

XV.

NOTES ON NEWARK CASTLE, RENFREWSHIRE. BY G. WASHINGTON
BROWNE, ARCHITECT, F.S.A. SCOT.

This castle, built as a place of residence rather than a fortified stronghold, stands within a few feet of the water's edge on the southern bank of the river Clyde, near its mouth, within the county of Renfrew and parish of Port-Glasgow. The ancient barony of Newark lay partly within the parish of Port-Glasgow, but chiefly within that of Kilmalcolm, and was afterwards included in the parish of Port-Glasgow. The earliest record of it I have found is of date 1373, when Robert Danyelstoun, knight, held, *inter alia*, a crown charter of Finlawstoun in the barony of Renfrew and shire of Lanark. He died without male issue, and his property fell to his two daughters and co-heiresses Margaret and Elizabeth. In 1402 the latter was married to Sir Robert Maxwell first of Calderwood, who thus came into possession of the lands, which were then called Danyelstoun-Maxwell. This Sir Robert was connected through his mother, Isabella Lindsay of Crawford, with the royal

family of Stuart, and the royal arms are said by some to be carved upon a panel under one of the windows to the courtyard, but it is too much worn to be identified with certainty now. Sir Robert was a man held in high esteem at the Court of Scotland, and was commissioned one of the ambassadors to negotiate for the release of James I. and of other nobles. Being of an adventurous spirit he joined in the French wars in 1420, and was mortally wounded shortly after his arrival in that country. He was succeeded by his son John, then a minor, who married first Margaret, daughter of William second Lord Borthwick, by whom he had one son and two daughters; and second Margaret Rutherford, by whom he had one son, George, the ancestor of the Maxwells of Newark, and who was known as George Maxwell of New-werk of Finlawstoune-Maxwell. The oldest remaining portions of the castle,—the two blocks forming the southern extremities of the eastern and western wings, and tinted black on the several plans,—were probably built by him in the second half of the 15th century; for while up to this time the estate is referred to as the *lands* of Newark, in 1484 the wood in which is situated the *place* of Newark was excluded from certain lands distrained for payment of a debt of 400 merks due by Patrick Maxwell, son and heir of the late George Maxwell of New-werk of Finlawstoune-Maxwell. In 1491 Robert, Laird of Lile, acquired the *place* of Newark by charter under the Great Seal on account of a balance of the above debt, subject to the condition that Maxwell was to recover possession if the debt was paid within seven years; and again in 1494 it is referred to as a *place* and Manor House. The more modern part, forming by far the larger part of the castle (hatched in the plans), was probably built at the close of the 16th century by Patrick Maxwell, whose monogram, P.M. interlaced, is cut in panels in the window heads, and also in the tympanum of the entrance door. Here also is carved the legend, “The Blessingis of God be heirin,” and the date 1597. The panel in the westmost dormer of the river front bears the date 1599.

This later building is most admirably planned, both in respect of internal arrangement and external surroundings. The completed building (see figs.

1, 6, and 7) forms three sides of a square, the fourth side being open towards the south, thereby admitting ample light and sunshine to the court, and leaving the view across the Firth of Clyde to the north, which is an extensive and impressive one, open and unrestricted from the principal apartments, to which at the same time sunshine is admitted by windows in their south wall. The quadrangle thus naturally forms the courtyard,

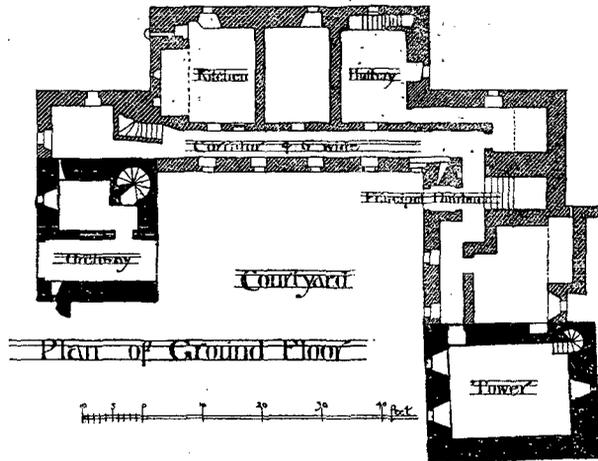


Fig. 1.

entrance to which is obtained through a semicircular vaulted passage in the older south-west block. The entrance doorway to the Castle is placed in the north-east angle of the courtyard, occupying in time of need an excellent position for defence, as the assailants while in the comparatively restricted area of the court could be assailed from the three wings of the house, and more directly from the window immediately to the left of the entrance, and at right angles to it. It is designed for a double door, the outer one to open inwards, and the inner one to open outwards, but curiously enough the old pins which still remain, upon which the doors were hung,—the stones being hollowed for the free working of each,—are so arranged that both doors would open *against* a loophole as shown

in fig. 2. In the inner wall is a small recess $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches high, 13 inches wide and 14 inches deep, the sill of it 3 feet 4 inches from floor, evidently intended for setting a candlestick, the purpose to which it is presently put. The ground floor is occupied by the kitchen and servants' apartments, which with the corridors are all vaulted in stugged ashler. The

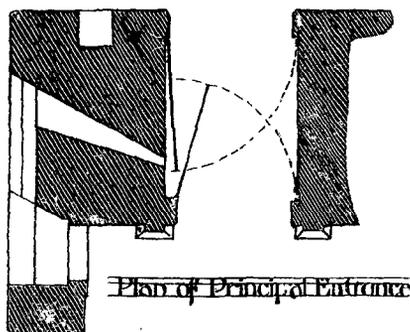


Fig. 2.

kitchen is well removed from the family apartments and the route of guests, yet by a service stair immediately to the west it has easy access to the dining hall at the end opposite the public entrance. The buttery also has an independent and direct communication with the dining hall by a small stair in the thickness of the wall. In the kitchen there is rather an ingenious arrangement in connection with the water supply. To avoid carrying the water from the river round the end of the building in by the principal door—for this is the only entrance to the interior of the building—and along the kitchen passage, there is on the west wall (see figs. 1 and 3) a corbelled stone, dished to form a bowl from which a channelled aperture is formed through the thickness of the wall and projects like a spout in the inside. The water poured in from the outside flowed through the channel and discharged into a white sandstone stoup or trough, from which it would be served into vessels as

required. In the returning angle of the kitchen wall there is another channel at floor level, through which dirty water was discharged to the outside. These simple sanitary arrangements are shown in plan and section in figs. 3, 4, 5. At the north end of the fireplace there is a seat,

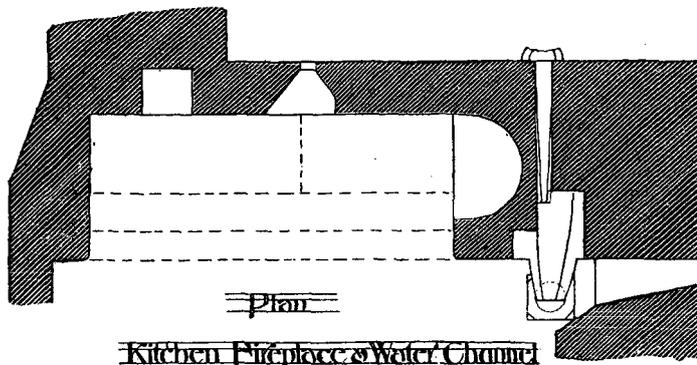
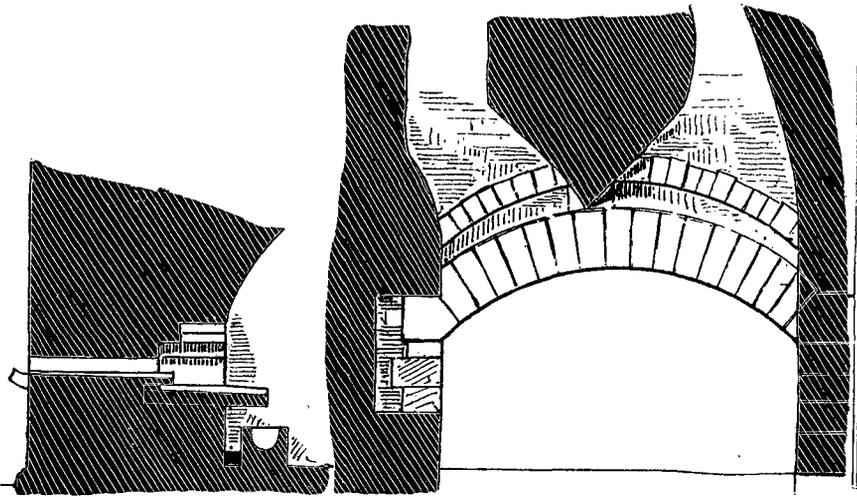


Fig. 3.

the sides and top of which are rudely formed like a niche. The flue from this fireplace is divided by a bridge, as shown in the section (fig. 4), the only example of this construction which has come under my notice.

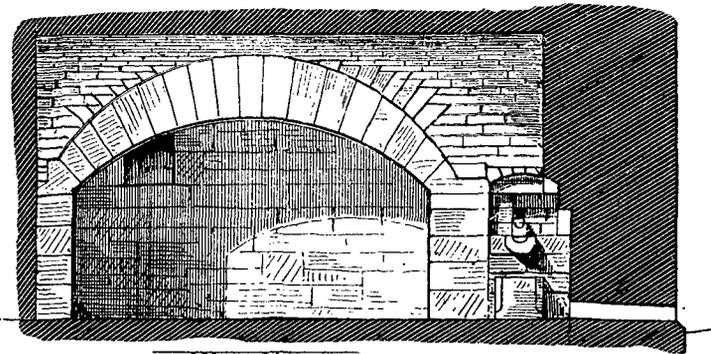
The family apartments are all upon the upper floors, the public stair to which starts directly opposite the entrance door. It rises in three flights to the principal floor level and is constructed entirely of stone, with the great solid newel characteristic of the style, stone cornice, corbels, beams and ceiling; some of the ceiling stones have broken, and are propped up by wooden struts. The great hall or dining room upon the first floor (fig. 6), now used as a joiner's workshop and general lumber room, is a rectangular apartment 37 feet 5 inches long by 20 feet 8 inches wide, having windows on all four sides. The floor is formed of stone flags $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches thick, laid in courses varying from 14 inches to 27 inches wide running across the narrow way of the hall.



Section thro' Water Channel

Section thro' Fireplace & Pier

Fig. 4.



Elevation

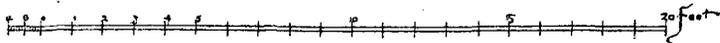


Fig. 5.

Upon the floor and in the position shown in the plan are a number of sinkings $\frac{1}{2}$ inch deep, and of sizes averaging 4 inches by $3\frac{3}{4}$ inches. Along the west line which runs at right angles to the fireplace, from near its centre there are several smaller sinkings placed irregularly between the larger ones. They seem like sockets for a moveable screen or partition;

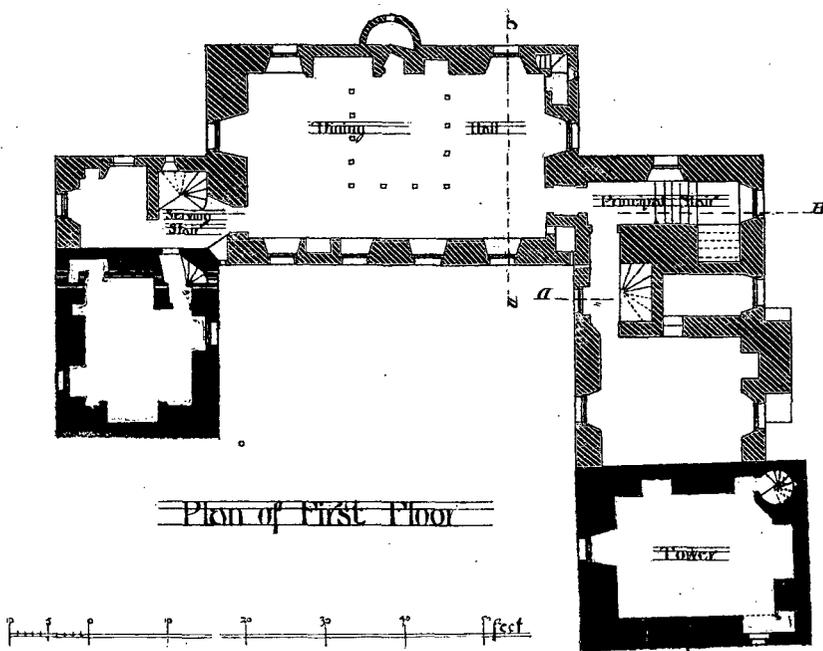


Fig. 6.

but their position in relation to windows and fireplace renders this doubtful. The walls retain patches of a thin coat of plaster, and round the top of them there is a bold stone cornice breaking with projection of fireplace, and carrying the timber joists, which are 8 inches square and set 18 inches apart. As these are not dressed the ceiling was probably

formed of wood divided by mouldings or ribs into panels. In addition to the principal stair to the second floor of the Castle, a projecting turret stair led from the hall to the chamber immediately overhead; but the entrance to this stair was blocked up about twenty years ago, by a gardener who occupied the upper chamber, to prevent the joiners from getting access to the fruit he had stored there. This upper chamber (fig. 7)

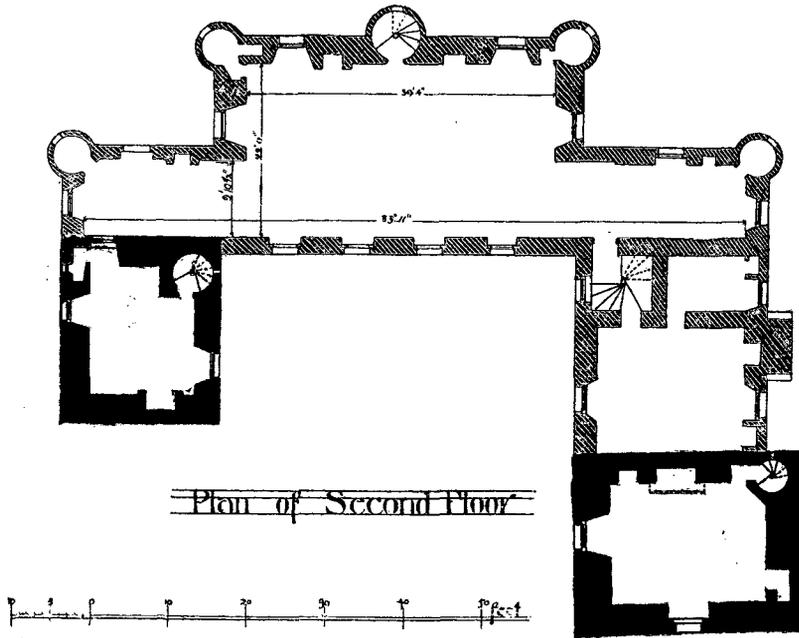


Fig. 7.

presently extends the whole length of the building, but when occupied as a dwelling the end wings at least would be partitioned or screened off, and each of them is provided with a fireplace besides the two in the central compartment. Both the central and the angle turrets contain blind windows, not original window openings afterwards built up, but built blind, with the jamb stones bonding through.

That the two southern blocks were built at an earlier period than the part of the house above described is evident by the mouldings on door and window jambs, which are gothic, those in the later part being classic in character, and by the fact that the northern part is butted against, not bonded into these southern blocks. This opinion is further supported by the circumstance, that the dressings of the one part, the earlier, are exclusively of grey stone, while in the other portion, the later, red stone is used throughout for this purpose. The window openings of the tower forming the south-east extremity, have been enlarged by Patrick Maxwell, as in size, detail, and colour of dressings they correspond with the rest of his work. He has also repaired and probably heightened the parapet and chimney stack, as the mouldings are classic in detail above corbel coursed and are of red stone.

I have not been able to find any evidence either of the existence or non-existence of any building of their own period, connecting the two earlier blocks, on the site now occupied by the 16th century work ; but I am of opinion they were not so connected, and for the following reasons :—(1) Although their respective western walls are flush with, and in the same line as, the continuous walls of the more modern additions, they each display angle quoins or dressed corner stones at these their north-west, similar to those of their other exposed angles. (2) They each have a staircase leading from the ground to the upper floors, though that in the south-west block does not now go to its original height. (3) The smaller and western block has upon its northern side, that upon which the 16th century house is added, a loophole upon the ground floor and a window upon the second floor—the latter grooved as for glass—which were undoubtedly in an external wall ; the communication now existing upon the dining hall level is evidently a later alteration. (4) The larger and eastern block is entered on the ground floor by what appears to have been an external door—the only entrance—and has no door or other communication with the building upon the north side of it, either upon this or upon the upper floors.

This doorway exhibits a method of construction not general in the period

to which it belongs, viz., forming the door lintel of wood without any saving arch over it. The wall which it pierces is 3 feet 6 inches thick. The doorway is 3 feet 5 inches wide, and 6 feet 3 inches high, and the lintel is formed on the external side by a stone 11 inches broad, and behind this inwards by 7 wood beams 5 inches deep, varying in breadth from 3 inches to 7 inches. The wall stones are bedded flat upon these, and carry the barrel vaulting of the chamber 15 feet 6 inches wide. There is no fireplace in this apartment. About 6 feet 3 inches from the floor there are in the north and south walls a series of holes 12 inches by 10 inches, and from 13 inches to 18 inches deep, in one of which, that next the entrance, the end of a joist or beam still remains. I don't know that these could have been for a floor as there is neither entrance nor light at that level. They probably formed a sort of open loft.

The detail of doors and fireplaces in the second floors is of the simplest kind; the windows are large, and, as has been already mentioned, they belong to the later period. There are no holes to receive the ends of joists supporting the intermediate floor, nor corbels to carry them, save one in two courses at the eastern end close to where the stair cuts off the angle of the apartment. A similar corbel is repeated directly over this one in the floor above, in addition to those which naturally carry the roof; the purpose of these corbels I cannot guess. On the south side of the arched passage leading through the western and smaller of the early blocks, at the external or exposed end is a loophole, and upon the other side near the court-yard end was the door, now built up, giving entrance to the ground floor chamber, and access to the circular staircase leading to the upper chambers. On the exposed gable of the western block there are stone tuskings and the indication of a lean-to roof, proving the existence of another, though probably unimportant, building to the south, traces of the foundation of which are distinctly visible.

There was also a chapel and endowed chaplainry to the barony of Finlastoun-Maxwell or Newark, the site of which is pointed out near the castle; but all traces of it are obliterated by the encroachments of

shipbuilding yards, which have left but a slender strip of ground around the castle itself. The castle ceased to be inhabited by its owners in the beginning of the 18th century and thus consequently fell somewhat into decay internally. Sir Michael Robert Shaw Stewart, Bart., the present owner, takes some interest in it, however, and keeps it in weather-tight condition ; but some much-needed renovation could be effected at a very small cost.