

III.

INVERMARK CASTLE. By W. DOUGLAS SIMPSON,
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The tall tower of Invermark stands at a height of about 850 feet near the head of Glenesk, on a steep bank overlooking from the north the rocky and boulder-strewn channel of the Water of Lee, a short distance below the point at which it emerges from the lonely loch of the same name. To the west the Castle looks out upon higher ground, while to the north it is protected by the Water of Mark, which joins the Lee Water just below the Castle, and forms with it the infant North Esk. Thus the situation between the two converging streams is tactically a very strong one, while strategically (see Map, fig. 1) the Castle occupies a position of considerable importance as an outpost to Edzell Castle, the headquarters of the Lindsays of Glenesk. It sentinelled the upper reaches of the Glen and controlled the Fir Mounth, Forest of Birse Mounth, and Mounth Keen passes, which here debouch from the north upon the *talkessel* formed by the valleys of the Tarf and the North Esk. The position was therefore well chosen to impede the movement of caterans across the Mounth between Mar and the Braes of Angus.¹ At present, save for the plantations around Invermark Lodge and the birch trees that line the river, the country at the lower end of Loch Lee is bare and desolate; but as late as the closing years of the eighteenth century the underslopes were thickly clad with oaks and pines, and the Castle was approached by fine beech avenues.²

The tower (see Plans, fig. 2) measures 38 feet 6 inches long and 27 feet 3 inches broad, and its walls in the basement are 5 feet 6 inches thick. It contains four storeys and a garret, each consisting of a single room, and the basement alone being covered with a plain barrel vault on the long axis, 8 feet 6 inches high. The entrance (fig. 3) is on the first floor, on the south side near the west end, and at a height of 9 feet above the present ground-level. It is a plain but well-formed round arched portal with a 4-inch chamfer, and measures 6 feet 4 inches high and 2 feet 10½ inches in exterior width. The portal was doubly defended, first by a wooden door that has disappeared, and next by the interesting iron *yett* which still remains

¹ See *Proceedings*, vol. lxxv. p. 117, with Ouchterlony of Guinde's account, quoted there.

² A. Jervise, *Land of the Lindsays*, 2nd ed., p. 110.

in position. On the exterior faces of the jambs grooves and batholes for a timber staging of access are still apparent.¹ The door opens directly on to the hall, and on its left side a circular stair, 4 feet wide, leads down to the cellar.

This stair is very crudely and irregularly built. The cellar is lit only by the roughly formed, broad mouthed, horizontal gunloops, about 3 feet wide, which are pierced in its walls on all fronts. Above the north shot-hole at the east end, both within and without, are

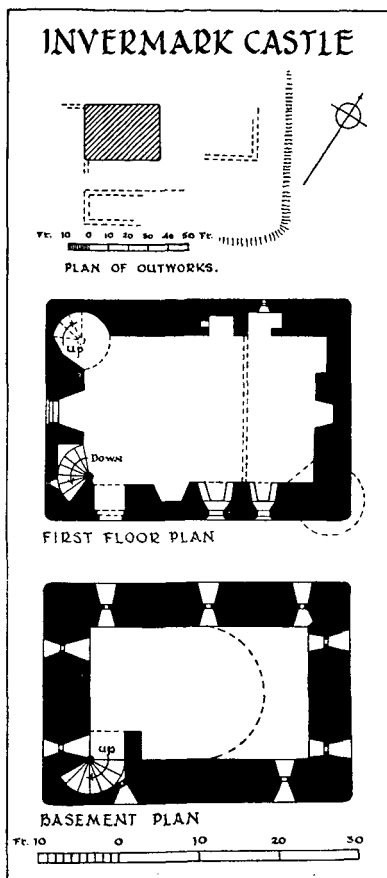
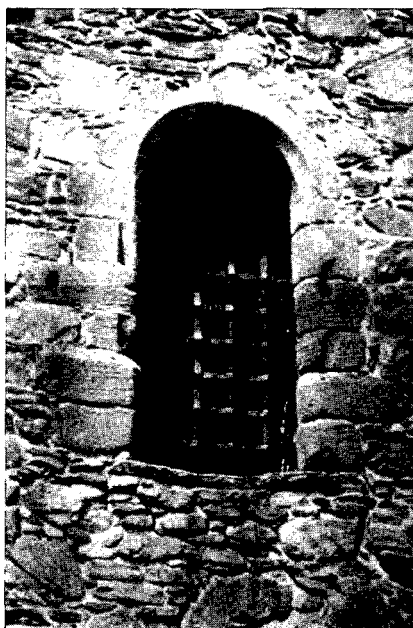


Fig. 2. Invermark Castle: Plans.



[Photo N. S. Cowan.]

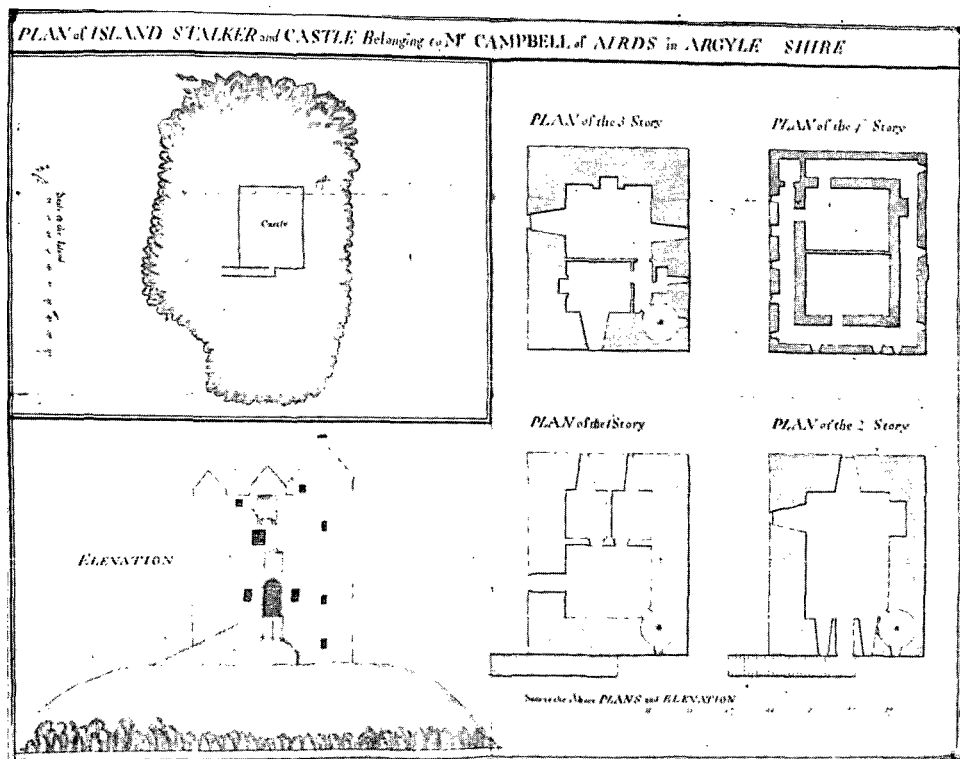
Fig. 3. Invermark Castle: Entrance and Iron Yett.

indications of disturbance in the masonry, as if some fitment, possibly an external trough and water-supply conduit, had been withdrawn.


On the hall level are two fireplaces, one on the south side and one

¹ A stone stair with a wooden gangway is shown in an old survey of Castle Stalcaire, Appin, now in the British Museum, and reproduced herewith (fig. 4). (I am indebted to Mr James S. Richardson, F.S.A.Scot., for drawing my attention to this survey.) At Castle Stalcaire batholes very like those at Invermark still exist (see MacGibbon and Ross, *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 164).

in the east end; from this fact, and also from the position of the two windows close to each other in the south front and two garderobes similarly situated opposite, it is evident that this flat was divided by a light partition into two portions, a larger west one forming the hall proper and a smaller eastern one serving as a kind of rudimentary withdrawing room. The latter, in addition to one of the two windows



[Photo H.M. Office of Works.]

Fig. 4. Castle Stalcaire, Appin, from an Old Survey in the British Museum,  xlix. 40.

and garderobes and the fireplace all above referred to, has a large arched capalmry or dresser-recess in the north-east corner. The hall itself, in addition to the features already described, has another wide window midway in the west front. The two windows placed close together in the south front, and lighting the hall and private room respectively, have roughly fashioned stone side-benches. At this level the internal dimensions of the tower are about 29 feet 6 inches by 19 feet. In the north-west corner of the hall a spiral stair, 7 feet

in diameter but now destroyed; led to the upper floors; it was so arranged as to project inwardly upon each storey in turn.

Joist-holes show that the hall was ceiled at a height of 12 feet. The floor above rested on a scarcement, and the garret floor again was mortised into the walls with joist-holes of a smaller size than those above the hall. Those upper rooms were similar in general



[Photo N. S. Cowan.]

Fig. 5. Invermark Castle: View from South-east.

arrangement to those of the main floor. Like the hall, the third floor-level was divided into two, as appears from the presence of two fireplaces close beside each other in the north wall. In the topmost storey fragments of the ancient grey plaster still adhere to the side-walls.

Externally (figs. 5 and 6) the tower is built with rounded angles and a pronounced batter, giving a very robust effect. At the eaves-level the angles are corbelled out to the square, above which the gables are finished with flat skews and projecting curved "peat stones." On the wall-head is a chamfered cornice. The four chimneys—one on each gable and one in each front—have a plain blocking course with

sloped cope. In the south chimney are two voids, the lower one lighting the garret-chamber and the upper one ventilating the roof timbers, while over all is a sunk empty panel. The north chimney has a similar panel above a single void. At the south-east angle of the tower a large and tall round turret of two storeys is carried out on bold continuous corbelling; it is equipped with small circular pistol-



[Photo N. S. Cowan.]

Fig. 6. Invermark Castle: View from West.

loops, of which one has a sighting aperture, while there are also one oval gunloop with a redented splay, and a twinned gunloop likewise having redented splays. The lower stage of the turret is entered at the third floor-level by a giblet-checked door in a diagonal wall; the upper stage was reached from the garret. As usual in late Scottish domestic work, the turret is deeply inset into the parent building, and is also depressed below the eaves-level, the constricted gable end above being properly finished off with a curved "peat stone" like the others. The chamfered cornice on the main wall-head is stepped up and continued round the turret. The whole design and workmanship of this turret

exhibits the most careful and elegant finish. The total over-all height of the tower is 66 feet, while to the eaves-level it is 47 feet.

It is evident on a close inspection of the exterior that the upper portion, above the second floor, is of more recent date than the lower part. At the level mentioned stubs of a former corbelled parapet are clearly distinguishable all round the building; mostly these corbels have been cloured away flush with the wall, no doubt so as to be harled over; but in one or two places they still project as mutilated stumps. Below this level the masonry of the Castle is composed of massive boulders of granite and schist, with schistose and slaty pinnings; above it, the masonry, though of similar materials, exhibits a markedly finer texture and a lighter tint. Also, below the level of the old corbel-table the window openings have uniformly a $3\frac{1}{2}$ inch chamfer, while above the corners are rounded. The large west window of the hall was slapped out when the tower was remodelled—as appears both from the fact that it shows the rounded edge-moulding of the newer work, and also because it has been thrust out above and partly through an older window, the sole, cut-away lintel and north jamb of which still remain and show the older chamfer. In the upper part of the tower, in addition to the firearm loops already described in the turret, plain round gunloops without an external splay are found at various places in the main building.

The date of the heightening is clearly fixed by the flat skews and by the details of the angle turret, all of which bespeak the early seventeenth century. The profile of the turret corbels and its redented gunloops are identical in pattern with those of the summer-house at Edzell Castle, built by David, Lord Edzell, in 1604¹—so that we may confidently infer that the remodelling of the tower was his work. The plain horizontal gunloops and the broad chamfered windows in the lower portion show that this belongs to the first half of the sixteenth century. It should be noted that the dressed work in the tower, both in its older and in its newer portions, is all very carefully wrought in freestone of a warm red colour. All the windows are grooved for glass, and five in the topmost storey still retain their grilles of iron bars intersecting in the usual manner.

The yett (figs. 3 and 7) consists of six vertical and nine horizontal bars, the mode of penetration as usual being reversed in diagonally opposite quarters. It is swung on two hinges, and is secured by a stout bolt and hasp sliding in two staples midway in the height of the yett. Near the top there is also a single staple to which no bolt-hole corresponds in the wall. From this fact, and also because the yett is

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. lxxv. pp. 164-7.

incomplete on the top, showing the commencement of an arched head much too large to fit the door of the tower, it seems probable that the yett was brought hither from somewhere else—perhaps from Edzell. It is said to have been of local workmanship.¹

To the south and east of the tower (see Plan, fig. 2) foundations of



[Photo J. N. Dunn, Brechin.]

Fig. 7. Invermark Castle: Interior View of Iron Yett.

outbuildings still remain. From the southern of these the entrance on the main floor of the tower would have been reached, by the timber staging of which traces exist. Some garbled recollection of this arrangement is probably embodied in the rather marvellous description of Jervise,² who avers that the Castle was “entered by a huge draw-bridge, one end of which rested on the doorsill of the first floor of the Castle, and the other on the top of a strong isolated erection of freestone that stood about 12 feet south of the front of the tower.

¹ Jervise, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

² *Ibid.*, p. 92.

This was ascended on the east and west by a flight of steps, and the bridge being moved by machinery the house was rendered inaccessible, or otherwise, at the will of the occupant."

In one of these outbuildings the cooking of the household, at all events during peaceful times, must have been done, as there is no kitchen within the tower. Also there is no trace of a well within either the tower or its precincts; it would be difficult to sink one on the rocky site, and the inhabitants probably depended on the river for their water-supply. Such a tower was, of course, not intended to resist a prolonged blockade, but would be almost impregnable against a sudden raid of caterans whose safety depended on swift emergence and swifter disappearance.

There are distinct traces of a metalled trackway leading from the Castle westward up the bank of the Lee, between it and the present road.

The history of the tower, so far as it is preserved, agrees fully with its architectural features. It has been stated that there was a Castle here in the fourteenth century, but of this no contemporary voucher appears to exist, and it is at all events certain that no part of the present building dates back to so remote a period. The *New Statistical Account*¹ says definitely that the tower was erected in 1526, and although I have found no authority for this statement the date would very well suit the lower portion of the building. The old *Statistical Account*, published in 1794, says that the Castle was built "about the beginning of last century";² but this is evidently a tradition of the reconstruction carried out at that time. In the *Register of the Great Seal* the "tower, fortalice, and manor-place of Invermark" appears first on record in 1554; and in 1588 we have the " fortalice, manor-place, demesne lands, and malt kiln of Invermark"—an inventory that recurs in subsequent writs down to as late as 1715.³

It was at Invermark Castle that David Lindsay, 9th Earl of Crawford, died on 20th September 1558—his will, dated thence on the day of his death, being still extant.⁴ Doubtless owing to its remoteness the recorded history of the Castle appears to have been uneventful. After the slaughter of Lord Spynie by the Edzell Lindsays at Edinburgh, on 5th July 1607, Invermark became one of the lurking places of Lord Edzell's son, young David Lindsay, who had

¹ Vol. xi. p. 194.

² Vol. x. p. 103.

³ *Registrum Magni Sigilli*, 1546-80, No. 922; *ibid.*, 1580-93, No. 1579; *Registrum de Panmure*, vol. ii. p. 348.

⁴ Lord Crawford, *Lives of the Lindsays*, vol. i. p. 327.

been a prime instigator of the bloody deed.¹ In 1729 the York Buildings Company agent estimated the value of the "Castle of Innermark, of stone and slate roof," at £365, and reported that "repairs necessary thereto is one hundred and ninety pound twelve shilling, which it must have in all haste to prevent it going to ruine."² These repairs were doubtless made, as the Castle continued to be habitable until 1803, when it was gutted and the outbuildings were razed in order to provide materials for the new parish church and manse. The last regular occupants had been the factor for the York Buildings Company, who died there in 1745, and his two daughters, who until 1750 shared the old tower with the Rev. Robert Ker, minister of Lochlee.³

The Castle is now in good order. In 1898 the ivy was stripped from the walls, and in 1913 the whole building was carefully pointed.

I have to thank the Factor, Dalhousie Estates Ltd., for kindly granting facilities of access to the Castle.

¹ Lord Crawford, *Lives of the Lindsays*, vol. i. p. 387; see Pitcairn's *Criminal Trials*, vol. iii. pp. 61-5.

² *Reg. Panmure*, Appendix to Preface, p. clvii.

³ Jervise, *op. cit.*, pp. 75, 93.