end where **F7.1.001** was built against it, and a small patch of **F7.1.023**, towards the base of the wall, seemed to be sealed by plaster **F7.1.022** over wall **F7.1.001**. **F7.1.023** was split into a series of discrete patches by a series of six horizontal scars, all numbered **F7.1.024**, typically 70- 100 mm high. A horizontal wooden baton, **F7.1.025** filled the third scar up from the bottom.

### 3 PHASING

#### 3.1 PHASE 1

This phase consists of the E and W walls of the room, seemingly as a larger space which extended to the N (into what is now room F4). In the E wall the large roll moulded fireplace **F7.1.031** is incorporated into this phase. In the current arrangement this fireplace sits in the NE corner of the room, with (phase 2) N wall **F7.1.001** angling to the N to avoid it.

The cupboard in the W wall is still mostly obscured by shelving **F7.1.017**, except for its N wall. Here its masonry **F7.1.030** was mostly hidden behind plaster surface **F7.1.023**, which was either broken off at its E edge where **F7.1.001** was built against it, or was actually sealed by plaster **F7.1.022** over **F7.1.001**. This indicates that the W wall was standing and plastered before **F7.1.001** was built.

Although much obscured internally by panelling **F7.1.017** it can be seen that this cupboard is of a similar size and shape to the windows in the E and S walls, as well as the window in the W wall just to its S, although only that in the S wall has stone benches built in, presumably reflecting its sunnier aspect. Externally all of these windows bear a relieving arch over a lintel, and these features can be also seen on the outside of the castle where this cupboard is. They are at the same height as those on the extant window just to the S, although there is no trace of margins or a sill to the cupboard externally, unlike all the windows. If this was once a window (or perhaps a door) then presumably much of this masonry has been robbed out. A single stone built into the stair in the S range, just above the first floor has a chamfer on one long edge, a rebate opposite it and a single possible (in filled) bar hole, matching the style of the margins of the other windows.

A hypothetical reconstruction of the phase 1 first floor “hall” would indicate that it had a single window in the S wall, perhaps two in the E (with the N replaced today by two windows in the E wall of F4) either side of the central fireplace, and three in the W wall (with the N now being in F5, and rebuilt), with the N wall occupied by the massive flue and therefore windowless.

#### 3.2 PHASE 2

During this phase the N wall **F7.1.001** is built, subdividing the once larger room into at least two spaces. Door **F7.1.002** at its W end seems integral to the build of this, and presumably provided access to the room(s) to the N. Although part of the build of the wall its stonework is probably recycled, as its W margin (**F7.1.004**) seems very irregular,

as if broken off to fit into the space between door and the phase 1 W wall. Additionally the stones of the E side of the E margin (**F7.1.005**) angle gently to the N, away from the line of **F7.1.001**. This may indicate the re- use of a door taken from a curved space, such as a spiral stair.

The other side of this door (at the S end of room F5) was only examined in a thin strip up its E margin. Although here it was not marked by a formal stone surround, plaster trapped behind the modern cupboard lining indicates that this was plastered, and that presumably it ran right through the thickness of **F7.1.001**. This indicates that the S side of the door was considered the side more appropriate for the display of architectural niceties.

Rough plaster **F7.1.019** covered much of wall **F7.1.001**, and although resembling an external render, it seems more likely that this is a "primer" before more formal surfaces are laid over it. Three areas of more formal plaster (**F7.1.020**, **F7.1.021** and **F7.1.022**) survived over this, and although some variation in colour was observed (with a tendency to darken towards the top of the wall, possibly caused by soot) it seems likely that they once formed a single surface. **F7.1.022** had a formal lower limit over the lintel of door **F002**, indicating their contemporary use.

Two areas of graffiti were noted over these plaster surfaces at E and W ends of the wall. To the E **F7.1.037** is probably phase 3, while **F7.1.036** was a damaged faint red design, possibly part of a letter. To the W **F7.1.038** is also probably phase 3, while **F7.1.039** was a faint design, again in red. Although partial this may be a copy of the Reid monogram seen today above the door in the S end of the E wall of room F7, owners of the castle in the late 17th and early 18th century. In the same area as this was **F7.1.040** a series of two complete and one partial compass drawn circle (270 mm diameter). This was scored into the plaster, and was not necessarily done while it was wet.

Wall **F7.1.001** is itself of some interest. Its position is one of only two possible for a cross wall, as its weight has to be borne by one of the two cross walls in the ground floor, the other being to the S of **F7.1.001**'s line. The thickness of the wall (800 mm for most of its length) is perhaps surprising for a partition wall. This wall supports the cross wall in the second floor directly above it however, and this may help explain this. The N side of this wall on a higher level carries a fireplace, and this width may have been required to carry its flue. The flue for this protrudes from the opposite (S) side of the wall in the attic space (first floor), and it remains possible that phase 3 aperture **F7.1.011** replaces a central fireplace in this wall at first floor level. There is no positive evidence for such a feature beyond the flue's position, and perhaps the crack **F7.1.026** noted above and to the W of door **F7.1.011**, although this has probably simply been caused by the insertion

of **F7.1.011**.

Although little of the fabric of the wall was seen on its N side (within F4 and F5) it did suggest that it was of better construction on this side than the S. More large stones, giving the impression of rough courses were seen and it seemed to present a better face than the S side. It is possible that the wall has been thickened at some stage, perhaps suggesting that the upper floor partition is later, or that the second floor fireplace is inserted, either of which might require the widening of **F7.1.001**. It should be noted that the raised ceiling height of room F7 (presumably simply designed to create a more impressive space), and the consequent alteration of floor levels in the second floor indicates that the cross walls at both first and second floor height are contemporary. The plaster surface **F4.3.008/F4.3.011** over the N side of the wall is of phase 2.

The splaying to the N of the E end of **F7.1.001** is evidently principally to allow fireplace **F7.1.031** in the E wall to be visible. This may have been retained as a feature, rather than a functioning hearth, as it is so close to **F7.1.001** that it is hard to see it being used without damaging the fabric of **F7.1.001**, although it is unknown when the smaller fireplace was inserted into **F7.1.031**, at its S end, away from **F7.1.001**. It should also be noted that access corridors in the W wing runs up the E side of the building on both the ground and second floors, and the narrowing in width here will also help the door aperture below this point carry the weight of **F7.1.001**.

It is unclear when the probable window in the W wall was converted into a cupboard; there seems no reason why it could not have continued to function as a window with door **F7.1.002** next to it during this phase.

### 3.3 PHASE 3

It is during this phase that the central door **F7.1.011** is forced through wall **F7.1.001**. This was cut through the plaster surfaces of phase 2, and was of plain masonry, lacking the roll mouldings of phase 2 door **F7.1.002**. No other decorative scheme to go with **F7.1.011** was noted, except for the panelling **F7.1.017**. This is thought to date to 1909, although the panel bearing the Reid monogram above the door in the E wall suggests an earlier decorative scheme. No evidence for earlier panelling was recorded in this wall, and it seems unlikely that something like this could be suspended from exactly the same dooks as **F7.1.017**. The implication is that either the single panel does not come from this room, or that this early panelling never covered the N wall, implying that this decorative scheme predates the insertion of **F7.1.001**.

The dooks to support the panels of **F7.1.017** had been laid out by pencil lines drawn

down the wall, and graffiti **F7.1.037** and **F7.1.040**, both possibly parts of letters, were in similar silver grey style. These may well represent vandalism done in 1909, immediately prior to the insertion of the panels. The wooden floor **F7.1.018** and the plaster cornice **F7.1.041** and ceiling **F7.1.042** presumably also belong to this phase.

Although not numbered the dumb waiter at the S end of F5 is probably also of this phase. This blocked the N end of door **F7.1.002**, and may even be the reason for the insertion of new central door **F7.1.011**. The lath and plaster in F5 goes with this, as presumably does that in room F4 (**F4.3.001**), indicating that the subdivision of the N end of the range into two rooms (F4 and F5) also dates to 1909. The masonry of the S window bay (**F4.3.006**), **F4.3.010** seems to postdate the S wall of the room. It may be that the window bays were altered at this time.

## 4 DISCUSSION

### 4.1 HISTORY

*This is brief summary is based on an initial review of secondary sources.*

In the second half of the 15th century the lands of Barra are recorded as being held by a Blackhall, known as 'the Goodman', who was a hereditary 'Forester and Coroner of the Garioch'. In the 16th century the lands were held by the Blackhalls and the King family. The King family lost Barra as a result of a feud with their neighbours, the Setons of Meldrum. In 1590 James King of Barra and others attacked and killed James Seton of Meldrum 'with schottis of hagbuttis and muscattis, committed upon the landis of Barra'. The feud resulted in the Kings and the Blackhalls forfeiting their rights to the lands and in 1599 George Seton was granted both halves of Barra. A charter of 1599 to George Seton, tutor of Meldrum mentions the erection of the lands of Barra as a free barony and another to George Seton of Barra, in 1615, ordained that the 'fortalice of Barra' was to be the chief seat of the barony (RMS, VII., 460). On George Seton's death (c 1630), Barra passed to his nephew's family, the Setons of Pitmedden. By 1658, James Seton of Pitmedden had sold Barra to James Reid, an Aberdeen advocate.

By 1672, James Reid had been succeeded by his son, John, who in 1703 received a Nova Scotia baronetcy. He married Mary Abercrombie (of Birkenbog), son Alexander & three daughters. Sir John died c 1723, succeeded by Alexander, who died in 1750 and was succeeded by his third son, James. James sold Barra to in 1754 to John Ramsay, a 'Russian' merchant. John Ramsay lived at Barra until 1766, but thereafter retained part of the building for residential use but sublet the remainder.

In 1909/10, John Ramsay's great-grand daughter, Mary, who had married Alexander Irvine of Drum, restored the older part of the castle. The architect was George Bennet Mitchell.



## 4.2 PROVISIONAL DEVELOPMENT OF THE BUILDING

*The following represents an initial periodisation of the castle integrating the archaeological phases with a base line historical architectural assessment*

**Period 1: 15<sup>th</sup> – 16<sup>th</sup> century**

**Owners: Blackhall/ King**

Tower

- Extended further to E than present version and with a 1st floor entrance?

Much altered in later periods but may have formed basis for reduced SE Tower.

**Period 2: Early 17<sup>th</sup> century – early 18<sup>th</sup> century (Archaeological Phase 1)**

**Owners: Seton/ Reid**

W range + SE Tower

- Ground floor kitchen and service rooms with service stair at SW.
- Gunloops of late 16<sup>th</sup> - early 17<sup>th</sup> century type.
- Hall + large fireplace
- Symmetrical towers at angles of W façade.
- Plank and batten doors
- South garden

Raised to present height in early 17<sup>th</sup> century by George Seton; date stones 1614 and 1618. A large circular stair tower is erected to link the earlier tower with the west range, providing a grand entrance to the first floor hall.

It is unknown if the hall extended the full length of the W range, as the N end of the W range has undergone rebuilding ( Period 4). However, it would be normal for a progression through the hall to another chamber, possibly at the N end of the W range, although in turn, this could have been upstairs.

**Period 3: Early 18th – mid 18th century (Archaeological Phase 2)****Owners: Reid**

Remodelling / refurbishment of interiors and subdivision of hall

- Panelling including monograms in SE tower and hall (latter mostly replaced in 1909 restoration).
- Doorways with lugged architraves.
- Smaller bolection moulded chimneypiece inserted within hall fireplace.
- Hall subdivided and new door constructed at W end of cross wall

**Period 4: Mid 18th – late 18th century****Owners: Ramsay**

N wing and pavilions in outer court.

N end of W Range rebuilt

Axis of castle complex aligned to E/W

N end of the W range damaged/ dismantled and present interior wall in W range may have formed temporary exterior wall. (Note recent pointing of diagonal crack on W façade). The new 2 storey N range becomes the main focus of the castle. N Range integrated in new work of N part of W range.

Listed building account notes 'good stair of similar type to Bourtie and panelled sitting room in N wing of 1753'.

(N wing, which is only two stories high, was erected by the grandfather of the present proprietor (Hay, 21 quoting Ferguson's *Scenery and Antiquities on the line of the Great North of Scotland Railway*, 33))

**Period 5: Late 18th – early 20th century**

Partial occupation + farm building

During the late 18th and 19th century most of the building was used as a farmhouse (1766-1909). The hall was divided into 3 rooms and many windows blocked.

During the early 19th century, heightening of N wing and remodelling of the upper part of N end of W range took place

**Period 6: 1909 (Archaeological Phase 3)**

Restoration of W and S ranges

Restoration of W and S ranges in 1909 by architect George Bennet Mitchell.

This included the possible replacement of panelling in the hall, retaining a monogram panel.

The interior N wall of the hall was possibly cut back/ refaced to show full extent of earlier fireplace.

**Period 7: Late 20th century**

Rebuilding of upper part of E gable of N range.

**4.3 CONCLUSIONS**

The archaeological phases described above provide a framework on which further analysis of the castle can be supported. At this stage they represent a baseline interpretation due in particular to the difficulty connecting features to N and S of the cross wall. The variation in aperture size, morphology and location either side of the cross wall has been explained by the rebuilding of much of the N end of the W range, and this remains speculative. The exterior of the castle is of random rubble build with little geological variation, except in the makeup of the N wing, and this inhibits the understanding of its fabric. The best evidence (apart from the apertures) comes from the reduced height of the NW corner tower when compared to the others, and it is possible that this was never built to a greater height, rather than it being reduced.

When seen against the historical architectural assessment, the work undertaken so far indicates that the wall subdividing the first floor level of the W range was inserted, no later than the early 18th century.

In addition, the potential removal of this wall may have significant structural consequences. Most obvious is that this wall supports the weight of the cross wall at second floor level, and its removal might necessitate the removal of this wall as well. The ceiling height of F7 is higher than that of F4 and F5 to the N, and the creation (or recreation) of this as a single space would mean the altering of floor levels throughout all but the ground floor of this range. On the second floor this would mean that windows would be left at the wrong height.

#### **4.4 POSSIBLE FURTHER WORK**

- 1) Measured Survey
- 2) A programme of Standing Building Recording
- 3) Further documentary and cartographic research

**A1. APPENDIX 1: FEATURE LIST****Features in the North Wall of F7 (F7.1)**

<b>Feature #</b>	<b>Description</b>
F7.1.001	Main wall fabric
F7.1.002	Aperture at W end of F7.1.001
F7.1.003	Lintel to F7.1.002
F7.1.004	W margin to F7.1.002
F7.1.005	E margin to F7.1.002
F7.1.006	Sill to F7.1.002
F7.1.007	Internal lining to F7.1.002
F7.1.008	Wood framework and shelves within F7.1.002
F7.1.009	Wood floor to F7.1.002
F7.1.010	Radiator in F7.1.002
F7.1.011	Aperture in centre of F7.1.001
F7.1.012	Cut for insertion of F7.1.011
F7.1.013	Infill of F7.1.012
F7.1.014	Wood lintel to F7.1.011
F7.1.015	Wood door frame to F7.1.011
F7.1.016	Wood door to F7.1.011
F7.1.017	Panelling and associated dooks across F7.1.001
F7.1.018	Wooden floor to room
F7.1.019	Roughcast ("harling") over F7.1.001
F7.1.020	Lower patch of plaster at E end of F7.1.001
F7.1.021	Higher patch of plaster at E end of F7.1.001
F7.1.022	Plaster at W end of F7.1.001
F7.1.023	Plaster at extreme W end of wall (over masonry F7.1.030, in cupboard in W wall)
F7.1.024	Horizontal scars in F7.1.023
F7.1.025	Horizontal timber in third scar up of F7.1.024
F7.1.026	Crack in masonry to W of F7.1.011
F7.1.027	Pinkish cement repair at E end of F7.1.001, over F7.1.029
F7.1.028	Mortar above F7.1.011- repair?
F7.1.029	Grey cement repair at E end of F7.1.011
F7.1.030	Wall fabric behind F7.1.023 (W wall of room)
F7.1.031	Fireplace aperture at E end of wall (actually in E wall)
F7.1.032	N margin of F7.1.031
F7.1.033	Lintel to F7.1.031
F7.1.034	Cut to E of door F7.1.011
F7.1.035	Infill of F7.1.034
F7.1.036	Red graffiti on F7.1.020
F7.1.037	Grey graffiti on F7.1.020

Feature #	Description
F7.1.038	Grey graffiti on F7.1.022
F7.1.039	Dark graffiti on F7.1.022
F7.1.040	Circle cut into F7.1.022
F7.1.041	Cornice at top of F7.1.017
F7.1.042	Ceiling
F7.1.043	Paint on F7.1.041 and F7.1.042

### Features in the South Wall of F4 (F4.3)

Feature #	Description
F4.3.001	Lath and plaster across wall
F4.3.002	Plaster cornice at top of wall
F4.3.003	Skirting boards at base of wall
F4.3.004	Door in wall
F4.3.005	Radiator
F4.3.006	S window recess in E wall
F4.3.007	Recent hole in F4.3.001 at E end of wall
F4.3.008	Smooth plaster over F4.3.011
F4.3.009	Wall fabric
F4.3.010	Wall fabric forming S side of F4.3.006
F4.3.011	Rough plaster over F4.3.009, under F4.3.008
F4.3.012	Recent hole in F4.3.001 at W end of wall

**A2. APPENDIX 2 : LIST OF DRAWINGS**

<b>Drawing #</b>	<b>Type</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Scale</b>
1	Elevation	F7.1, S facing elevation of N wall of F7	1: 20
2	Elevation	F4.3, N facing elevation of S wall of F4	1: 20

**A3. APPENDIX 3 : LIST OF PHOTOGRAPHS**

Photo #	Description	From	Date
1	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
2	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
3	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
4	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
5	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
6	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
7	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
8	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
9	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
10	N wall of room F7 E- W, base- top	S	29/ 06/ 09
11	N (external) side of castle: X1; X''; X3 and X11	NW	30/ 06/ 09
12	Elevation X1, base	N	30/ 06/ 09
13	Elevation X1, top	N	30/ 06/ 09
14	Elevation X3	N	30/ 06/ 09
15	E (external) side of castle: X4; X5 and C4	E	30/ 06/ 09
16	X4, N end, base	E	30/ 06/ 09
17	X4, N end, top	E	30/ 06/ 09
18	X4 centre	E	30/ 06/ 09
19	X4, S end, base	E	30/ 06/ 09
20	X4, S end, top	E	30/ 06/ 09
21	X5, base	E	30/ 06/ 09
22	X5, top	E	30/ 06/ 09
23	S (external) side of castle: X5; X6; X7; X8 and X9	SE	30/ 06/ 09
24	Detail of X5, X6 and X7	S	30/ 06/ 09
25	Detail of X7, X8 and X9	S	30/ 06/ 09
26	W (external) side of castle: X9; X10 and X11	W	30/ 06/ 09
27	Base of X9 and S end of X10	W	30/ 06/ 09
28	Top of X9 and S end of X10	W	30/ 06/ 09
29	Base of N end of X10 and X11	W	30/ 06/ 09
30	Top of N end of X10 and X11	W	30/ 06/ 09
31	Windows (N blocked) from F7 in elevation X10	W	30/ 06/ 09
32	Base of E end of C1	S	30/ 06/ 09
33	Top of E end of C1	S	30/ 06/ 09
34	Base of W end of C1	S	30/ 06/ 09
35	Top of E end of C1	S	30/ 06/ 09
36	C2	W	30/ 06/ 09
37	Base of E end of C3	N	30/ 06/ 09
38	Top of E end of C3	N	30/ 06/ 09



Photo #	Description	From	Date
39	Base of W end of C3	N	30/ 06/ 09
40	Top of W end of C3	N	30/ 06/ 09
41	Base of N end of C4	E	30/ 06/ 09
42	Top of N end of C4	E	30/ 06/ 09
43	Base of S end of C4	E	30/ 06/ 09
44	Top of S end of C4	E	30/ 06/ 09
45	C4, detail of dormer window and recess for plaque on chimney	E	30/ 06/ 09
46	C4, detail of dormer window pediment	E	30/ 06/ 09
47	General shot, F7 work in progress	S	30/ 06/ 09
48	Building XB1	SE	30/ 06/ 09
49	Building XB1	SE	30/ 06/ 09
50	General shot of castle	SW	30/ 06/ 09
51	Building XB1	NE	30/ 06/ 09
52	General shot of castle	W	30/ 06/ 09
53	General shot of castle	E	30/ 06/ 09
54	Building XB2	SE	30/ 06/ 09
55	Building XB3	E	30/ 06/ 09
56	Building XB3	W	01/ 07/ 09
57	F7, door at S end of E wall	W	01/ 07/ 09
58	F7, door at S end of E wall, detail of crest	W	01/ 07/ 09
59	F7, door at S end of E wall, detail of lock mechanism	W	01/ 07/ 09
60	F7, door at S end of E wall, detail of lock mechanism	W	01/ 07/ 09
61	F7, fireplace at N end of E wall	W	01/ 07/ 09
62	F7, fireplace at N end of E wall, detail of inserted fireplace	W	01/ 07/ 09
63	F7, cupboard at N end of W wall	E	01/ 07/ 09
64	F7.1, general view	S	01/ 07/ 09
65	F5.3, general view	N	01/ 07/ 09
66	F5.3, detail of stripped area	N	01/ 07/ 09
67	T4.1 detail of W end	S	01/ 07/ 09
68	T4.1, detail of E end	S	01/ 07/ 09
69	T4.3, detail of E end	N	01/ 07/ 09
70	T4.3, detail of scar in wall	N	01/ 07/ 09
71	T4.3, detail of W end	N	01/ 07/ 09
72	F7.1, E end showing relationship with fireplace in E wall	SW	01/ 07/ 09
73	F7.1 graffiti F036 and F037	S	01/ 07/ 09
74	F7.1 detail of graffiti F036	S	01/ 07/ 09
75	F7.1 detail of graffiti F036	S	01/ 07/ 09

Photo #	Description	From	Date
76	F7.1, detail of graffiti F037	S	01/ 07/ 09
77	F7.1, detail of graffiti F037	S	01/ 07/ 09
78	F7.1, detail of graffiti F038; F039 and F040	S	01/ 07/ 09
79	F7.1, detail of graffiti F038; F039 and F040	S	01/ 07/ 09
80	F7.1, aperture F002	S	01/ 07/ 09
81	F7.1, aperture F002, detail of E margin F005	SW	01/ 07/ 09
82	F7.1, aperture F011	S	01/ 07/ 09
83	F7.1, wall F030 and plaster F023	S	01/ 07/ 09
84	F7.1, wall F030 and plaster F023	S	01/ 07/ 09
85	F7.1, wall F030 and plaster F023, looking up	S	01/ 07/ 09
87	F4.3, hole at W end, detail	N	01/ 07/ 09
89	F4.3, hole at E end, detail of masonry F010	N	01/ 07/ 09

## A4. APPENDIX 4: COMPONENTS IN BARRA CASTLE

- GROUND FLOOR: 12 Rooms (G1- G12)
- FIRST FLOOR: 14 Rooms (F1- F14)
- SECOND FLOOR: 15 Rooms (S1- S15)
- THIRD FLOOR: 7 Rooms (T1- T7)
- EXTERNAL FACES TO CASTLE: 11 elevations (X1- X11, of which 3 (X5; X9 and X11) are circular)
- COURTYARD ELEVATIONS: 4 elevations (C1- C4)
- EXTERNAL BUILDINGS: 3 buildings (XB1; XB2 and XB3. XB1 is a structure at W end of the gardens; XB2 and XB3 are matching pavilions to the E of the castle, XB2 to the N and XB3 to the S. All three buildings are two storey and of probable 18th century date.)

### Internal Component Descriptions

Component	Description
<b>Ground Floor</b>	
G1	North Range. Door (modern?) at S end of wall. 1 window each in N & S walls. Painted/Panelled
G2	N range Stair. Door (main entrance to range) in S wall. Blocked door in S end of W wall. Stairs. N and W walls bare stone, S and E painted/plastered.
G3	W range. Door at E end (to G13) and W end (to G6) of S wall. Fireplace at W end of N wall, blocked (?) entrance to G5 at E end. W wall dumb waiter at S end, central window, just to N is small recess (for salt?) next to oven, N end is the aperture to G4. E wall has window at S end & blocked up slop drain. All plastered & whitewashed, occasional patches of stonework stripped or never covered. Concrete floor. N-S Vaulted ceiling.
G4	W range. Oven. Entrance (v small aperture in E wall. Corbelled ceiling, bare stone and plaster, slab floor. V hard space to draw.
G5	W range. Entrance to S, small vaulted space, infilled (?) by masonry to start of vault springers. N wall and vault bare stone. No sign of door in E wall to G2. Hard space to draw.
G6	W range. N wall door to G3, E wall door to G13, W wall 'gun loop' window, S wall has modern cupboards against it. Whitewashed/plastered, concrete floor, N-S Vault.
G7	W range. Door (to G13) in E wall. SW corner remains of stair (to F8) now blocked and door to G8. W wall 'gun loop'. Whitewashed only - some stonework visible. Concrete floor, vaulted N-S. Window in S wall of blocked up stair. Mostly slab floor, some concrete areas.
G8	W range. Window (altered gun loop?) in W wall, door to G7 in E wall, niche in N wall. Whitewashed walls, stonework visible, peat over floor, vaulted N-S.

Component	Description
G9	S range. Small recess off G13. Open to N, bare stone walls and slab roof, concrete floor.
G10	S range. Spiral stair to F10. Window in S and W walls, bare stone steps (13), plastered and whitewashed walls.
G11	S range. Door to G13 at N end of W wall, 'gunloops' in N, E and S walls, door to G12 at E end of S wall. Plastered and whitewashed, concrete floor, vaulted N-S.
G12	S range. Door to N to G11, window (altered gunloop) in W wall, wooden cupboard in SW corner. Plastered and whitewashed, concrete floor, vaulted E-W.
G13	L-shaped corridor in W & S ranges. N-S area: 2 gunloops in E wall, door to G3 in N wall, 2 doors (to G6 and G7) in W wall, door outside at S end. E-W area: window (narrow and chamfered but no roundel for a gun loop) and door to outside, E wall door to G11, S wall door to G10 and open aperture to G9.
<b>First Floor</b>	
F1	N range. 1 window and 1 cupboard in N wall, fireplace in E, window in S. Door to F2 in W wall. Wood panelled.
F2	N range. Stair/landing. Window in S wall, door to F3 in W wall. N and W wall bare stone, painted and plastered to E and S.
F3	W range. Window in N wall, door to F2 in E wall, door to F4 in S wall, wood lined cupboard in S wall. Wooden floor, painted and plastered.
F4	W range. Door to F3 and fireplace in N wall, 2 windows in E wall, door to F6 in S wall, door to F5 in W wall. Panelling across walls, stripped in 2 patches in S wall. Wood floor.
F5	W range. Door to F4 in E wall, cupboard (reached by wooden steps) in N wall, window in W wall, dumb waiter in S wall as well as a probable blocked door to F7 partly behind the dumb waiter. Mostly panelled and painted, much cupboards. Small part of S wall stripped. Chipboard floor.
F6	W range. Corridor connecting F4 and F7. Panelled wood floor.
F7	W range. Door and blocked(?) door in N wall. Fireplace (2 phase) & door to F9 in E wall. Window (in bay with seats) in S wall, door to F8, window and cupboard (possibly a blocked aperture - window(?)) in W wall. Room wood panelled except the N wall which is stripped. Wooden floor.
F8	W range. Door to F7 in E wall, niche in N wall, window in W wall, niche and blocked door (stair down to G8). Plastered and painted. Wooden floor.
F9	W range. Door in W wall to F7, door in E wall to F10. Plastered and painted. Wood floor. Vaulted N-S
F10	S range. Door in S wall to F9, window in W, door in N to F12, open (scars indicate removed door) to E to stairs of G10/F11. Plastered and painted. Stone floor - neat square flags. Vaulted E-W.
F11	S range. Stair from F10/G10 to S11. 7 bare stone steps, window in S wall, painted and plastered.

Component	Description
F12	S range. Window and cupboard (wood lined but stone arch visible - no sign externally) in N wall. Fireplace and window in E wall - externally blocked door visible to N of fireplace, hidden by panelling. Door to F14 and window in S wall. 2 doors to F11 and F13 in W wall. Wood panelling and wooden floor.
F13	S range. Window and niche in S wall. Bare stone walls and slab ceiling. Earth over a possibly stone floor.
F14	S range. Door to F12 in N wall, window in E and W walls. Panelled/plastered. Wood floor. Vaulted E-W.
<b>Second Floor</b>	
S1	N range. Window in S and E walls, recess at S end of E wall. Plastered and painted. Door in W wall to S2.
S2	N range. Window in S wall. Door in N wall to S3, Door in E wall to S1 and door in W wall to S4. Painted and plastered.
S3	Window in N wall, door to S2 in S wall. Plastered and painted.
S4	Landing at top of stairs down to S2. Plastered and painted. Door in W wall to S5
S5	W range. Window in W wall, chimney breast protrudes from middle of N wall, recess to E and W, E one has a window. E wall has 2 windows and a door to S4, S wall has fireplace and opening (no door) to S6. Painted and plastered. Wooden floor.
S6	W range. Doors to S7 and S8 in N wall - 3 wooden steps drop c.700mm to S5. Doors to S8 and S9 in W wall. Window and door to S11 in E wall - 3 stone steps drop c.500mm to S11. Painted and plastered. Wooden floor.
S7	Cupboard with door to S to S6. Plastered and painted. Lino floor. Shelves and boiler against N wall.
S8	Door to S6 in E wall, window in W, door (to T4) in N wall. Painted and plastered. Lino floor. Bath and toilet etc.
S9	Door to S6 in E wall, window and door to S10 in W wall. 2 windows and fireplace in S wall. Window to the W is tiny (150mm wide x 520mm high) in a wide (1.75m) but shallow (650mm) arched recess. E margin has a chamfer and 2 hinges. Plastered and painted. Wooden floor.
S10	Door to S9 in E wall, window in W wall. Modern cupboard against S wall. Plastered and painted. Wooden floor.
S11	S range. Landing. Open to stairs F11 to the S, door to S6 in W wall, window and door to S12 in N wall, door to S13 in E wall. Plastered and painted. Stone flag floor.
S12	Spiral stair from S11 to T1/T3. Very tight stair with 11 steps. Doors to S11 and T1 in W wall, door to T3 in S wall, 2 windows in N wall. Bare stone walls and steps. Painted wooden ceiling.
S13	Doors to W to S11 and E to S14. Painted and plastered. Wooden floor.

Component	Description
S14	Fireplace and door to S13 in W wall, window in N wall, window and door to S15 in S wall. 2 windows in E wall - that to N is very similar to window in S9. Small (150mm wide x 320mm high) painted top window in a wide (c2.1m) but shallow (650mm) bay. Chamfered margin to S with 2 door brackets. Exposed stonework protrudes out of N end of E wall of this bay. Plastered and painted with a wooden floor.
S15	Door to S14 in N wall, window in S. Painted and plastered. Bath/Sink etc obscure walls.
<b>Third Floor</b>	
T1	S range. Window in W wall, window and door to T2 in S wall. Fireplace in E wall, door to S12 in angled NE corner, window in N wall. Plastered/painted. Wooden floor.
T2	Door to T1 in N wall, window in W. Painted/plastered. Concrete floor.
T3	2 windows in E wall, cupboard in N wall, door to S12 in W wall, skylight in N wall. Wood panelled and wooden floored. Cupboard in S wall.
T4	W range. 2 windows in N walls and chimney breast. Door to S8 in S wall and possible roof scar lower than current roof (E side of pitch only though)
T5	Chimney breast in N wall - only known fireplace in this wall is in S5 on the other side of the same wall.
T6	Not Seen
T7	Wood panelled & wood floor. Door in N wall to T3, step up.

## **A5. APPENDIX 5: PRESENT STATE OF KNOWLEDGE**

The study of the castle to present has been somewhat superficial. Brief accounts appeared in various 19th and early 20th century accounts of Aberdeenshire castles, Even MacGibbon and Ross state 'There appears to be no trace of history or tradition connected with the erection of this mansion'. Most recent descriptions are heavily reliant on a short unpublished analysis by N. Bogdan.

The photographic coverage, in contrast, is good. There are a number of 19th century exterior views. Another series was taken in 1912 for *County Life*, shortly after the castle was restored. More were taken in 1962 for the Scottish National Buildings Record (now part of the RCAHMS).

**A6. APPENDIX 6: N BOGDAN, BARRA CASTLE, TYPESCRIPT DATED 1983 NMRS****D5.13.BAR(P)**

## Summary

## Phase 1

Late 15<sup>th</sup>

Vaulted kitchen, hall (now dining room and garret (BruceRoom))

## Phase 2

C16<sup>th</sup> Blackhalls

L-plan tower in SE, later slighted.

## Phase 3A

Post 1599 Setons

In 1599 George Seton granted both halves of Barra. Date stones 1614 and 1618, monogram MGS and heraldic device of interlocking crescents.

Heightened existing S wing (phase 2), infilled area between it and original tower, thus forming an L-plan, erected conical towers on ends of S façade.

These works not finished – original phase 1 tower not heightened until c 1760 and position of hall fireplace shows that larger hall intended.

On George Seton's death (c 1630), Barra passed to his nephew's family, the Setons of Pitmedden. By 1658, James Seton of Pitmedden sells Barra to James Reid, an Aberdeen advocate.

## Phase 3B

By 1672, James Reid had been succeeded by his son, John, who in 1703 received a Nova Scotia baronetcy. He married Mary Abercrombie (of Birkenbog), son Alexander & 3 daughters. Sir John died c 1723, succeeded by Alexander, who died in 1750 and was succeeded by his third son, James. James sold Barra to in 1754 to John Ramsay, a 'Russian' merchant.

Main bedroom (Ramsay Room) and hall panelled. Hall panelling replaced in 1909 but monogram panel and door survive and built-in china cupboard retained.

James Reid probably responsible for formal garden to S – remains of terrace (possible bowling green) and summer house.

## Phase 4

John Ramsay resided at Barra until 1766. Heighten original tower (phase 1) and added



N wing. He built two pavilions in the outer court.

The Ramsay family retained use of certain rooms but building used as farmhouse 1766-1909. Hall (Drawing Room) divided into 3 rooms and many windows blocked.

In 1909, John Ramsay's great-grand daughter, Mary, who married Alexander Irvine of Drum, restored the older part of the castle – undoing alterations of previous 150 years. Post 1945 N wing reroofed, E gable partly rebuilt and chimney stack lowered.

Hay, 21

N wing, which is only two stories high, was erected by the grandfather of the present proprietor (Ferguson's Scenery and Antiquities on the line of the Great North of Scotland Railway, 33

## A7. APPENDIX 7: SOURCES FOR HISTORICAL RESEARCH

### Published accounts

Davidson, W 1909 'Barra Castle' *Aberdeen Journal Notes and Queries* 76 (29/9/1909, 279-80)

Ferguson's Scenery and Antiquities on the line of the Great North of Scotland Railway, 33

Giles, J *Aberdeenshire Castles* (Third Spalding Club): Drawing of view from SE in 1840 by James Giles (pl LIII)

Leith Hay, A 1887 *Castles of Aberdeenshire*, 21-22.

MacGibbon, D & Ross, T 1887 *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, Vol II, 399-401, Edinburgh, David Douglas.

Morison, A 1905 *Blackhalls of that Ilk and Barra*, Aberdeen, New Spalding Club.

Drawing of view from SE in 1840 by James Giles (pl LIII)

### *Manuscript account*

Bogdan, N 1983 'Barra Castle', typescript dated 1983 NMRS D5.13.BAR(P)

### Documentary sources

#### *National Archive of Scotland*

##### Inventories:

Captain Alexander Reid, younger of Barra, eldest son of Sir Alexander R. of Barra, baronet, 04/09/1745, NAS CC1/6/26

John Ramsay of Barra, 21/12/1787 NAS CC1/6/51A

John Ramsay of Barra, 20/12/1816 NAS CC1/6/79

John Ramsay, esquire of Barra, 22/01/1833 NAS SC1/36/10

George Alexander, residing in the House of Barra, 01/05/1839 NAS SC1/36/16

John Ramsay of Barra and Straloch, d. 29/05/1895 at Straloch, testate, 16/10/1895 NAS SC1/36/126

Jean Strachan, lately residing at the House of Barra in the parish of Bourtie, 21/10/1839 NAS SC1/36/16

NAS GD1/320/1

MS. Volume entitled *Memoirs of the Reids of Straloch*, containing genealogy of that family. The first part describing the origin of the family is traditional, but from 1451 the genealogy is based on documents, and later, on personal recollection, the writer being

son of John, 8th Robertson alias Reid of Straloch. Some interesting details are given of events of 1689 Revolution including siege of Castle of Blair by John, Lord Murray; and of estate management in the late 17th century. Memoirs were written in 1728

NAS GD1/43/75

Charter by James Seatoune of Pitmedden in favour of Mr. James Reid, advocate in Aberdene, and Isobel Hay, his spouse, and the survivor in conjunct fee and liferent.  
6 Oct 1655

*National Library of Scotland*

Inventory Dept.327 Papers of the Frasers of Strichen and Lovat: 167  
John Ramsay of Barra, 1795, 1798

*Records of Scottish Parliament*

Ratification in favour of John Reid of Barrach (1686/4/84)

*Maps/ estate plans*

For the general layout of house and gardens

Further light on the development may be shed by comparison with the associated houses of owners of Barra, eg John Ramsay and Straloch.