

The architectural evolution of Innes House, Moray

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ABSTRACT

Documentary evidence appears to date the construction of Innes House, near Elgin, to c 1640, whereas a drawing of c 1590 implies there was a castle on the site some 50 years earlier. This paper seeks to resolve that paradox by dissecting Innes through documents and drawings, correlated with a minute study of its fabric through a sequential examination of its principal structural components; and, by doing so, evaluating the extent that information gleaned from a building's fabric can supplement, support or deny documentary history.

CONTEXT

In 1640, at Innes, as Alistair Rowan (1976) has put it:

Sir Robert [Innes] began and carried through to completion one of the largest and certainly one of the most regularly planned country houses then known in Scotland.

However, Timothy Pont's manuscript maps,¹ prepared possibly between 1585 and 1608, illustrate a 4–5 storeyed house named 'Innes Cast[le]' in minute elevation in the correct location (illus 1). Is the received history of the house, therefore, suspect? The two most extensive historic treatments of the house are contained in R W Billings's *Baronial and Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*, (1852, vol 3, Innes, 1), and David MacGibbon & Thomas Ross's *The Castellated & Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (1887, vol 2, 202–3). They regarded Innes as having been new-built in the 1640s to a design obtained by Sir Robert Innes from William Ayton, who was then working on George Heriot's Hospital, Edinburgh. Most descriptions of Innes are founded upon what Billings described as 'a long and

very full Account-book' (Billings 1852, Innes, 1) then in the possession of the Spalding Club, but later published in *Ane Account of the Familie of Innes* (Innes 1864) The account-book states that Sir Robert Innes paid, 'Wm Aitoun, Maister Maissoun at Heriott £26/13/4d for drawing the forme of the house in paper'. Most subsequent writings on Innes have understandably adopted the starting point that the house is a mid-17th-century design emanating from one of the Court architects of the Lowlands. Billings was certain of it:

Though its meagreness throws it behind [Fyvie or Cawdor] in fulness of effect, it belongs to a more ambitious class of architecture. It will be easy to see that, meagre though it may be, it contains the same character of detail with that which imparts to Heriot's Hospital its beauty and oriental-looking richness (Billings 1852, Innes, 1).

Given that Billings's own dramatic drawings of romantic Renaissance buildings proved to be the principal inspiration for the florid mid-19th-century Baronialism of David Bryce and his followers – and indeed of Billings himself –

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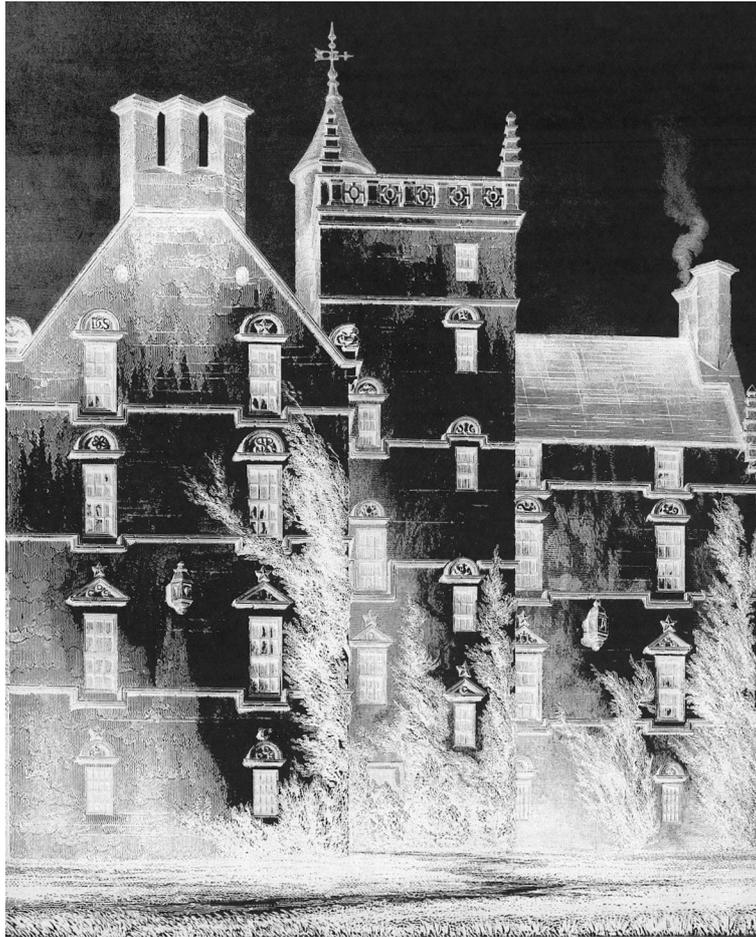
ILLUS 1 'Innes Cast' from Timothy Pont (Courtesy of the National Library of Scotland). Insofar as we can decode Pont, Innes comprised a substantial tall, four or five storeyed tower, with lower wings and an enfolding courtyard, surrounded by a plantation of trees. It is not clear what the little complex to the east might have been. Note the barnyards lying to the south, and Leuchars lying across the marsh to the west (*National Library of Scotland*)

it can be little surprise that he mistook Innes's calm sobriety for meagerness (illus 2).

Historic visual evidence is notably slight. Innes is not illustrated in Thomas Pennant's *Tour in Scotland* (1772), nor in the Rev Lachlan Shaw's (1775)² *History of Moray*, in David Alexander's *Antiquities of Moray* (Alexander 1843) nor in Forsyth's (1805) *Beauties of Scotland*. Nor does it figure in any of the other topographical recordings of the time. Possibly because it was not considered as the primary seat of a great family, it fails to be included in, for example, J P Neale's *Scotch Seats* (Neale c 1824), whereas Craigston was. The earliest depiction is possibly the large 18th-century oil hanging in the Dining Room, probably painted to illustrate the works about to be undertaken by James Robertson for the Earl of Fife 1768–9,³ just about the same time

as similar works were being undertaken at Delgatie, by Turriff. There are some accompanying manuscript drawings and a plan in the Montcoffer Papers.⁴ There are no other plans of the house until 1870.⁵ Topographical illustrations and Victorian photographs show only minor variations with the 'main house'⁶ as it exists now, although the same cannot be said for the courtyard buildings.

The courtyard currently lying to the north can, for the most part, be dated to the reformatting by Walker and Duncan for the Tennants after they had bought the house in 1912, altering 1870 and earlier work by the Earls of Fife. The entrance close or court to a Scottish Renaissance country seat rarely lay to the south⁷ (McKean, forthcoming) and the lie of the ground to the north implies the existence of earlier buildings in that location, as a very



ILLUS 2 Innes House c 1846 R W Billings. Not untypically of Billings, he or his engraver has added embellishment. He has too many ground floor windows, and they were not, at that time, embellished like the upper storeys. Note that the top storey windows are no longer dormered

thick cross-wall in its eastern wing on the 1870 drawing would appear to support. However, whether any such a court to the north was the *inner*, the *outer*, or the *back* court remained unclear – certainly to begin with.

This paper is the consequence of a study of the fabric of Innes House that began with a survey undertaken by Joseph Innes with Blair Brooks, stimulated by the discovery that Pont's drawing of the building could be taken as approximately reliable. The plans and sections that they prepared for the house indicated changing volumes, concealed voids

between floors, the clouring back of wall thicknesses, and significant alterations to the roof structure (all remarkable in a house theoretically constructed in a single building programme). Hermione Tennant then invited the author, Kitty Cruft, Bob Heath, James Simpson, Ian Davidson, Ted Ruddock, Neil Grieve, and Peter Donaldson, to join the above in an intensive study visit to examine the structure in April 1998. Papers, analysis and successive tentative interpretations were subsequently illuminated by further documentary research, principally by Joe Innes. It



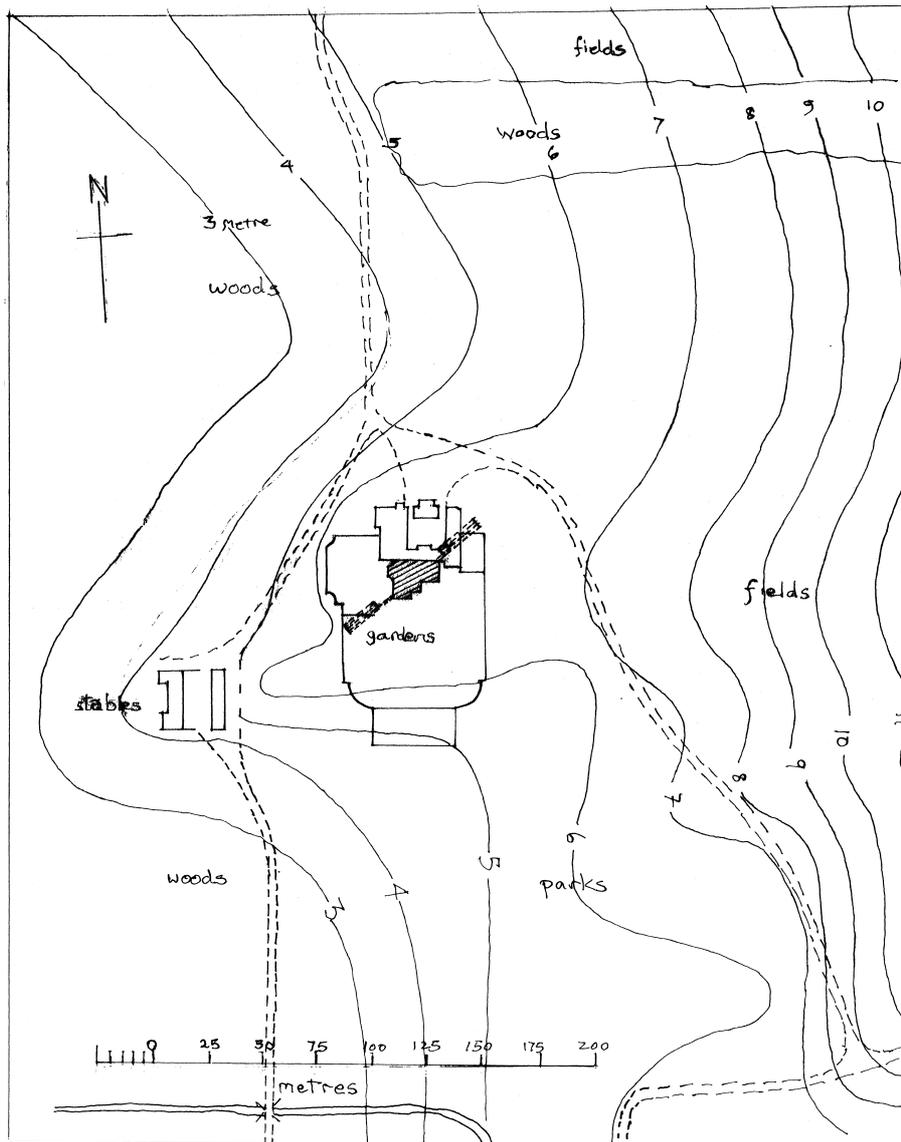
ILLUS 3 Innes House from the south (*author*)

is upon this extended iterative process that this tentative synthesis is based. The author wishes to acknowledge his debt to all his collaborators. Errors are his alone.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF THE PLACE OF INNES

Innes (illus 3) had always been ‘the ancient seat of the family’ (in late 17th-century parlance),⁸ or the ancient paternal seat of the Innes of that ilk, whose first charter was issued in 1160 (Innes 1948). The house occupies a platform on the 6m contour, slightly raised ground on the rim of the neighbouring marshes of the former Spynie Loch and flood plain of the river Lossie (illus 4). The name Innes probably derives from a Pictish place

name meaning ‘low lying land liable to flooding beside a river’;⁹ and its only dry-land approach appears to have been along the 6m contour from the south-east. The house sits on a gentle slope rising from the loch on the lowest contour to provide adequate space for all the structures of a major seat like this. There is some evidence that the building platform has been cut slightly into the uphill slope, and that it required underbuilding at its lower end. Neither area is now occupied by buildings, but these signs indicate that they might once have been.¹⁰ An examination of the 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map¹¹ reveals that several of Innes’s neighbours like Pitgavenny, Leuchars, Kinneddar and Unthank lay on the 5m contour on the very edge of the loch



ILLUS 4 Innes in its contoured setting (after Joe Innes). The 1768 splayed wings have been speculatively added. It seems likely that, *pace* Glamis, the entrance drive would not, as now, have gone round to the north courtyard, but would have entered on axis from the south-east

of Spynie before it was drained. Presumably, Innes was built on the higher 6m contour since only the latter was sufficiently wide to produce a sufficiently spacious flat platform. It is entirely plausible that Innes would have had its own jetty; and the prospect from its viewing

platform or belvedere extends over trees and flatlands, west to Spynie Loch, north to the Moray Firth and south to Ben Rinnes.

The pre-1640 Innes charters refer to a 'mansion' in 1490 (Innes 1864, 124-5), a castle the following year (*ibid*, 88), the 'place of

Innes' in 1543 (*ibid*, 108), the rather more customary tower and fortalice in 1581 (Innes 1934), and the 'place of Innes' in 1585 (Innes 1864, 108). There was also a separate chapel. It is as the 'place of Innes' that it is mostly referred during the Renaissance – invariably thus by John Spalding, in his *History of the Troubles* (Spalding 1830). For example, Spalding records that in 1634 the Laird of Ballindalloch, having escaped from kidnapping by James Grant, escaped:

to the place of Innes, where the Laird made him very welcome: he stayed that night and by the morn at 10 hours came Elgin.

Yet, although it was thus probably a house of formidable presence Innes, like its peers, was not strong enough to resist a vengeful professional army such as that of the Marquis of Montrose who, 'all burnt and plundered the place of Innes' in February 1645 – allegedly (Spalding 1830, 473).

The terminology is significant. 'Place' (interchangeable with palace) in Scottish 17th-century usage usually implied a country seat whose inner court or 'close' was a fully fledged courtyard enclosed by significant buildings,¹² sometimes entered through a porter's gatehouse or *châtelet* (also forewark or foreentry) – as at Dudhope, Dundee, or through a pend beneath a wing – as in Allardyce, Kinnaird, Thornton and Pitsligo (McKean 2001, ch 9). 'Palace' or 'place' derives from the Latin *palatium*, indicating a courtyard building, and should not be misread as implying the grandeur of a palace that it might not have had (MacKenzie 1927, 144).¹³ Customarily such a 'place' might comprise the original tower house, one or more galleries, guest tower, lodgings, offices and, pre-eminently, the laird's house – sometimes referred to as the 'main house' (McKean 1991; 2001, 68). Tolquhon, Aberdeenshire, is an excellent example. Thus, the description of Innes as a 'place' implies that at the heart of this great country seat lay

a formal court of buildings – somewhat different to the 'main house' with its northern court that survives today. In addition, one might look for the brewhouse, bakehouse, bottle house, women's house, dairies, gill houses, barns (girnels), stables, and all the rest. As the centre of the estate, this building complex was almost certainly also surrounded by myriad walled yards and gardens that were essential to an estate's functioning (McKean, forthcoming). That this was indeed the case at Innes is indicated by the public repentance required in October 1649 of David Allan, who took advantage of his Minister being absent – preaching to the army in the House of Bog – to 'mis-spend the morning of the Lord's Day in viewing the castellyards of Innes' (Cramond *nd*, 28).

In 1611, Sir Robert Innes had married Lady Grizzel Stewart and reoccupied the family seat (Innes 1939, 40), which had probably remained unmodernized while occupied by a relative in 1578–88 and thereafter. The Drawing Room plasterwork gives a strong hint that substantial and sophisticated refashioning took place long before major building works began in 1638 (below) – possibly when Sir Robert Innes first brought his wife to the house. She was a Darnaway Stewart, sister to the Earl of Moray, and Sir Robert had therefore much to keep up with, for Innes's eldest daughter had married Urquhart of Craigston (Spalding 1830, 26) – a house most remarkably transformed 1604–7; and the Stewarts were to transform their seaside villa of the House of Pettie, by Ardesier, into the fashionable U-plan *château* of Castle Stewart in the 1620s. Both Craigston and Castle Stewart were tall U-plan houses in a provincial echo of the Court style then prevalent in the vicinity of Edinburgh. Urquhart had elected to follow the regional preference for verticality and height, probably not only because height was a principal signifier of nobility, but also because it had become an expression of the enhanced nationalist feeling that emerged in North-Eastern architecture once King James VI had

quit Edinburgh for London (McKean 2001, ch 11). Urquhart thereby eschewed the fashionable horizontality of the U-plan Renaissance wing that Alexander Irvine of Drum added to his ancient tower nearby (even though they both probably used the same fashionable North-East architect John Bel).¹⁴ He built, instead, high into the sky, mounting toward a parapet-level gallery and a roof-level belvedere. It is from houses such as these that we might infer Sir Robert's ultimate ambition for Innes when he finally felt sufficiently financially secure to proceed in the late 1630s. But what precisely might he have been seeking by selecting a fashionable architect from the Court circle in Edinburgh to reformat his 'main house'?

The principal architectural change amongst Court circles was the evolution of the house-plan away from the expansive and rambling great houses of the 16th century to a more compact one, achieved through re-ordering their circulation. The Renaissance state apartment of hall, chamber of dais and bedchamber was made more compact as additional staircases provided access to individual chambers without the necessity of having to pass through one chamber to the next (McKean 2001, 193–212). In both provinces and Lowlands, the climax of the architectural composition remained the elevated and sophisticated belvedere or viewing platform that towered over the rest. From its commanding heights, the laird and his guests could gaze down upon the inner close and new guests arriving, or upon the gardens, parterres, orchards, wildernesses and other forms of agricultural improvement and, farther out, upon the laird's immensity of landholding. A particularly significant change during the latter 17th century was the gradual relegation of the outer court, its estate buildings, girnels, stables and 'sluttery' (an English Court term for the messier service buildings and functions), from straddling the principal entrance route round to a back court, and kept out of sight (McKean, forthcoming).

The accounts that show payment of fees to Ayton in 1640 also reveal that quarrying had begun in January 1639, which implies that the design must have preceded that: *ergo* 1638 at the latest. But building work was disrupted by war. Innes and his son Robert became notable Covenanters, the former joining the principal Covenanting army of the Marquis of Argyll. He was at the Trot of Turriff on 16 May 1644 (Spalding 1830, 414). In February 1645, the Marquis of Montrose plundered and damaged a number of seats of the Moray lairds who had been reluctant to support the King, and, as already mentioned, specifically, 'all burnt and plundered the place of Innes' (Spalding 1830, 473). That damage of some kind occurred at some point is confirmed by a manuscript in the Floors Muniments entitled 'Losses as a result of the Burning'.¹⁵ Dated 1643, it comprises a list of damaged farms and steadings, but nothing about damage to the house. Since similar documents normally formed the basis of a later claim for reparations, any damage suffered by the main house would surely have been included. The house had, therefore, probably remained largely unscathed – perhaps because it was just a building site offering very little by way of plunder. How much more effective to damage the landowner's pocket through attacking his agricultural income. Soon after the attack, Sir Robert was living with his son in the nearby episcopal palace of Spynie (of which the latter had taken charge in 1642), further implying that Innes was indeed temporarily uninhabitable. However, it is worth pondering the fact that had the 'main house' been seriously damaged in 1645, William Ayton's work of 1638 was likely to have gone up with it. Since nothing in any of the building accounts indicates or implies work being undertaken to 'repair' the house or, more particularly 'repair after fire', and nothing about the reuse of existing material (terms one might have expected in such circumstances), the damage might, therefore, have been restricted to other buildings of the inner and outer courts. Completion was approached

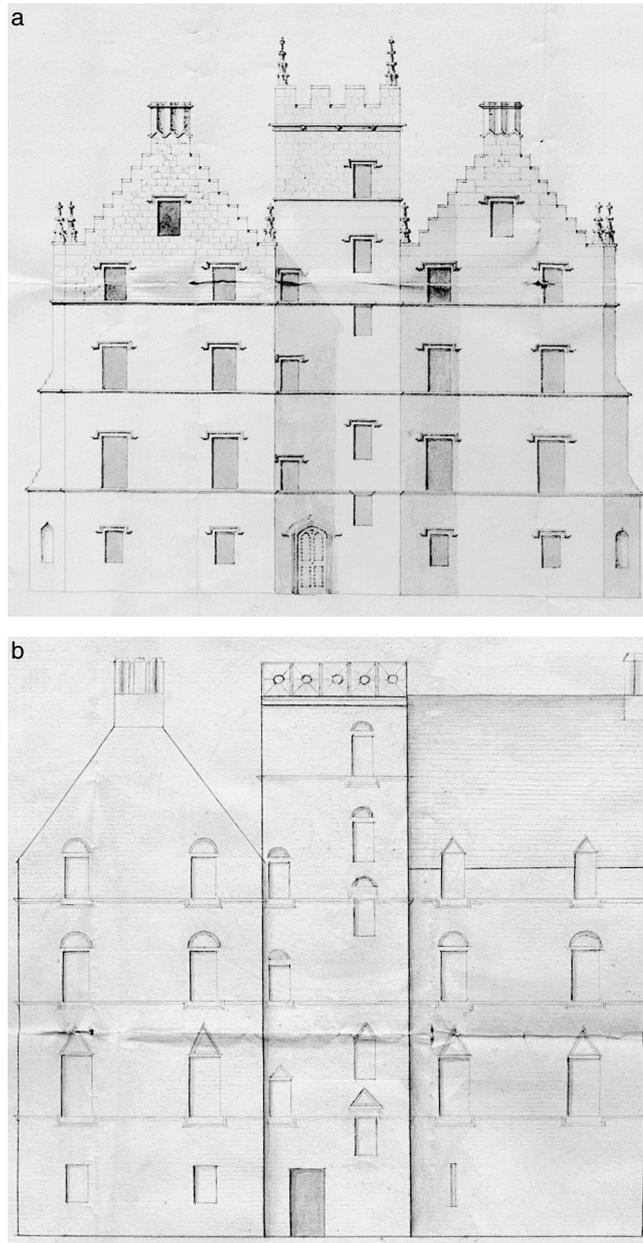
only by late autumn 1649 when its new, but yet uninhabited, condition is confirmed in the parish proceedings against serial Sabbath-breakers Andrew James, David Allan and James Boyne (Cramond nd, 28).¹⁶

The earliest known record of some of the apartments inside Innes has to wait until the next century. It is contained within a letter recording the grievous damage caused by a thunderstorm and lightning strike in 1736.¹⁷ Both low and high dining rooms (the latter with hangings), a painted room with wainscotting,¹⁸ a nursery and Miss Grant's room, were all damaged, and the house was left 'in general . . . rent and shaken'. The storm tore off much of the roof, struck down the kitchen chimney, melted all but three of the windows of the staircase from top to bottom (implying that they were the metal ones mentioned in the accounts), and cracked the east and south gables. It also broke the lintel of the entry gate, made a great clap (rent) above the window of the Laich Dining Room, beat down every window of the High Dining Room, and some part of its wall, and rent and shook some of the vaults, thereby rendering some part of the floor of the Hall loose.¹⁹ Of particular interest is the room panelled in wainscot with a painted ceiling, since that might imply a well-furnished room of the late 16th century which the family, like so many others, had elected to retain in its old form, possibly in homage to their forebears (Bath 2003, ch 1). The Hall appears to have been what is now the Ballroom. The Drawing Room (probably the former Chamber of Dais) was simply 'the room above the kitchen'. The current ground-floor dining room may have been the Laigh Dining Room (or Lettermeat Hall), although since the letter implies that it had only a single window, it might more likely have been the eastmost vaulted chamber in the east wing (once the butler's pantry).

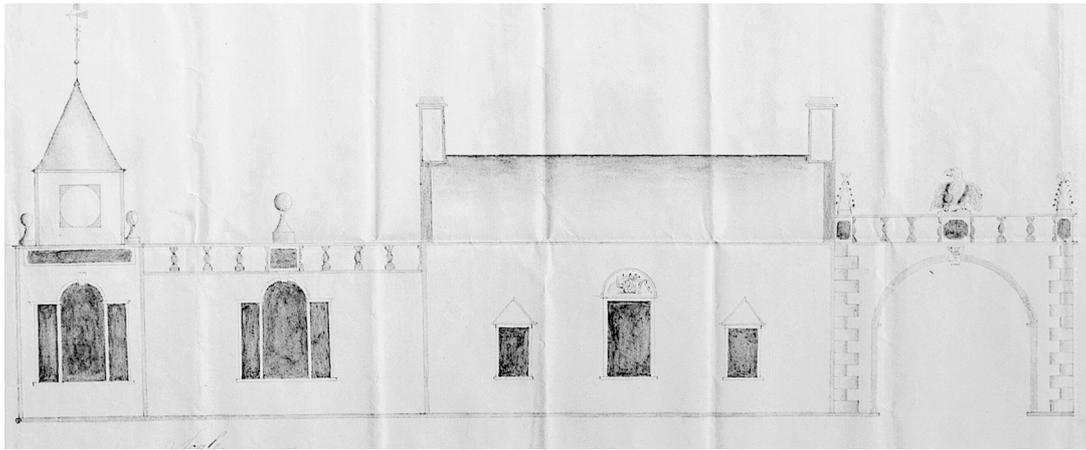
Presumably repaired, the house was abandoned after a severe fire in 1739, and the Innes family spent the next 15 years living in the Earl of Dunfermline's town house (otherwise known as the Bishop's Palace) in Elgin.²⁰

Reoccupied by 1754, Innes remained the seat of the increasingly impoverished family²¹ until it was sold to the Earl of Fife in 1767, whence the family decamped to Devon where they sought to establish a new Innes House at Huish.²² The Fifes, however, appear to have made the first of several alterations to their villa soon afterwards. They obviously contemplated gothicizing Innes into a Castle of Otranto or some such, with hoodmoulds, fantastically proportioned crowstepped gables, and Gothick buttresses and entrance, in a manner not dissimilar to contemporary proposals for Glamis by John Carr of York (illus 5). Fortunately, the scheme remained abortive. Nonetheless, the building accounts show that the Fifes fettled the place up, extended it with two smart, balanced single-storeyed wings c 85ft (25.8m) long, and furnished it well (illus 6). Charles Cordiner, writing to Thomas Pennant in June 1776 (Cordiner 1780, 57), praised Innes's sequence of 'king's pictures' without which no self-respecting seat would be complete, 'portraits of the royal line from many ages past to that of his present majesty', which, by 1798, had been expanded to include 'other personages of distinguished memory' (Forsyth 1798). A chapel was added in 1857, which probably entailed the demolition of the Georgian wings, and the back court remodelled in 1870.²³ The house was finally purchased by Charles Tennant in 1912, in whose family it remains today. It was remodelled first by the architects Walker and Duncan in 1914–16, internally refitted by W Ashley Bartlam in the late 1940s, and then again from 1993 (illus 7).

Though charters, historical references and the Pont drawing all indicate the presence of a substantial family seat somewhere at Innes long before the payment to Ayton in 1640, did the original buildings lie on the current site? If so, are any of them still entombed within Innes House today? Given the remarkable continuity of site in the preponderance of Scottish Renaissance seats – successive rebuilding in and



ILLUS 5 (a) A sketch of Innes House 1768 (Montcoffer Papers), showing proposed remodeling of the upper storeys and all decorative detail. Whereas the buttresses might seem part of the overall decorative 'gothicizing', the west wing had been damaged in the lightning strike, and they might have had a functional purpose. Probably, however, what was adopted from this notion were the finials that now adorn the viewing platform. (b) the south front of Innes House, after a rough pencil sketch in the Montcoffer Papers. This is likely to be a sketch of the house when the Fifes purchased it. Note the dormer windows in the east gable, the height of the east gable roof – in line with the viewing platform, the lack of finials on the latter, the separation of the east from the west wing roof, and the plainness of the ground floor windows (*University of Aberdeen*)



ILLUS 6 East wing at Innes House from a sketch in the Montcoffer Papers. In fact, it could only have been the west wing – unless it represents the view from the north courtyard. A Victorian photograph showing an arch similar to that in the drawing, on either side of the house (illus 14), implies that it might have been built as one of two wings enclosing an inner court to the *south-east* of the house where the garden now is (*University of Aberdeen*)



ILLUS 7 West Elevation of Innes House as it is today, with dormer windows in the heightened west wing roof (*Law and Dunbar Nasmith*)

around the masonry of their predecessors – it would not be altogether unexpected.

THE BUILDING ACCOUNTS

The two most significant features of the building accounts are first, that they appear intermittently over some 15 years, and secondly, that the expenditure appears insufficient for a brand-new country seat. The entries are dated severally September 1640 (when Ayton was paid for his plan, *inter alia*), June 1641 (when Ayton was paid for quality materials, *inter alia*), September and October 1643, July 1647, October 1648, and March 1650. Some entries are detailed, but £7200 worth of work was carried out between 1643 and July 1647, of which we know little. The accounts cover relatively contained works. The first one – for lime, 200 long stones and 150 short stones from Covesea quarry, some timber and some iron – imply the construction of the great staircase. The following year, Sir Robert was paying for smaller scale works – namely, iron windows, iron bars (probably window-yetts), and a small amount of timber (160 deals – presumably floor boards or panelling, and 16 spars – presumably joists) from Elgin. Brass uprights (probably the missing stair balusters whose base can still be seen in the treads) were supplied directly by William Ayton himself. Payment in 1643 was principally for iron and lead work, with timber imported from Inverness, possibly implying the platform and gutters of the belvedere given that the great stair's steps are in stone. Then silence until 1648–9, when 1100 deals and 6000 nails – possibly for sarking – were required, with new hinges and bolts for doors (which were to provide no great obstacle for the Sabbath-breakers), and lead, presumably for mending parapet or battlements. That explains why the building was locally regarded as 'new' in 1649.

The final account was for 22,000 Caithness slates to complete the roof, and timber, plaster and split oak for wainscoting, hair, lime, nails and lath (presumably for partitions), glass and

lead for leaded glass and, significantly, quoins for the office houses (of, presumably, one of the missing courts). The specification of quoins at this date is unusual. Not only does it imply that these office buildings were of some importance, but also that these quoins were themselves distinctive. The vast majority of Innes's quoins (or cornerstones) are concealed beneath harling, and the earlier phases of the new work would have already required a good number of quoinstones not singled out for attention in this way. The account therefore implies that these office house quoins might have been decorative – possibly the ornate 'buckle quoins' fashionable in Edinburgh at this period, and still visible at Heriot's. In adding his sums, Sir Robert lamented that he had not accounted for his tenants' service in providing or working the lead, lime, stone, timber, sand 'and manie other thingis which wold have cost a good deal of money if I had payed for theme' (Innes 1864).²⁴ How to quantify what he was implying? Since the accounts principally imply specialist or skilled building work, Sir Robert was possibly referring to more basic construction being undertaken by his estate men. Given that the walls of the upper two storeys indicate considerable alteration, was Sir Robert's estate labour used, perhaps, to heighten the wallhead? Whatever the case, these accounts would not cover the costs of the construction *de novo* of a major country seat on a new site.

EVIDENCE FROM THE FABRIC

It is reasonable to expect that a new building, designed from scratch by a fashionable Edinburgh architect of the 1640s, would be consistent in wall thickness,²⁵ in construction and in stonework – as, for example, in George Heriot's Hospital itself. Walls should be appropriately bonded one to another, rooms should open into each other in a logical sequence, passages should be straight, and floors of each storey should all be on the same level. Even where the building's progress might

have been subject to a change of mind, one would look for broad consistency of construction approach within the same construction period. Thus, in the absence of *documentary* evidence to prove the existence of an earlier building, variations from constructional logic might fill the gap. In particular, one would be looking for changes in floor level, disparities and inconsistencies in wall thicknesses, variations in door and window embrasures, inconvenient or squint junctions, and significant variations in building material.

A difficulty typical of standing archaeology studies such as this, is that the exterior of the house is harled, and the interior furnished and plastered, thus concealing whatever potential evidence may lie in the masonry.²⁶ The 1998 study nonetheless identified over one hundred items inconsistent with a new-built house by a designer and building team of ordinary skill. Evidence of alteration recorded in the Schedule of Curiosities²⁷ is ubiquitous: some is palpable, some became apparent only upon detailed inspection, and some emerged from retracing drawings and superimposing floor-plans one upon the other. There are variations in level on the same floor, concealed voids, blocked windows, roofs extended curiously over external walls, windows seemingly at the wrong heights, enormous variations in wall-thickness, and serial slappings and blockings through the principal walls. There are also anomalies in the relationship of the great staircase to the rest of the house, and in the configuration of the north-east turnpike staircase. Although some of these curiosities may post-date the 1640s reconstruction, the majority appear to have been caused by the building works of that period.

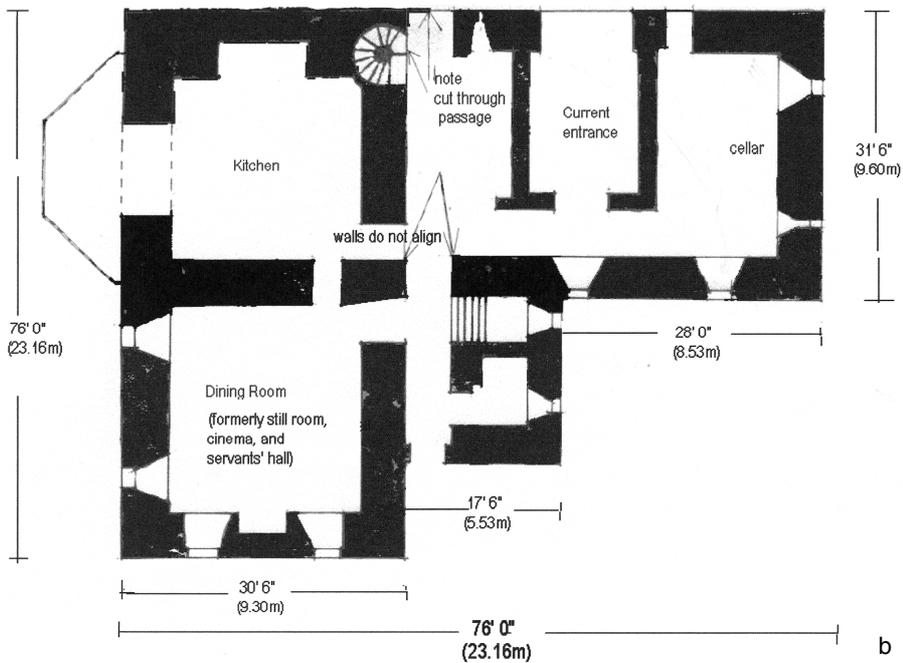
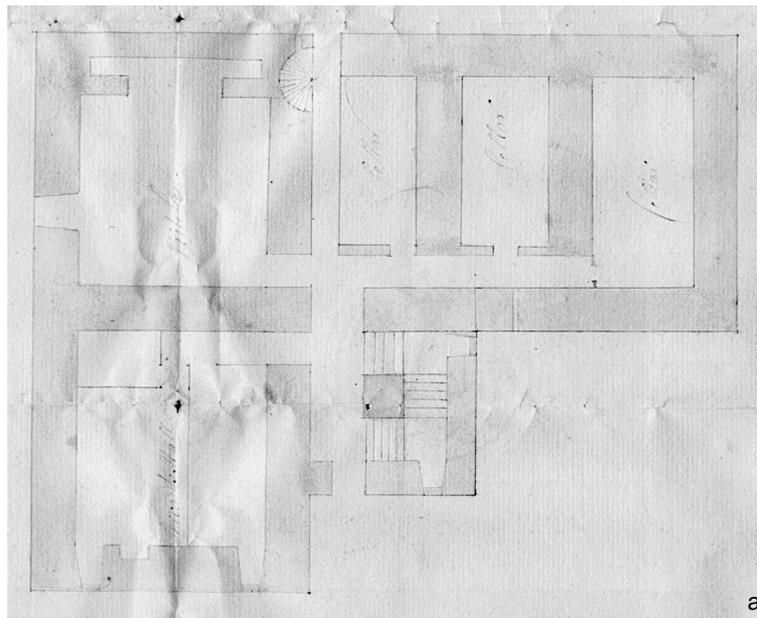
WALLS

Enormously differing wall thicknesses at the ground (entrance) level, different floor levels, different angles of vaulting and inconsistencies of structure imply at least three separate building periods *before* the addition of the

staircase in the 1640s. The thickest wall of 7ft (> 2.13m), implying a date possibly in the 15th century (since walls of that thickness are very rarely built after 1500) contains a kitchen chimney stack (illus 8).²⁸ Its adjacent east and south walls can be established as originally 5ft 2ins (1.52m) thick although now much altered. The next thickest wall is the east gable of the east wing at first floor level, 5ft 10in (1.72m) thick. The remainder of Innes's ground floor walls are consistently 4ft 8ins (1.40m) thick. The exception is the great stair in the angle which has walls consistently 3ft (0.91m) thick from the first floor to the top (illus 9).

Walls convey a great deal of information about construction sequence. To begin with, the west wing appears at first sight to be an unusually large, long, rectangular tower-house homogeneous in structure. Yet, most unusually, a cross wall bisects it from bottom to top, and this wall was once thicker than at present in its lower storeys (illus 11a) before being thinned on opposite sides on both ground and first floors. It was thus far thicker than would be required of a partition wall. Moreover, the ground floor chamber on its south (now dining room) is at a higher floor level than the kitchen on its far side, and each chamber has a different angle of vault – implying two different building programmes. Thus, rather than the west wing being a large tower with an unusual cross-wall, the probability is that we are looking at a small, approximately square – 32ft 6 in (9.84m) by 30ft 6in (9.30m) tower lying to the north, which was later extended southwards (see section from west — illus 11a). The curious cross-wall, therefore, was almost certainly the south external wall of that north-east tower. Furthermore, since the ground floor vaults of the east wing support themselves against this north-west tower, it means that the tower came first. Economic, maybe, but not entirely structurally advisable (illus 13a & b).

Study of the walls also reveals that the great stair is not fully embedded into the



ILLUS 8 Floor plans of Innes House (a) Plan of the Low Storey of Innes House, c 1768 in the Montcoffer Papers. Note the paucity of windows at this level (which does not square with the elevation), and the trimming of the north-west tower's turnpike jamb (*University of Aberdeen*); (b) Level 1 – ground floor after J Innes & B Brooks. The principal changes over the 1768 plan (apart from the 20th-century openings to the north) are the increased number of windows, what looks like an inserted chimney bottom left, and the c1770 bay window. Note how the turnpike stair levels cannot connect with the kitchen

structure of the main house. Instead, it cannibalizes the wall on its west, and is cut into the eastern wing to its north. The only possible conclusion is that some form of L-plan 'main house' already existed at Innes before Ayton began his redesign.

The east wing ended up with the vaulted cellars and service corridor typical of the 16th and early 17th centuries,²⁹ but by the time of the 1768 survey, the west-most cellar (now occupied by the lift) had been opened out to the north to provide an entrance in direct alignment with the great stair (see illus 8b).³⁰ When was that done and for what purpose? The answer probably lies in the relationship between the main house and its courtyards. The 'main house' of a Scottish Renaissance country seat rarely extended *out* beyond the inner court, but formed the principal part *of* it. The inner court of Innes, therefore, probably lay to the south with the current house forming part of two of its walls. However, the fashionable trend from the mid-17th century was to relocate the 'sluttery' to a back-court, after the English manner. If the current entrance court on the north side, therefore, lies on the site of any original court, it would have to be that of either an original *outer*, or a new-fashioned *back*, court. The opening up of this ground-floor vault might be explained by the need to provide a connection between the two – like similar pends in Kinnaird, Allardyce and Pit-sligo.

On the second and third floors, the structure of both wings becomes much thinner and the wall-thickness more homogeneous. Whereas upper walls becoming thinner was normal practice in brick buildings in England, in Scotland it implies significant remodelling, the homogeneity implying it was all work of a single building programme (illus 10b).

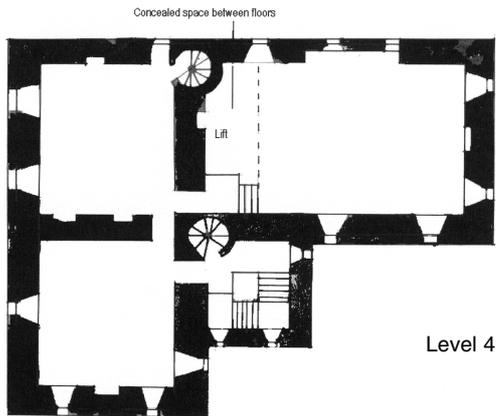
CIRCULATION

How one might have moved around Innes before the construction of the great staircase

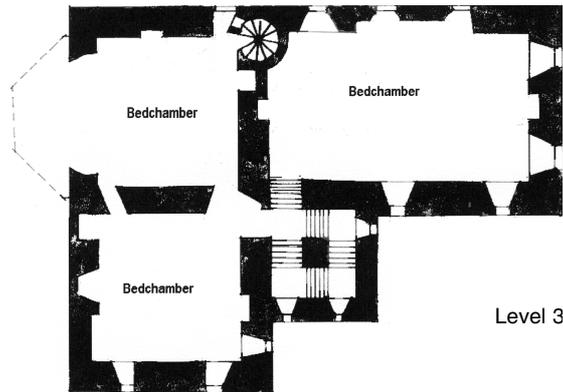
remains a puzzle. However, there is one particular part of the house where substantial disturbance to the walls on all floors is concentrated: namely at the south-east corner of the original tower where the southern extension, the eastern wing and the current staircase all abut each other. That implies that the 16th-century main stair was in that locality.

The northern turnpike stair that survives in the jamb of the north-west tower is also on the previous site of a former staircase. Its shell predated the refashioning of the Drawing Room undertaken by Sir Robert c 1612, since the latter's ornate plaster frieze is carried across its bulge. Yet, although that stair was never gracious enough to have been the principal staircase of Innes as a whole, it had served the five chambers and parapet of the north-west tower. However, when access from the great staircase through to the north court was carved through the western cellar, much of the ground floor of the staircase wing or jamb was shaved off (illus 8b). Perhaps that was when the turnpike's direction was reorientated. If so, to judge by the fact that some of the turnpike's stair treads are clearly contemporary with, and of the same height, as those of the great stair,³¹ all these alterations were simultaneous with the arrival of the great staircase. Where visible in voids between the floors, the turnpike gives the impression of being roughly-built since its treads are not properly bonded into its circular shell.³²

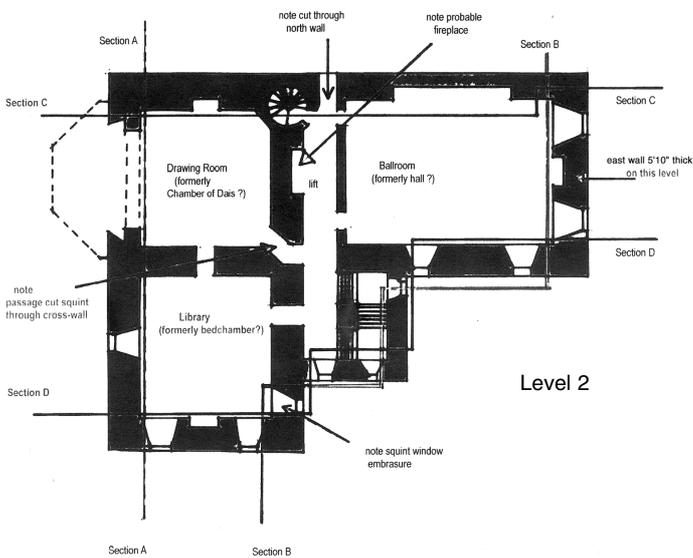
What was the turnpike's new purpose? It no longer connected the kitchen with the room above, since its platforms were now on the wrong level (too high) to enter either. Instead, it feeds the first two floors of the eastern wing *only*, linking the north corridor and back court with the Hall/Ballroom. On the two floors above, this little stair swivels to connect the upper floors *only* of the western tower (illus 9 middle and lower). The stair shell continues upwards towards the fifth floor which implies that the stair once did so also, probably to the parapet of the north-west tower. But when the roofs were reformatted³³ and the parapet of



Level 4

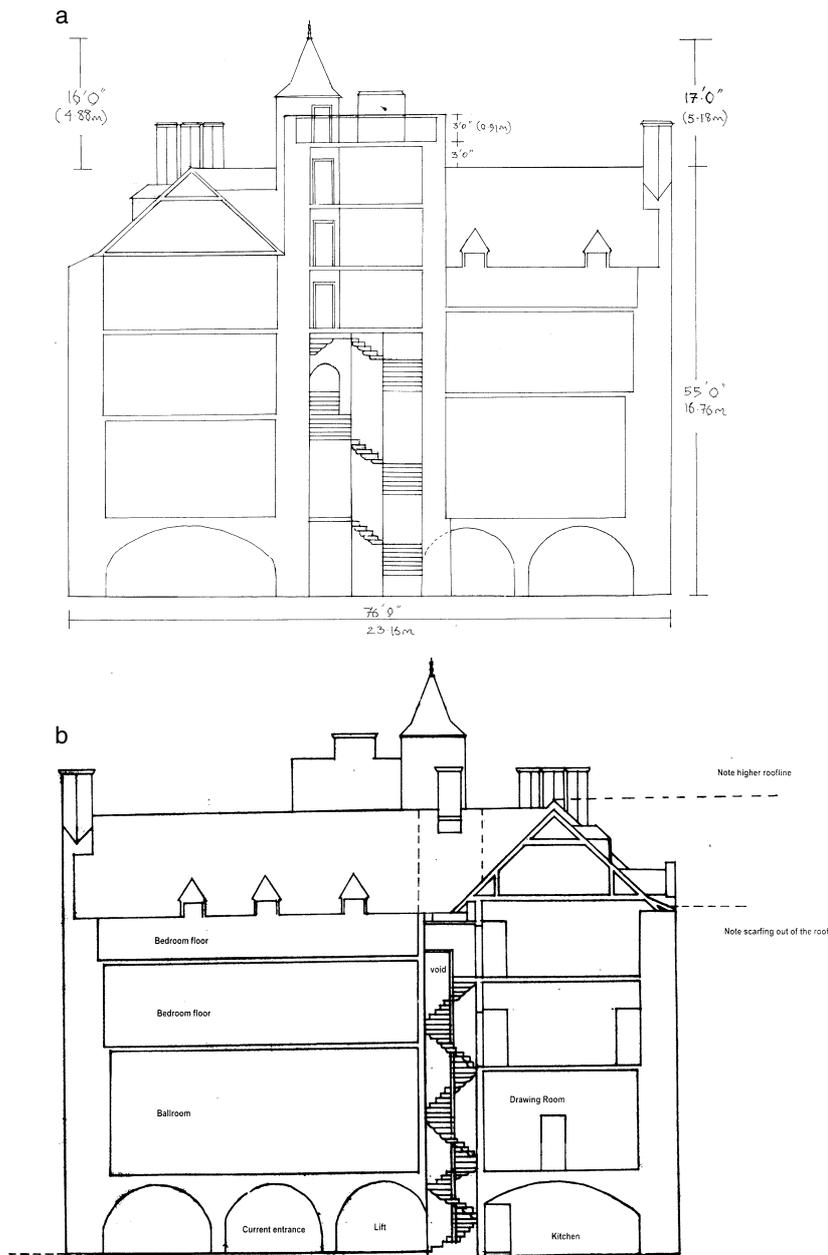


Level 3

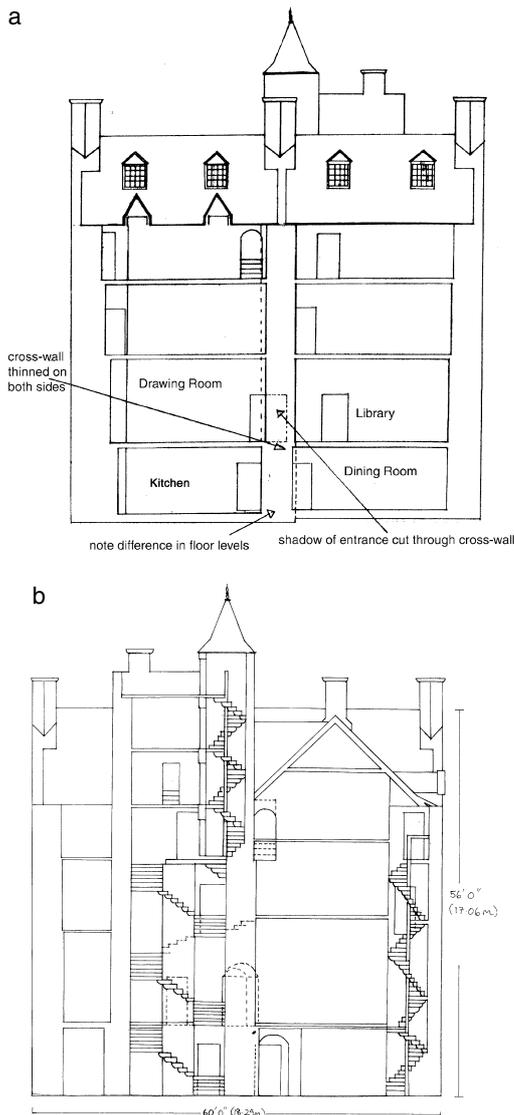


Level 2

ILLUS 9 Plans of Levels 2, 3 and 4 after J Innes and B Brooks: (Lower) Level 2. Note the thinner wall where the 1770 bay window used to be, the tortuous entrance to the Drawing Room, the turnpike tread levels which work for the east wing but not for the drawing room, and the central doorway in the cross wall, probably added in 1768. (Middle) Level 3. The turnpike has now become orientated to the west: and because the ballroom has a raised ceiling, the east wing is six steps higher than the rest. Two very odd cuts through the cross wall, one perhaps a relic of an earlier stair. (Upper) Level 4. Note the east wing, again, higher, and the north wall, again, thinner. At this floor the great stair mutates into a corbelled turnpike



ILLUS 10 Innes House: Sections after J Innes & B Brooks. These are not so much sections as an examination of the structure immediately behind the facades. (a) from the south. Notice the diminishing thickness of the east gable, the regularity of the stair, and the extent to which it cannibalizes the existing wall on the left; (b) Section from the north. Note particularly the thick walls and lower floor of north-west tower on the right and the three-celled east wing on the left. The turnpike, with its thin walls lies at the centre. Note also how the treads are at the wrong level for the kitchen. This stair used to rise up, possibly to an original parapet, and later to the east wing's attic. The extent to which the north west tower has been cut down, and the new roof structure adapted can be seen from the scarfed-out joists on the right hand side to take the water over the wallhead



ILLUS 11 Section of Innes House after J Innes and B Brooks. (a) from the west. The north-west tower is on the left, with the shadow of its turnpike's projection acting as a measure of the extent to which the wall has been cut back. Of particular interest is the cross-wall at the centre: the south wall of the original tower. Note how it has been cut into from the right on the ground floor (when they inserted a door), and cut back on the left on the first floor – and thereafter above; (b) from the east. This section is the key to understanding Ayton's design, since it shows the two staircases in relation to the remainder of the building: with the alterations to floor levels, additional steps and slapped openings that would never have been required if the house had been designed de novo. Note also the scarfing of the roof timbers on the right.

the north-west tower probably cut down, the turnpike was switched in orientation to feed into the attics of the newly-raised east wing. For, before they were joined together, the roofs of the east and the west wings were entirely without connection, with the result that the stair, in its jamb, no longer connected with the lowered pitched roof of the west wing. It is fair to conclude, therefore, that the small turnpike stair in its projecting wing was remodelled to act as a family/service stair at the same time as the construction of the great staircase.

FLOOR LEVELS

Curiosities of floor level lie principally in the upper storeys of the east wing and in the top storey of the west. Floor level changes at Level 4 in the western wing were caused by the creation of taller, more stately, fourth floor rooms in place of the original attic storey at Level 4, when the servants were moved up into new attics squeezed into the truncated roof-space. Raised ceilings and a new flattened roof structure were required (illus 10a). It is possible that the Fifes undertook this work because of a shortage of high-status guest accommodation, since that appears to be what Innes most lacked in the absence of inner and outer courts.

When the Hall was converted into the Ballroom, its ceiling was raised to lend dignity to the room. The consequence was that the floors above were raised (except the ceiling above the screens passage or the westmost bay of the east wing) by some five steps each. There were several consequences. First, it rendered the upper storeys of the east wing inaccessible to the turnpike stair.³⁴ Next, the raising of its floor levels on Floors 3 and 4 left a void in the westmost bay of some 6ft (1.83m) high between floor and ceiling (illus 9 upper – plan of Level 4). Consequently, the raised floor level became unnaturally close to the bottom of the windows on those Levels. The resulting low attic windows (that still existed in 1903) no longer admitted sufficient light, and had to



ILLUS 12 South elevation of Innes by Law and Dunbar Nasmith

be enlarged into dormer windows³⁵ probably when the Tennants planned their alterations after 1912. To them might also be attributed the aggrandizement of the ground floor openings in the east wing into windows to match those on the upper storeys in line with the upper ones (illus 12).³⁶

ROOF

The timberwork and jointing of the west wing roof is probably 18th-century in date, noticeably older than the east wing's. That suggests that either the work was done following the 1739 fire or when it was being modernized by the Earls of Fife. When the east wing roof was extended westwards to join the west wing roof, it was flattened in pitch and trapped some external harled walls and the remains of a chimney stack within. However, the sawn boards of the east wing roof appear to date

from the Tennant alterations when they reintroduced the dormer windows.

The roof wallheads also provide clues to the building's history. The short section of the west wing (illus 10b – section from north) reveals how the eaves have had to be scarfed outward over the wallhead so as to throw the water clear over the edge, and prevent it from draining directly into the core of the thick wall. If it had been typical of a tower-house, the pre-Ayton roof would have been narrower and steeper, rising upon a structure aligned with the inner face of the wall, leaving space for a corbelled wall walk behind a parapet. From such little details of a scarfed-out roof, and the shell of a now missing turnpike stair, it is possible to sense the original height and capping of the north-west tower. But whereas Sir Robert Kerr warned his son against taking away the battlements of the House of Ancrum:

as some gave me counsel to do. . .for that is the grace of the house, and makes it look like a castle, and hence so noblest, as the other would make it look like a peel (Laing 1875, 64).

Sir Robert Innes stripped his house of all that *faux militaristic* nonsense and concealed all evidence of martial panoply beneath the image of the contemporary Scottish villa.

AYTON'S DESIGN

Ayton was paid for a design on paper. So long as it was assumed that the project was the construction of a new Innes House from scratch on a cleared site, there was no particular imperative for assuming that he had had to visit the site. Now that we can appreciate the complexity he faced from working with a substantially existing building – and understand better the subtlety and economy of his design – it seems impossible that he did not. The ingenuity with which he reorientated the turnpike stair to become a service stair implies a deep knowledge of the existing building. The accounts themselves state that he supplied some fashionable fittings, and he may have accompanied them there, rather as William Adam was to do at Duff House a century or so later.

He modernized Innes House by reforming its plan through changing its circulation, and then reworking the façade to provide a contemporary image. Whether he was responsible for the reorganization of the courts to relegate the 'sluttry' to a back court is uncertain, but from the cutting through of the northern corridor, it seems probable. The key to his design was the insertion of the spacious, six-storeyed, well-lit great stair, capped by its triumphant belvedere. Whereas its location gave direct access to both chambers in the western wing, he provided corridors (not shown on the plan) in the east wing in place of the traditional pattern of room-by-room enfilade (to judge by partition elements in the accounts). He then transformed the original

turnpike stair into the secondary service/family stair. The unobtrusive subtlety with which he coped with the varying floor-on-floor heights of the existing buildings is revealed by his deployment of stair treads of differing height as necessary.³⁷ The great stair has the thinnest and most consistent walls (external walls of 3ft (0.91m) exactly, from Level 2 to the top,³⁸ the internal newel of 4ft (1.22m) square without variation), and its regular dimensions contrast strikingly with any other part of the structure of the house. The insertion of the stair had aesthetic as well as functional consequences. It reshaped the proportions of the building as a whole, partly because it visually shortened the east wing by blocking that wing's western windows (illus 12). Its construction also conveyed such a spurious visual homogeneity to those ill-fitting earlier phases of the building, that it is only on plan that the extent of his reworking of the house becomes apparent.

Pont's late 16th-century drawing implies that Innes comprised a substantial tower with lesser towers, outbuildings or courts. The fabric study reported upon here implies that the original buildings at Innes comprised at least one slender, single-chambered tower, five or more storeys at the west and another, perhaps lower, to the east, linked by a narrow two-storeyed wing, perhaps containing the hall: a pattern not unlike the Grahams' seat of Mugdock, Dunbartonshire. Ayton, by decapitating one tower, retaining only a single wall of the other, and raising up the hall wing between, produced a coherent composition with a regularized roofline. He provided the necessary heraldic skyline with a composition of a balustraded belvedere, dormer windows, and gables marked by fashionable square chimneys set on angle. The façade beneath was adorned by elaborate aedicules for the windows, corner finials, string courses and other decoration.

There is a distinct family resemblance between some of Innes's details and those of Heriot's Hospital on which Ayton was

working in 1638, but in decorative terms, there are no pure matches. String courses step up and down in Innes,³⁹ whereas they are generally at a constant level at Heriot's. Innes's square ashlar chimneys are squatter and much less elaborate than Heriot's scalloped masterpieces, and the parapet of its belvedere is considerably plainer than the splendidly ornate, almost buckle-quoined Heriot parapet.⁴⁰ The principal similarity lies in the treatment of the windows. Before 1838, the rear three wings of Heriot's were harled with dressed stone details, similar to Innes, and both buildings have window pediments alternately triangular or segmental. But there the similarity now ends, since the Heriot windows are full aedicules, whereas those at Innes have pediments only. Yet the Innes pediments appear disproportionately large for the windows that they cap, implying that columns for an aedicule were originally intended but never installed. Yet the Heriot pediments are open, capped often by a star or crescent, whereas the Innes pediments look like a poor copy: closed with a star unevenly perched above. In sum, Innes's facade has echoes of Heriot's but less of its achievement.

PROBLEMS OF ANALYSIS

It is difficult to discern the full Ayton plan in view of later alterations, and in the absence of the inner and outer courts. There are, for example, no obvious guest chambers or tower, no gallery, no houses of office (although the accounts make it clear that there once were). Even modest houses of the later 17th century, like Gallery, Angus, had to have their galleries and guest chambers, and no house could survive without its dairy, bakehouse, brew-house, barns, and stables. Consequently, what survives at Innes now, or what was remodelled to Ayton's plan, was only a portion of a larger complex of buildings, some of which clearly lay to the north.

Although Innes retained their nobility of height, it eschewed the U-plan of Craigston

and Stewart, and only in its compact plan did it resemble the late Jacobean lowland villas of the Court circle.⁴¹ It remains unclear exactly how Ayton's plan worked in terms of a state apartment of hall, chamber of dais and bed-chamber, but the ballroom is likely to have been the hall, the drawing room (possibly the hall of the north-west tower) the chamber of dais, and the library the original bedchamber (illus 9 lower). If that was so, one would expect each chamber to open into the next in enfilade; yet there is no visible evidence of that.⁴² Instead, the communication is entirely through the stair lobby itself. A thinned wall between the ballroom screen's passage and the drawing room, however, might imply a former aperture between the old tower and the new eastern wing. Yet its dimensions imply a fireplace⁴³ (feeding into the chimney stack that now lies immured within the attics) rather than a door. Indeed, enfilade doors were rarely placed at the centre of the wall, usually preferring to be against the outside wall, and were never that large. The arrival of the great staircase appears to have closed whatever passage existed, requiring a new entrance cut squint through the cross wall into the drawing room, demonstrating that any earlier doors must have lain elsewhere.

There are only two possible locations for the principal staircase of Innes prior to Ayton's arrival. Either in the only large spaces whence the evidence has been removed: namely, where the bay projects from the west wall of the drawing room, and once projected from the north wall of the east wing; *or* in the angle between the west and east wings, approximately where Ayton built the great stair. Here is where one discovers by far the greatest quantity of disturbed masonry; here is the location from which changes in floor level begin; here therefore lies the key to the planning of the house.

In conclusion, there are far too many inexplicable curiosities of structure and of planning to accept that a good architect like Ayton had been starting with a free hand on a

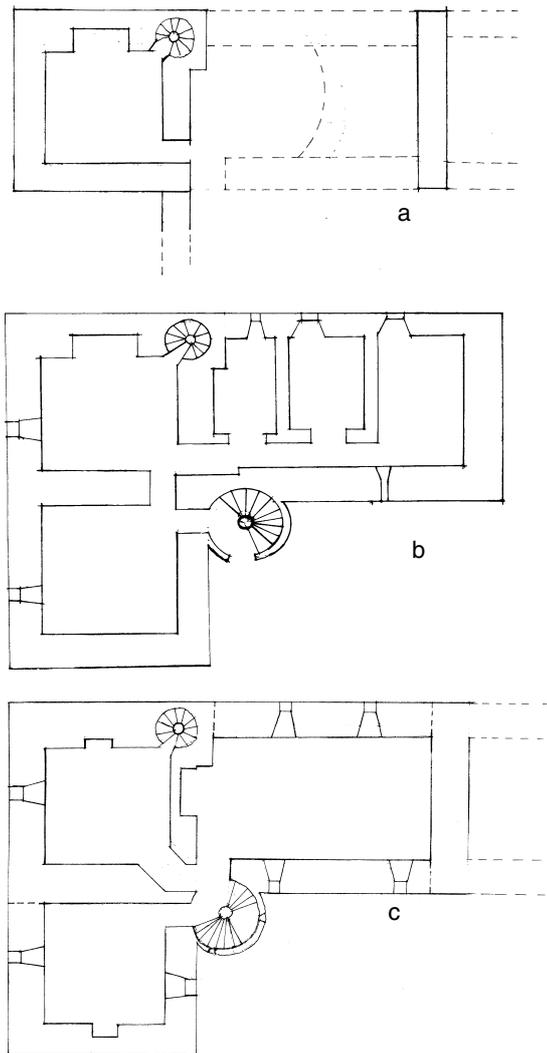
virgin site. The only reasonable conclusion is that there was an existing structure on site that he remodelled; and that is what the manuscripts imply.

HYPOTHESIS: THE ARCHITECTURAL EVOLUTION OF INNES

By the 15th century, Innes probably took the form of a courtyard with slender, thick-walled towers to the north-west and north-east, with a block lying between rather in the manner of Mugdock, Craig or Kellie (illus 13a). The extension of that tower's eastern wall to the south,⁴⁴ probably as a curtain wall, implies that the tower originally projected from a corner of the inner court. Since the tower that still occupies the north-west corner of the house has wall-thicknesses that imply a 15th-century date, it might have been built by Walter, 10th laird, in response to James I's instruction that the northern aristocracy re-edify their houses.

In the next phase, perhaps undertaken between c 1550 and 1580, the two towers were joined into a single building, the 'hall' block widened, and the north-west tower extended southwards (illus 13b). Evidence lies in the east wing's service corridor, the fact that its south wall does not align with the cross-wall in the west wing (implying different building dates), and differences in floor level. A large turnpike stair appears to have been inserted in the south-east corner of the north-west tower, which permitted Innes to enjoy a 'state apartment' comprising hall in the east wing, the chamber of dais in the west wing, and the principal bedchamber in the southern extension. The plasterwork in the drawing room then implies that when Sir Robert and Lady Grizzel undertook some redecoration when they occupied the house in 1611. But major works had to wait.

That brings us, at last, to 1638–50. At this point, the main house may possibly have resembled a tall tower extended with a lower eastern wing, like Delgatie or Dalcross. Sir



ILLUS 13 Conjectural plans by author of early phases of Innes House. (a) Phase 1. It seems logical, given the wall-thicknesses, that Innes might have had two or more small towers with buildings between, rather like Mugdock, Bemersyde or Kenmure. (b) Phase 2, Level 1. This presupposes the extension southwards of the north-west tower, and the normalization of an eastern wing, requiring cutting out of some original masonry. (c) Conjectural plan of Level 2, Phase 2 first floor. This suggests the emergence of the state apartment and the normalization of a hall in the east wing, with a large fireplace: but the principal circulation has changed from, possibly, an external stair to a large turnpike stair: new entrance cut through cross-wall (wall probably thinned); decorative cornice followed

Robert's more fashionable and radical ideas may have emanated from his wife or his son-in-law. Whatever the inspiration, he sought a platt from William Ayton to modernize the entire complex into a homogeneous design. Ayton reduced the height of the original towers and rendered them invisible (as John Wood had done at Balbegno in the 1570s) by levelling up the eastern wing, and using a new great stair as the generator of his new design. Thus an organically-evolved ancestral seat of varying age, height and character was compressed into the appearance of a taller version of the contemporary Lowland-inspired villa.

And thus the house remained, barring repairs after the 1736 lightning strike, and damage from the 1739 fire,⁴⁵ until the Earl of Fife bought Innes as a seaside villa. So what might the Earls of Fife have done? A mid-Victorian photograph (illus 14) indicates a remarkable concept: the house set on angle flanked by raked-back triumphal arches (presumably joined to the single-storeyed pavilions on each side implied by the 1768 drawing). It conveys a very distinct echo, albeit in a very much less grand or baroque way, of how Patrick, Earl of Strathmore, re-orientated Glamis in the 1670s. One of these arches was later rebuilt as the current western entrance to the northern court. The Fifes, therefore, were probably responsible for the reconfiguration of the entrance to the house to south, and the removal of whatever may have existed of the former inner court. A huge new southern porch was added as the principal entrance.

The Fifes raised the attics of the west wing and flattened the roof to provide additional accommodation, and replaced the dormer windows⁴⁶ with small but fashionable attic windows which required less maintenance. They removed closets and other small rooms from the north wall of the east wing, cut down and regularized window embrasures, and constructed the tall bay windows that projected from the north and western walls. Rooms were changed and changed again. The current dining room has done service as a still room,

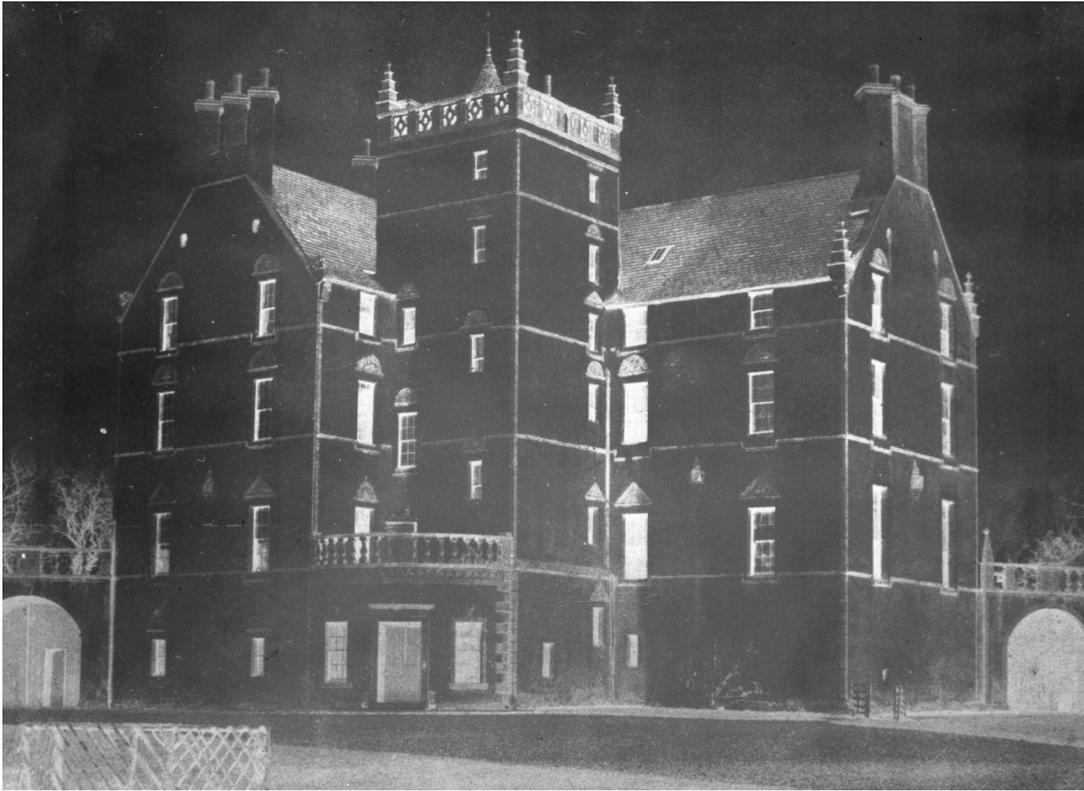
billiard room and a servants' hall; and the current kitchen the housekeeper's room or, under the Tennants, a cinema. It was the Fifes who heightened the ballroom by almost 6ft (1.83m), possibly in the time of the fifth Earl, since the deed was done before 1870, probably with the consequent raising of the upper floors of the east wing. Finally, it was the Fifes who created the courtyard to the north in the approximate form it is today, albeit incorporating some earlier structure (illus 15). They had added a chapel attached to its east in 1857.

After 1912, the Tennants restored the dormer windows that had been removed perhaps 150 years earlier. They decorated the ballroom, slapped new passages through thick walls (between the kitchen and the current dining room) and reorganized the ground floor. The northern court became the entrance courtyard (again?), connected to the house by an entrance passage through the central vault of the east wing, rather than the west vault which became the lift shaft. Frequent re-ordering of the interior, creating self-contained and, latterly, guest accommodation, followed throughout the 20th century. Much of the northern court was rebuilt and enlarged, particularly to cater for a new purpose of a function suite.

CONCLUSION

This paper set out to consider how a detailed study of a building's fabric might confirm or alter the accepted history of Innes House. It has revealed that its history – as in so many Scottish country seats – is considerably more complex than we have been led to expect. It also confirms the tenacity of Scottish landowners in sticking to the original site wherever possible, and adapting thriftily the structures already in place.

It is not uncommon for Scottish buildings to be interpreted as having been built in a single building programme, and characterized accordingly. It is equally not unusual that a detailed scrutiny of the fabric of such houses



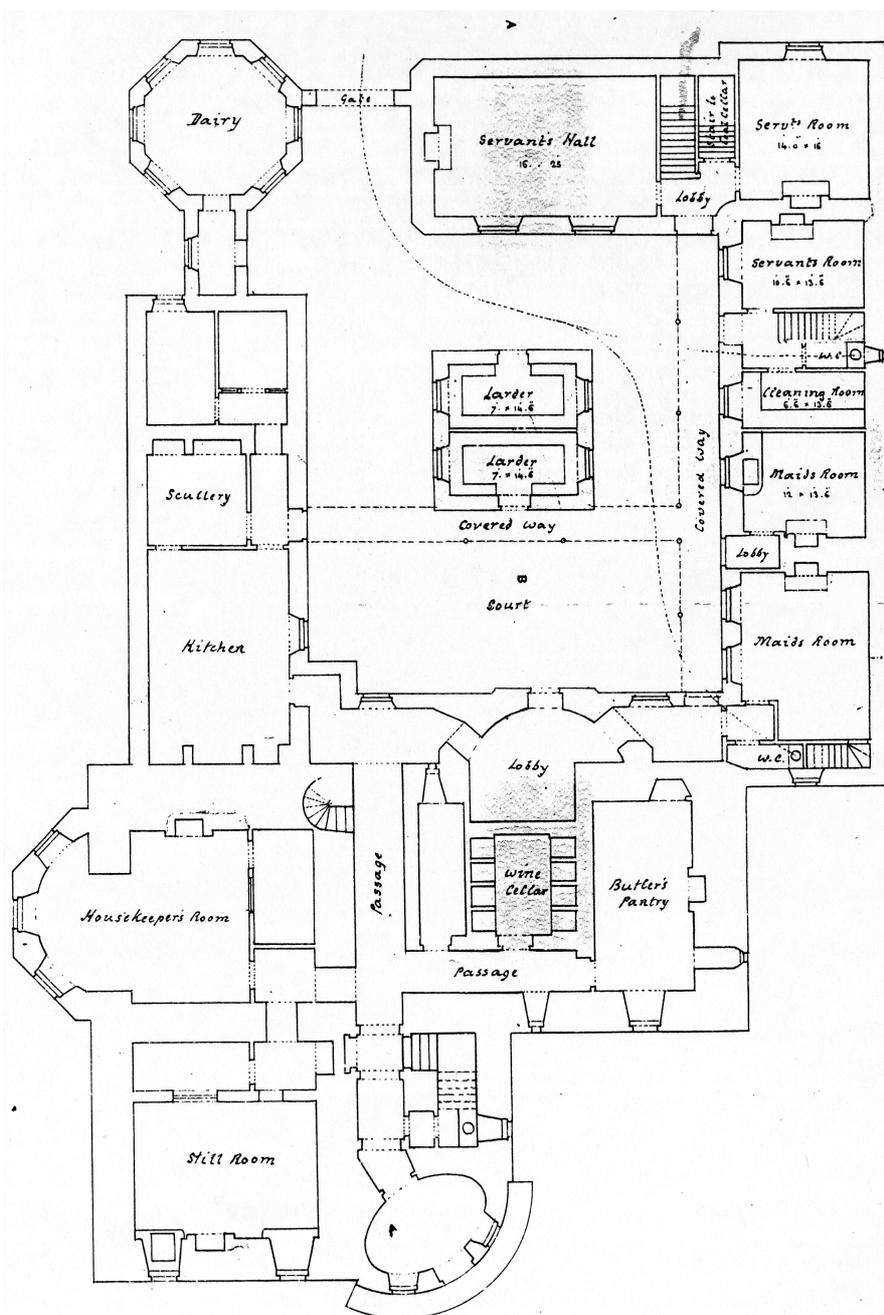
ILLUS 14 Photograph of Innes House c 1860, showing the ovoid entrance porch and the two wings. Note also the paucity of Level 1 windows in the east wing, proving that Billings's depiction of them was imaginary (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*)

provides sufficient evidence to reveal the contrary. In that respect, the Place of Innes is an excellent exemplar. Because it has the appearance of a house rather than a castle, it has been perceived not just as a house, but as a lowland villa. However, Pont described it as a castle, and locals called it a castle, indicating local memory of an ancient structure. The fabric reveals that that ancient structure remains within. It is a great tribute to Ayton's skill that he managed to conceal so much of Innes's original character beneath its modern mid-17th-century surcoat. Equally, our appreciation of him as an architect must rise with our understanding that his modern villa design has been achieved through the reformatting, replanning and repackaging of an existing building complex.

This tentative analysis provides a framework that makes sense of most of the features of Innes. It should provide a starting point for understanding the house, and perhaps for undertaking new research. In particular, should construction work ever need to be undertaken again, it is now quite clear that when plaster or harling is removed, which parts of the building should be subjected to close examination for further evidence as to its evolution.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper would have been impossible without the continued support of Joe and Carole Innes, and the enormous work undertaken by Joe Innes and Blair Brooks in measuring and re-measuring the building,



ILLUS 15 Innes House, 1870 ground floor plan. The principal differences with Innes as it is today are the elliptical entrance porch (probably c 1770), the subdivision and fewer windows of the bottom left room, the now vanished bay to the north, and the wine cellar where the current entrance is. This is the earliest surviving drawing of the northern courtyard (Wittet Collection, Elgin Library, Moray District Council)

producing the plans and sections, and so cheerfully setting out to check yet another discontinuous detail. To Hermione Tennant, great thanks are due for hospitality. I am grateful to the team of Kitty Cruft, Peter Donaldson, Ted Ruddock, Ian Gow, James Simpson, Bob Heath, and Ian Davidson for their patience and ingenuity in assisting the decoding of this most deceptive of structures; and to them all for good company. Thanks are also due to Law and Dunbar Nasmith, Chris Fleet at the National Library of Scotland, to Elgin Museums, Aberdeen University, and to the RCAHMS for permission to use the relevant drawings and photographs. Particular thanks are due to the Clan Innes Trust, which has supported the publication of this paper.

NOTES

- 1 Timothy Pont map 8 ‘North-East Moray’. It has been thought that this particularly well-drawn map had been the work of Robert Gordon of Straloch rather than of Pont, but Christopher Fleet argues definitively in Cunningham (2001) that whereas there is some overwriting and additional names, the maps and presumably the drawings are Pont’s own.
- 2 It appears that Shaw had begun collecting data in 1726, and that the book was virtually complete by 1760 (pers comm, J Innes).
- 3 From the fact that, on this painting, Innes no longer has its dormer windows, we might suppose that it depicts the *proposals* of how the much wealthier Fifes intended to modernize their villa. A mid-19th-century photograph implies that the east and west pavilions, linked to the main house by archways, were built. It seems reasonable to consider these buildings not so much extensions as a reformatting of the original inner court or close.
- 4 Architectural drawings and details of payments for work done are in Aberdeen University Manuscripts, the Montcoffer Papers A 80 (1)/458, MS 3175/M/i45 and MS 3175/1951.
- 5 Elgin Library Wittet Collection DAW P10014; Montcoffer Papers A 80 (1)/458.
- 6 The use of the term ‘main house’ for what the French call the *corps de logis* is based upon the building contract for the House of Partick contained in Napier (1873). It implies the principal house or, perhaps, laird’s lodging as distinct from all the other ancillary buildings that made up the country seat.
- 7 Although some houses were entered from east or west, these country houses appear very rarely to have been entered from the south. That was usually the domain of the privy garden.
- 8 This is the term Patrick, Earl of Strathmore, used in his *Book of Record* and his other manuscripts to distinguish his house of Glamis from his other favoured seat, Castle Lyon (now Castle Huntly). See Strathmore 1890, 37.
- 9 I am very grateful to Dr Simon Taylor for this information.
- 10 The contour plan taken by Joe Innes in 2003 revealed the logic of the house’s position: the only part of the contour wide enough to take the extent of its structures. The walling of Innes’s east gable, beneath its coating of harl, appears unusually well-built if not ashlar, which could reinforce the original approach to the house from the south-east, along Innes’s own 6m contour line.
- 11 Undertaken by Joe Innes.
- 12 That is a reasonable interpretation of most of the contributions – particularly the sections describing Buchan – contained within MacFarlane 1907–8.
- 13 MacKenzie (1927, ch 5) argues that a ‘palace’ was of a different order than a mere castle, but restricts his interpretation, for the most part, to seats with an identifiable hall block of some grandeur, whereas the usage in MacFarlane implies the courtyard interpretation adopted in this paper.
- 14 On stylistic grounds, a Bel connection is plausible. H G Slade is more specific, pointing to the motif of the heart in Castle Fraser, known to be by Bel, to a similar one in Craigston. Matt Davis, however, points out that the two hearts are significantly different.
- 15 Floors Muniments 1486. Joe Innes suggests that the document could be read as implying ‘losses since 1643’.
- 16 James and five others went down to the wards of Innes on 1 October and let themselves in with a skeleton key. A month later, Allan and others went down to view the castlewards; and the following week, James had to repent publicly ‘for repairing to the new castle off Innes and breaking up the doores of that emptie hous’.

- 17 Letter from Sir Harie Innes, 18 February 1736, Rose Family Papers, NLS, Advocates Mss 49.7.1.
- 18 Many houses retained 'painted rooms'. It seems that these might have been later 16th-century rooms with painted ceilings and perhaps painted walls which were kept as a curiosity and a way of venerating ancestors. It was also a means of identifying a room. Generally, if a room was to be identified solely by colour, the term would not be 'painted room' so much as 'blue room', red room', 'yellow room' etc., in which most of the furniture and furnishings would be colour-coded.
- 19 Letter from Sir Harie Innes, 1736 NLS Rose Papers, Adv Mss 49.7.1.
- 20 Rose Papers, Adv Mss 49.7.1. It looks as though this was the town house of Alexander Seton, earl of Dunfermline who had also been Lord Pluscarden and Lord Urquhart – both properties nearby. Seton was one of the great architectural patrons in Scottish history.
- 21 Rose Family Papers, NLS, Advocates Mss 49.7.1.
- 22 Innes/Ker Muniments MS 1100/976
- 23 Elgin Library Wittet Collection DAW/P100/4
- 24 Although Cosmo Innes found the building accounts in the Charter Chest in Floors, they have not yet been rediscovered.
- 25 The working assumption is that all building work in a single building programme will be to standard wall-thicknesses; and that as technology improves, wall thicknesses diminish. There is variation relating to the height of the building, the type of stone, and whether or not there are rooms, stairs or flues contained within the walls. Evidence from old buildings under restoration implies that 4ft 6in (1.37m) or more would be prior to 1500; a thickness of about 3ft (0.91m) for 1600; and William Adam appears to build to 2ft 8in (0.81m) and his son Robert to 2ft 4in (0.71m); and in the 19th century, William Burn and John Smith (in non-flue bearing walls) to 2ft (0.61m) thick.
- 26 In 1993, the house underwent refurbishment including strengthening, interior decoration and a complete reharling. Records of what lay beneath the harl or plasterwork were not made systematically, so that much of the evidence will now remain concealed for another half century at least.
- 27 The *Schedule of Curiosities* is the term given to all items emerging from the first inspection and drawing up which appear aberrant: for example, an asymmetrically placed window in a classically ordered facade, a change in wall-thickness, in structure, in floor level, in staircases and circulation, in the pattern of flues, in material, or in wall surface etc.
- 28 The north-west kitchen chimney-gable is 7ft 6in (2.28m). Level 1 is generally 4ft 9in (1.45m) thick, as is Level Two, although there is a regular ebb and flow of 6in (0.15m) or so, save that the east gable has thickened to just under 6ft (1.83m), and the kitchen chimney gable is thinned to just over it. Other than the staircase, Level 3 is generally just over 4ft 3in (1.22m), save the east gable again which remains at 5ft (1.52m) and the south gable over 4ft 6in (1.37m). Walls of 4ft 8in (1.42m) and above are far thicker than one would have expected of 1640–50. The House of Leslie, Aberdeenshire, Innes's nearest relative, has wall thicknesses that are predominantly 3ft 6in (1.06m). A curious batter/thinning of the east wall of the west wing results in the loss of 5in (0.125m) as it rises.
- 29 Joe Innes's re-measurement reveals that the east wing is narrower than shown on the Tennant-period remodelling plans. The Victorian drawings in Elgin Archives had the correct dimensions. All subsequent drawings were based upon the 1914 survey and repeated their error in the dimensions of the east wing. Blair Brooks holds that as a result of the proportional system that appears to have governed the south facade, Ayton probably rebuilt it. If he did, there would have to be an explanation for the anachronistically thick wall.
- 30 The Montcoffer drawing shows the opening northwards in that location.
- 31 Some of its treads share the typical 17th-century bull-nose and lugs.
- 32 That is visible from the void between the floors of Levels 2 and 3.
- 33 This sharing of the north-west tower's eastern wall demonstrates the extent to which the east wing cannibalized the western. It is done with such ingenuity as to imply Ayton's hand.
- 34 I am grateful to Blair Brooks for pointing this out; and also for observing how Ayton's proportional relationships in the south facade

- between the south gable, the stair and the east wing Innes have been carefully worked out.
- 35 The house still retained attic windows when photographed in the Christmas edition of *The Northern Scot* in 1903. Attic storeys of this kind are uncommon in 17th-century Scots houses, and comparison with Heriot's indicates nothing similar. The drawing in the Innes/Ker papers of c 1768 shows dormer windows, whereas Billings shows only eaves windows. It is therefore at least possible that when the upper storeys were renewed to provide additional accommodation, presumably by the Earl of Fife, a former dormer storey was reduced to an attic storey. Its condition now is therefore likely to be closer to 17th-century original than the condition Billings saw it in, save that the floors are too close to the window, and the original dormers were likely to have been more elaborate.
- 36 The Montcoffer elevation shows unadorned ground floor windows on the south wing and simply a light aperture on the west one.
- 37 The calculation of its treads reveals considerable ingenuity in the planning of the stair. From floor to floor, the heights varied – ground 17ft (5.18m) high, first 23ft (7.01m) high and second 19ft (5.79m) high: and yet the stair had to maintain an appearance of regularity. Therefore treads of generally between 7 and 8 inches (0.18–0.2m) high were used, taller ones were deployed where more height was required with fewer steps. Many of the curiosities noted are the consequence of having to shoehorn the staircase into pre-existing inconvenient floor levels.
- 38 The same dimensions as the approximately contemporary staircase at Leslie, and the scale-and-platt stairtowers in houses as diverse as Scalloway, Shetland, and Killochan, Ayrshire. Thus, a staircase of this date might typologically be expected to have walls 3ft thick.
- 39 The drawing in the Montcoffer Papers implies that a pronounced cill at the bottom of each window gave the impression of the string course being consistently horizontal.
- 40 Buckle quoins were a key motif in the Court architecture of the school of Sir James Murray of Kilbabernton. See MacKechnie 1988.
- 41 The plan is not unlike a grander version of Peffermill.
- 42 The central door from the Drawing Room into the Library was added as part of the 1768 works which might explain its unusual location in the middle of the wall. A pre-existing opening would have been to one side.
- 43 It would have been a massive fireplace, suitable for the new principal room.
- 44 The east wall of this western tower is slightly battered in its lower storeys, as measured by Joe Innes and Blair Brooks against the necessary verticality of the current lift: and they found that that batter to the wall continued south to the edge of the great stair.
- 45 Perhaps when the butler's pantry vaulted ceiling was rebuilt after the lightning-strike rent, it was rebuilt taller than the other two.
- 46 The c 1768 Montcoffer drawing shows dormer windows. That this drawing is more likely to be a survey than a proposal lies in the fact that by the 18th century people were more likely to remove dormer windows or turn them into cat-slides, for reasons of ease of maintenance, than to create them *de novo*.

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