

Excavations at Gilmerton Cove, Edinburgh, 2002

Melanie Johnson*, Richard Oram† & Tim Neighbour*
with contributions by M Cressey, G Haggarty, D Henderson, A Hobbs,
B Hobbs & R Murdoch

ABSTRACT

A research project was undertaken at Gilmerton Cove, Edinburgh by CFA Archaeology Ltd in advance of its development as a visitor attraction by City of Edinburgh Council. Historical research indicates that the Cove was built in the early 18th century. Excavation revealed hitherto unknown details of the layout of the Cove, including the presence of features cut into the rock floors; a well or cistern; a sump; and a second entrance.

INTRODUCTION

A research project was undertaken by CFA Archaeology Ltd within Gilmerton Cove, on Drum Street, Edinburgh (NGR: NT 2925 6865; NMRS no: NT26NE 33; illus 1) in advance of its development as a visitor attraction. The project was carried out between April and November 2002 and was commissioned and funded by the City of Edinburgh Council and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

The aims of the project were to attempt to determine the date at which the Cove was constructed; to determine its original function and subsequent usage; and to research the veracity of the many folk traditions that have grown up around the Cove. The techniques used to fulfil these aims included historical research, ground-penetrating radar (GPR) survey, excavation and historic building survey.

The Cove has been opened as a visitor attraction with an attached museum – website www.gilmertoncove.org.uk.

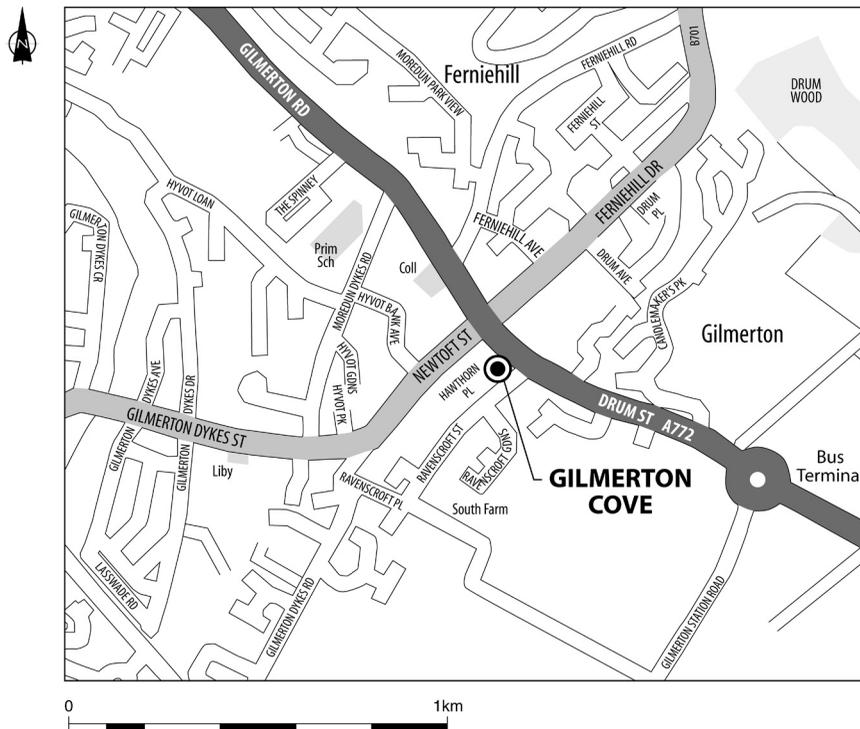
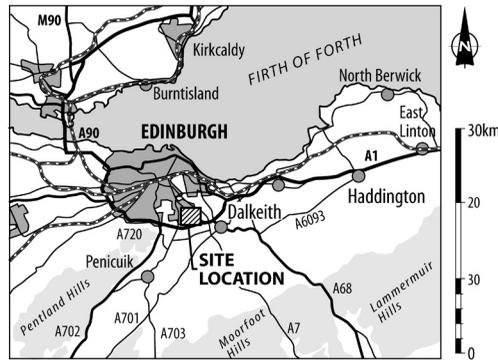
LAYOUT OF THE COVE

Gilmerton Cove is a subterranean complex of rooms and passages cut into the sandstone bedrock (illus 2) which, at the time of the fieldwork, was entered by an anonymous-looking door on Drum Street, and lies beneath Ladbroke's betting shop and a short row of cottages. The Cove is a category B listed building. The following text provides a description of the Cove prior to the work described in this report.

The irregularly shaped rooms of the Cove branch out from two passages, identified within this report as the Main Passage and the Rear Passage. Access to the Main Passage is gained by a rock-cut stairway leading down from the door on Drum Street. Rooms lead off to left and right from the Main Passage and Rear Passage (Rooms 1 to 6A on illus 2). The junction of the Rear Passage with the Main Passage is *c* 7m from the foot of the stairs. The Rear Passage leads eastwards to a rear entrance, which was subsequently blocked by a mortared stone wall *c* 9m from the junction with the Main Passage.

* CFA Archaeology Ltd, The Old Engine House, Eskmills Business Park, Musselburgh EH21 7PQ

† Department of History, University of Stirling, Stirling FK9 4LA

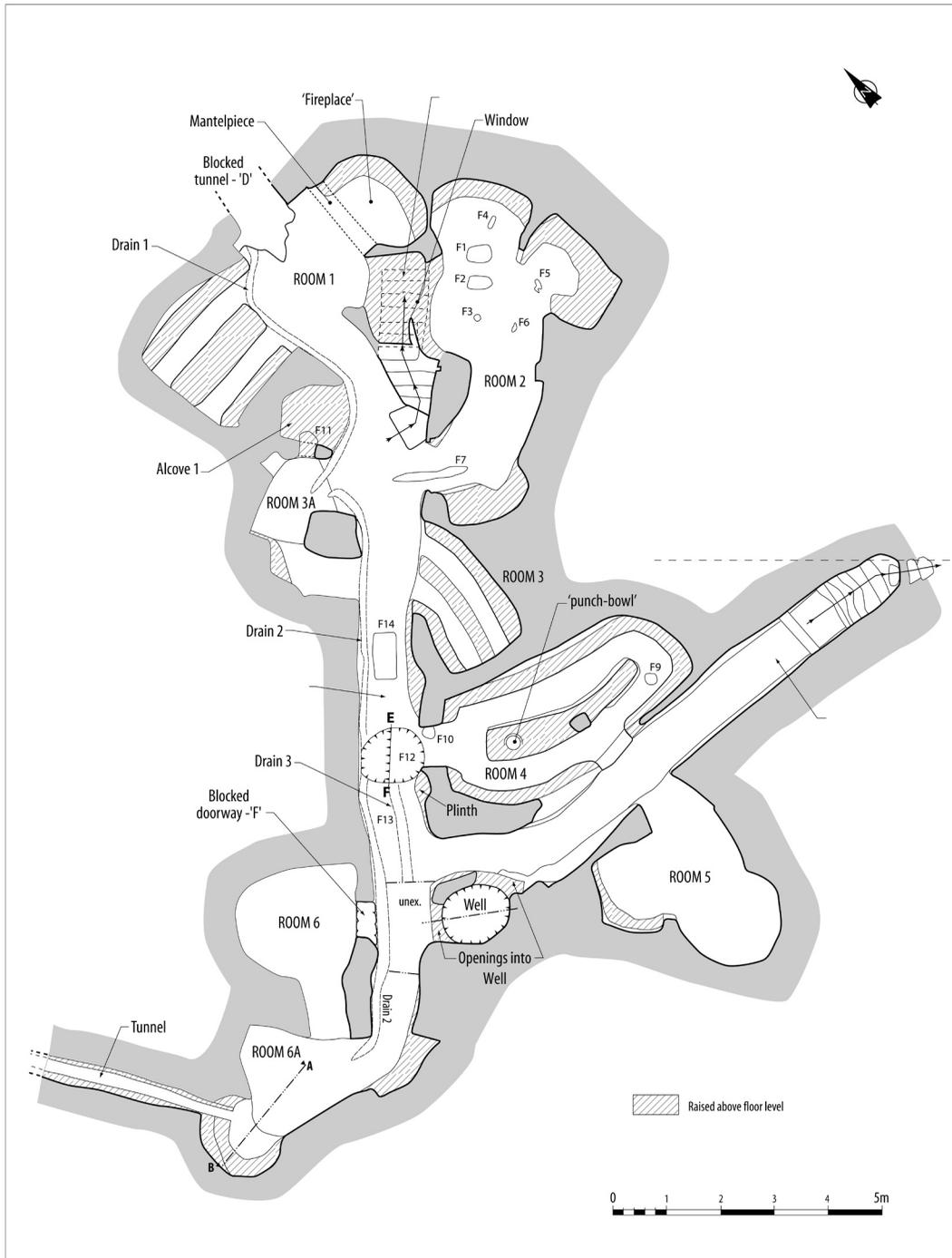


ILLUS 1 Location map

Several of the rooms contain benches and tables, hewn from the bedrock (Rooms 1, 3 and 4). Room 4 is the most strikingly furnished: the table has a carved ‘punch-bowl’ at one end, a bench runs around the wall and the ceiling is supported by a pillar that rises up from the table, midway along. A number of the entrances to the rooms that lead from the main passages were blocked

with rubble and the floor of the Cove was covered with a thick layer of compressed earth.

A detailed survey of the Cove, conducted by The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) in 2001 was used as a base plan upon which to record features identified during the GPR survey and the excavation.



ILLUS 2 Plan of Cove

HISTORICAL RESEARCH

Richard Oram

Gilmerton Cove is an excellent example of a class of site where, in the absence of a strong, well-documented history, a substantial ‘pseudo-history’ based on a combination of fragmentary historical fact, folk tradition and myth has been manufactured in the comparatively recent past. Whilst it is unwise entirely to reject folk memory as a source of information, in the case of the Cove there is a need to exercise particular caution as the traditional narrative incorporates many common motifs, for example secret passages, mysterious burials and arcane rituals, all literary and folk-tale *topoi* that enjoyed renewed currency in the 18th century with the emergence of the ‘Gothic novel’ and the ‘Romantic’ traditions. When stripped of the wilder fantasies of 19th- and 20th-century commentators, a strong core of verifiable fact is discernible at the heart of the narrative.

THE HISTORICAL TRADITION

The earliest specific reference in a published source to the Cove is a little over two centuries old. This description of the Cove occurs in an account of the parish of Liberton, written in 1782 by the Rev Thomas Whyte, minister of Liberton, but only published in 1792 in the first volume of *Archaeologia Scotica*.¹ Whyte’s narrative forms the basis of all subsequent descriptions until Frederick Coles published his ‘Notices of Rock-hewn Caves in the Valley of the Esk and Other Parts of Scotland’ in 1911.² Whyte was minister of Liberton from 1752 until his death in 1789,³ so was not a contemporary of George Paterson, the man identified by him as the digger of the cavern, but the early part of his ministry probably coincided with the lifetime of Paterson’s children. Although doubt has been cast on some of the detail of his account, such as his record of a short inscription relating to the completion of the work in 1724, which he describes as having been carved into one of

the chimney-heads,⁴ there seems to be no good reason for rejecting his record in general. Coles, however, while conceding that the inscription may have been on a separate panel – lost by the time of his visit – set into the rectangular niche over one of the fireplaces, uses the absence of any such text to reject the idea that the Cove was dug out as recently as the early 1720s. In his argument, Coles introduces one of the red herrings that has bedevilled accounts of the Cove throughout the 20th century, that in addition to Paterson’s own short commemoration of his work, the inscription included an eight-line verse relating to him composed by the minor Scots poet Alexander Pennycuik or Pennecuik.⁵ Whyte, however, simply states that ‘Pennycuik the poet, among his works, has left us an inscription on the cave’,⁶ meaning only that he had written such a work, not that it was inscribed on a panel in the Cove. Pennecuik, who was active in the first half of the 18th century and whose works were published posthumously in 1769,⁷ appears to have been just one of many individuals intrigued or inspired by this remarkable enterprise.

Working on the assumption that Whyte provided a basically factual account, what can be extracted from it? His description is largely circumstantial and presents a series of bald assertions that have proven difficult, but not impossible, to verify in part from the surviving historical record. As mentioned above, he identified the excavator of the Cove as one George Paterson, smith in Gilmerton, whom he describes as a feuar and therefore a man of property in the parish. According to him, Paterson completed his excavation work in 1724 ‘after five years’ hard labour’, and states that this achievement is commemorated in an inscription ‘on one of the chimney heads’. He gives a description of the layout, the detail of which makes it clear that it is talking about the complex visible at present, and asserts that Paterson used the place as a workshop and dwelling for himself and his family ‘for a long time’. Paterson’s date of death is given as ‘about the year 1735’ and it

was commented that his family ‘enjoyed it for some time after his decease’. He concludes by commenting that the Cove became something of a tourist attraction in the neighbourhood ‘for many years’ and was ‘visited by all the people of fashion’.⁸

What we have, then, is a 1782 account that preserves poetic references to the Cove published in 1769 but written probably over 20 years earlier, and alluding to a man active in the period down to 1735. There are no pieces of hard chronology in this narrative at all, which makes it very difficult to obtain any kind of firm fix on the dating of the story. All the chronological markers are expressed in that vague ‘around and about’ form that means a considerable but undefined length of time ago. This was a problem recognized by Coles, who claimed to have found no corroboration for the tradition of a subterranean smith at Gilmerton, but it should also be remembered that Whyte was composing his account around 50 years after Paterson’s approximate date of death, by which time his heirs had disposed of the property, and that he was producing a description of the parish of Liberton, not of George Paterson, his life and times. The key is in identifying George Paterson with certainty as the owner of this property. If Paterson’s possession was heritable there could be a record of the descent of the property to him and from him to his children preserved in the *Register of Sasines* for Edinburgh/Midlothian. Unfortunately, the sasines are not indexed fully and, without a firm date for Paterson’s death, very difficult to use. No entry was identified in the course of this reconnaissance. A second possible source of information are the papers of the Wauchopes of Niddrie Marischal,⁹ the principal landowners in the parish, who would perhaps have been feu superior to Paterson as a tenant. Unfortunately, the rentals of the Wauchope properties in Liberton appear to survive only down to 1705¹⁰ and, although there is a detailed inventory of ‘All the Property, Movables, Lands and Rents’ of the barony, dated 1711, only the pages relating to cash

assets and the moveable property in the house of Niddrie Marischal itself appear to survive in the papers on deposit in the National Archives of Scotland.¹¹ There are, however, other records that establish the existence of a man of that name, resident in Gilmerton around the requisite dates and, more significantly, that confirm his possession of the Cove.

GEORGE PATERSON

Basic personal information relating to George Paterson, Whyte’s excavator of the Cove, is distinctly lacking. According to Thomas Whyte’s 1782 account, he was a smith by trade and a ‘feuar or feodary’ of the parish of Liberton, who completed his work in 1724 and who died there in *c* 1735. As a feuar, his property passed to his children, who ‘enjoyed it for some time after his decease’, but who had evidently disposed of it some time before the minister wrote his account.¹² From the Old Parish Records (OPR) for Liberton, it can be seen that the Paterson family was well established there by the second quarter of the 17th century, with various related branches settled in the main communities. The Christian name George is rare in that family, with only two candidates for identification with the Gilmerton blacksmith being recorded in the parish. The elder of these two Georges, resident in Niddrie Marischal in the parish, is recorded with his wife, Janet Gray, having their son, the younger of the Georges, baptized on 3 September 1699.¹³ This couple may be the same as the George Paterson, indweller in Edinburgh, and Janet Gray, daughter of the deceased John Gray, maltman at Torie, who were married in Edinburgh on 27 October 1698.¹⁴ That Edinburgh George Paterson, however, is described in the marriage register as a baker, not as a smith, and it is unlikely that a man in his twenties (as he appears to have been) would have entered into a fresh apprenticeship as a smith following his marriage. It is, of course, possible that an error was made in the composition of the 1698 record. Unfortunately, the Liberton baptismal register

does not give the occupation of the elder George Paterson in 1699. Despite the possible reference to him as a baker in 1698, the age of this individual (he would have been in his mid-40s around the time that Whyte suggests the Cove was dug) makes him the most likely candidate for the excavator of the Cove.

A second George Paterson, who from subsequent evidence can be identified as the son born in 1699, is next recorded in June 1714 as witness to the baptism of James Paterson, son of James Paterson in Stonehouse in Liberton parish.¹⁵ James Paterson, the father, appears to have been either an elder brother of George, born before his parents' wedding in 1698 and subsequently legitimated by their marriage, or a cousin. Certainly, James and George Paterson junior appear to have been close, witnessing the baptisms of each other's children and naming sons after them. This same George junior, described as 'in Gilmerton', together with his wife, Beatrix Low, is recorded on 25 September 1715 registering the baptism of their daughter, Janet, with James Paterson this time as witness.¹⁶ The naming patterns here suggest that this George is the one born in 1699, making him just 16 at the birth of his first child. He and Beatrix had a second child, a son named James, baptized on 26 January 1718, again witnessed by James Paterson.¹⁷ It is possibly this George also who secured possession of a share of a seat in Liberton parish church on 3 June 1720 – his father had been resident in the parish for over 20 years by that date¹⁸ – but it is more likely to mark the older George's establishment of his social presence as a successful tradesman in the community. George Paterson younger makes a final appearance in these records along with James, as witnesses to the baptism of Andrew Paterson, the son of their probable youngest brother, Peter, on 15 January 1725.¹⁹ There is no clear evidence for the date of death of either of the Georges, the *Register of Deaths* for the parish only recording payments for interment under the name Janet Paterson on 16 January and 4 October 1735.²⁰ A Janet Paterson continues to

appear in the Kirk Session minutes as receiving money from the parish poor's fund into the 1740s,²¹ which would suggest that if this was the elder George Paterson's widow, he did not leave any substantial legacy upon which she could support herself nor from which their family could support her. This raises question marks over either the identification or the traditional depiction of Paterson as a feuar.

It is the Kirk Session minutes that provide the firm link between a George Paterson and the Cove.²² On 7 May 1721, the Kirk Session summoned James Sanderson and John Currie, indwellers in Gilmerton, who were accused of having been drinking in the house in Gilmerton of George Paterson, smith, on the previous Sunday.²³ Both men admitted the crime and Paterson was summoned to answer. When 'interrogat why for he entertained people with drink ... upon the Sabbath day' who came to see 'his Caves', he answered that:

he had put a padlock upon his door and brought the key always with him to the Kirk and being told that his wife opened a back door to let them in, he answered that care should be taken for the future that none may enter that way. The Session being informed that not only from Edinburgh but from other places also a great many people haunted his house for seeing his Caves on the Sabbath days he was assured that if any were caught in his house on the Sabbath day drinking the Session would proceed not only for Church censures against him and his wife, but would take care to have the laws against profanation of the Lord's day duely execute and therefore he would take care to prevent any abuse of this kind for the future, the which he promised faithfully to do.²⁴

He evidently maintained his promise, for there is no further record of action against him in the minutes, nor is he again mentioned in them in any context. The significance of this case is not that he was being charged with the illegal provision of alcohol, but that he was providing it on the Sabbath, a heinous offence in what was a strongly Sabbatarian society. The implication is that he was known otherwise as a legal

provider of liquor, which considerably discredits the traditional view of the Cove as an illegal drinking den.

As with the other parish records, the Kirk Session minutes provide us with a frustratingly vague record. Here, we have confirmation of the existence in 1721 of both a George Paterson, smith in Gilmerton, and of the Cove (or *Caves* as the minutes refer to the excavation). The minutes also confirm that he was married, and that he supplied alcohol to visitors to the Cove, a claim made in many later sources. In 1721, however, it seems that Paterson was not living in the Cove but in his normal house, although work on the underground chambers was sufficiently far advanced for the two entrances to be already in existence. It is clear, moreover, that by that date the Cove was already a well-known attraction in the area, implying that it was substantially complete and that work on it had been carried on over a period of sufficient duration for its fame to spread widely. Unfortunately, the minutes do not give the name of this George's wife, which would have permitted a conclusive identification of which of the George Patersons was owner of the Cove. The balance of judgement, however, suggests that it is the father rather than the son who was the creator of this remarkable monument.

THE COVE IN LITERATURE

Going through the printed sources subsequent to Whyte, it is evident that all are simply re-workings of his 1782 account. The *Old Statistical Account* entry, composed in 1786 and published in 1791, is simply a summary of Whyte's original narrative stripped of all but basic statistical detail.²⁵ It does not include Whyte's description of the Cove. The *New Statistical Account* of 1845 does contain an account of the excavations, but this is simply an abbreviated version of the 1782 original.²⁶ Subsequent descriptions give a variety of permutations based on the Paterson story, but include a series of variants that introduce new

themes based on the fashions of the times or the personal psychoses of the writers. One of the fullest accounts is provided by J Grant in 1883.²⁷ It contains an abridged version of Whyte's narrative, elaborated with the detail that Paterson had dug the Cove 'in the little garden at the end of his house'. Grant then expands greatly, reporting that 'holiday parties came from the city to see him in his singular house, and even judges of the courts imbibed their liquor in his stone parlour'. He adds that 'the ground was held in feu, and the yearly duty and public burdens were forgiven him on account of the extraordinary labour he had incurred in making himself a home'. He does not, however, cite a source for this statement. The 1721 Kirk Session minutes and Whyte's 1782 account had already mentioned the Cove's powers of attraction for the curious, and this quite clearly was still the case a century later. In 1893, Thomas Speedy, in a popular guide to Craigmillar and its surrounding districts, commented of Gilmerton that 'on entering the village, going towards Dalkeith, the first thing that meets the eye is the announcement regarding the "Gilmerton Subterranean Cave"'.²⁸ Its popularity as a tourist destination was still high and, indeed, the Cove continued to attract visitors until the late 1960s after which it closed to regular public access.²⁹

A range of uses for the Cove began to be propounded in the later 19th century, including everything from illegal drinking den, pseudo-ritualistic setting for the deflowering of the virgins of Midlothian, Masonic meeting-place, to storehouse.³⁰ Despite the strong evidence for it being an 18th-century product, there was also a recurrent suggestion that it was a hiding place used by Covenanters during the periods of persecution in the 17th century. There is a strong local tradition of the use of caves by the Covenanters in the 1640s, the best-known example in the vicinity being the 'Cave of Thorns' in the cliffs of the gorge of the North Esk at Hawthornden near Roslin, which is on record by the 1640s as 'a quite large tavern, divided into three chambers' and it is clear from

this report that its use as a drinking-house was not a recent development.³¹ The confirmation of the connection of the Gilmerton example with George Paterson, however, seems to relegate that tradition firmly to the realms of myth, but it is possible that Paterson was simply re-using a much older, already established venue. The fact that the ‘Cave of Thorns’ appeared in a published description of Midlothian, however, indicates that it was far from a secret hideaway and refuge for fugitives from the royal enforcers of religious conformity, but a well-known and popular drinking-howff.

Another recurring theme is that the Cove was linked by the now blocked passage at the western end of the complex (illus 2) to Craigmillar Castle,³² located over two miles away to the north-east. This is simply a re-working of traditional tales of underground passages, common both in folk tradition and linked with the Otherworld and in late 18th- and 19th-century popular literature. All these various interpretations offer no hazard of a guess at the original date of its construction.

Coles represented the first serious attempt at ‘scientific’ enquiry into the origins of the site. Its greatest value is in the measured plan and sections that he produced, but he also made a series of observations that attempted to question the whole Paterson tradition. Coles failed to verify any point in the 18th-century narrative for the Cove’s origins. In particular, he rubbished the tradition of an inscription recording Paterson’s work being located in the complex. He did acknowledge the existence of a rectangular recess over the fireplace in the western room (illus 2) in which an inscribed panel could have been set, but dismissed this possibility by stating that there was no sign of any means of fixing such a panel into the space. For Coles, the physical arrangements of the passages and rooms presented the strongest evidence against its having functioned as a home for a couple with several children and smiddy with forge. Quite simply, there was in his view insufficient room for any serious iron-working

to have taken place – no room to swing a cat, let alone a smith’s hammer. For Coles, the smith-Paterson story was an invention based on the superficial similarity of some of the features to a forge. He also dismissed the possibility of a single man managing to excavate the volume of rock represented by the passages and chambers in only a five-year period. Of course, if we can identify James Paterson, George younger, John and Peter as children of the Cove’s excavator, then possibly only the youngest son, who married *c* 1724, may still have been living with his parents in the period 1719–24. More to the point, as the Kirk Session records make clear, a George Paterson had retained possession and occupancy of the house in whose garden the Cove was dug. It is questionable to what extent the Patersons ever ‘lived’ in the subterranean portion of George’s property.

In his survey of the cove, Coles drew attention to the ‘punch-bowl’ in the table in the largest chamber (Room 4, illus 2) and to the various ‘pipes’ cut into the walls and traceable for considerable depths. These had been suggested in the past as tubes through which liquor could be conveyed secretly to the subterranean chambers ‘in which ... carousals, or it may be secret politico-masonic meetings ... were wont to be held’.³³ For Coles, they were nothing more than ventilation pipes.

It was Coles’ opinion that the most telling evidence against the Cove being the work of George Paterson in the early 18th century was the style of its excavation. To his mind, the use of pointed tools rather than chisels indicated greater – but unspecific – antiquity than the 1700s. On this reasoning, Paterson was simply re-using an existing structure. This is an entirely unsupported and unsupportable view, but it has marked the beginning of something of an open season on theories for the early origins of the Cove.

All told, the fragmentary record for the Cove presents a deeply unsatisfactory picture. Despite Coles’ strongly expressed views, there is nothing in the evidence available currently

that allows us with any confidence to assign a date earlier than the 18th century to it and, if we accept the Paterson story at face value (and the parish record evidence indicates that we can), nothing that takes the narrative back before *c* 1715, when a ‘George Paterson in Gilmerton’ is first recorded. Coles’ argument, however, falls down on more than simply the evidence of tooling in the Cove, for the parish records of Liberton do establish that a family of Patersons with two adult males with the Christian name George were resident there within the requisite chronological frame and that one of them possessed the Cove. There is no exactly contemporary material that identifies either man as the actual excavator of the Cove as opposed to its owner, but there was an already well-established local tradition of such a role in place by the period *c* 1750–80, and there is no good reason to doubt its authenticity. While we may remain uncertain about the Cove’s exact origin and date, what we can be certain about is some of the things that it was not.

A recurring suggestion is that it was in some way connected to the activities of one of the various secret clubs that emerged in 18th-century Scotland. The model for this has been taken as the Knights of St Francis, better known as the Hellfire Club, founded in *c* 1755 by Sir Francis Dashwood and whose meetings were held on his Buckinghamshire estate of West Wycombe Park. Basically a private social and political club, Dashwood’s group soon acquired a reputation for black magic, mock-religious ceremonies and deviant sexual activities. David Stevenson has identified similar clubs in 17th- and 18th-century Scotland, but none who used purpose-built settings such as Gilmerton Cove. Most, indeed, met in private houses or in private rooms in taverns in the main burghs.³⁴ More to the point, the Edinburgh Hellfire Club, ‘a vile association of profane young men’,³⁵ was not set up until the 1760s, around 40 years after the excavation of the Cove, and, like most drinking clubs of that date, it met in taverns, inns, or in the more notorious ‘oyster cellars’ of the capital.³⁶

At West Wycombe Park, Dashwood had a complex of caves and passages cut into the hillside in which he conducted many of his orgies and rituals. These excavations were well known in the late 18th and 19th centuries and it is likely that they were the inspiration for some of more lurid stories told about the Gilmerton ones. Dashwood’s caverns are, however, wholly different in character and on an altogether more substantial scale. The circulation, too, of novels such as *The Monk* and the *Castle of Otranto*, where secret passages through which the villainous main character travelled to indulge his lusts on his victims, or where the acts themselves were committed, helped to implant an image of salacious romance in the minds of the ‘people of fashion’ of the later 18th century. As memory of the original connection with George Paterson was forgotten, more colourful tales replaced it.

An alternative suggestion that the Cove formed part of a grotto should also be discounted, although the now vanished house of Gilmerton Park appears to have had a significant collection of garden features in its grounds, including groves, avenues, belvederes and gazebos. The grotto tradition came with the development of the designed landscape around houses from the earlier 1700s onwards, but burst to prominence in the full flood of classicism in the later 18th century as the results of the fashion for the ‘Grand Tour’ of Europe and the wonders of Classical Italy made their impact felt. Grottos, however, were landscape features and, generally, had elaborate entries that were designed to be seen and to be seen from. The Gilmerton example does not fit at all into that category. Similarly, grottos generally have large chambers behind an elaborate frontage and are entered horizontally through an opening cut – or built – in to a rock-face or slope. Again, Gilmerton does not fit these terms. Its location, too, in the heart of the old village at Gilmerton rather than in what would have been the grounds of the house, requires that any notion that it was a piece of glorified 18th-century garden furniture be rejected.

Finally, there is the question of George Paterson's burial. Local tradition claimed that he was buried in the Cove, the entrance to his tomb lying behind one of the walled up sections of passage.³⁷ The tradition appears to have its inspiration in Alexander Pennecuik's verse, which described the Cove as 'my house when living and my grave when dead'.³⁸ This must, however, be dismissed as a poetic flight of fancy. In the early 18th century, the Church still exercised very strict control over where burials could take place and would never have permitted such an irregular burial to take place. Had there been an attempt to bury Paterson in the Cove, there would most certainly have been action taken by the Kirk Session to prevent such a possibility and to take measures against his family. No such record exists. It is a colourful story, but nothing more.

GROUND-PENETRATING RADAR SURVEY

Bruce Hobbs and Alan Hobbs

A Ground-Penetrating Radar (GPR) survey was carried out in order to investigate the presence of features cut into the rock beneath the beaten earth floor within the Cove. Six profiles were surveyed: two along the Main Passage, two along the Rear Passage and two within Room 2. The profiles surveyed within the Main Passage detected an anomaly, *c.* 0.5m wide, at the junction of the Main Passage with Room 4. This was later revealed by excavation to be a sump (F12; see below and *illus.* 2). The remaining profiles did not reveal any subsurface anomalies. The absence of features from these survey areas was later confirmed by excavation.

EXCAVATION

Melanie Johnson

All excavation and on-site recording was carried out according to standard CFA procedures, principally by drawing, photography and completion of standard CFA record forms. Using the RCAHMS survey as

a base map, the positions of features were recorded through measurement with tapes and by industry-standard electronic surveying equipment. All deposits were removed by hand. Particular attention was paid to removing the thin layers of hard-packed sediment which had built up over all the floors and surfaces within the Cove and the removal of blocking within alcoves and entrances. All of the features that had been cut into the Cove floor were concealed beneath the hard-packed earth floor.

Each room within the Cove was assigned a unique identifier (Rooms 1 to 6A; *illus.* 2); other areas are referred to by descriptive terms: the Main Passage, the Rear Passage, the Well and the Tunnel. Features cut into the rock were assigned individual feature numbers, prefixed by the letter F.

ROOM 1

This room lies on the western side of the Drum Street entrance to the Cove. It has three alcoves around a central open area. A large proportion of the room was filled with rubble and soil, which was removed. Finds within the fill included metal tools and bucket fragments, ceramics and glass.

The western alcove contains a rock-hewn table with a bench along each side. The tabletop has a small, deep circular hole (0.05m diameter) carved into it.

The north-eastern alcove was completely filled with soil and rubble which also partially filled the central area of the room. This alcove was referred to in previous investigations as the fireplace (Whyte 1792; Coles 1911). It contained a stone-carved bench around two sides and was unlikely to have ever functioned as a fireplace as evidenced by the lack of scorching and blackening of the stone and the absence of a chimney or grate. On the exterior is a 'mantelpiece' with a rectangular recess above; it has been suggested that the recess held an inscription.

The south-eastern alcove has a window through to Room 2 which lies beneath the staircase to Drum Street, and a step separating it from the main area of the room but is otherwise featureless.

At the northern side of the room lies an entrance blocked with stone and soil (Blocked tunnel 'D'; *illus.* 2). The entrance leads to a passage that runs beneath Drum Street. This passage was not explored for health and safety reasons.

A drain (Drain 1) is cut into the floor of Room 1. The drain runs from Room 3a, along the western side of the Main Passage and into Room 1.

ROOM 2

This room lies on the eastern side of the Drum Street entrance to the Cove. It is an elongated room with two alcoves at its eastern end. A recessed bench lies to the south side of the entrance to the room.

The floor was covered with a thin layer of trampled earth. A number of features were revealed beneath the trampled earth floor, cut into the rock floor of this room (F1–F7). Six (F1–F6) are small rock-cut pits and slots, clustered at the eastern end of the room, outside or slightly within the alcoves and of unknown function. The seventh (F7) is a short length of gully leading out through the entrance to the room and ending within the Main Passage, and is likely to have formed an element of the drainage system found throughout the Cove.



ILLUS 3 Room 4

ROOM 3

This small room lies just to the south of Room 2, on the same side of the Main Passage. It contains a rock-hewn table with a bench along each side, and is slightly curved. The surfaces were covered in a thin layer of soil and the table was found to have graffiti on its surface (see below).

ROOM 3A

This room lies opposite Room 3 and forms a C-shaped space opening out into the Main Passage at each end, with a rock pillar at its centre. The floor within the southern portion of the room lies at the same level as that within the Main Passage, while the northern portion forms a roughly square pit with a flat base. The ends of Drains 1 and 2 both enter the deeper northern portion of the room, suggesting that this area acted as a sump.

Between Room 3A and Room 1 lies Alcove 1. The base of the alcove lies at a height of about 1.2m above the floor of the Main Passage and has a flat base. Cut into this base is a small circular feature (F11) and an opening in the wall of the alcove at the same level through to Room 3A. Although this alcove has been traditionally interpreted as the blacksmith's forge, it is suggested that this interpretation is incorrect (see Oram above); its function is unknown.

ROOM 4

This long room has two entrances and lies to the north-east of the junction between the Main Passage and the Rear Passage. It contains a long, curved rock-hewn table which is surrounded by benches (illus 3). There is much graffiti cut into the top of this table (see below). A cylindrical, flat-bottomed feature is cut into the western end of the table, traditionally referred to as the 'punch-bowl'. A pillar, hewn

from the bedrock, supports the ceiling of the Cove at the eastern end of the table.

The surfaces in this room were covered with a thin layer of trampled material, which concealed two rock-cut features in the floor (F9 and F10). F9, which lies at the eastern end of the room to the south of the table, is circular with a rounded base. F10, which lies beside the northern jamb of the entrance to the Main Passage, is irregular in plan and is partially cut into the side of the jamb. Perhaps this slot held a post for a door.

ROOM 5

A small step up leads into the Rear Passage and then southwards into Room 5. The entrance to this room lies directly opposite the southern entrance to Room 4. Room 5 has two lobes, the more northerly of which was filled with drystone rubble blocking. The blocking was removed to clarify the plan of the room and to determine whether anything was concealed behind it. A low bench was revealed in the blocked area. No other features are present.

ROOM 6

This room has two entrances, one of which, an opening from the Main Passage, had been blocked with stonework (Blocked Doorway 'F'; first recorded by Coles 1911). The stonework is mortared on the inside of the room and was evidently designed to have a smooth face on this side and a rough, unfinished face in the Main Passage. There is a gap in this blocking close to the ceiling. The blocking was left in place, as

it seemed to be serving an important role, supporting the walls on either side. The room is plain with no features present. Its entrance was filled with soil and rubble, and several lengths of wire were present, perhaps from a previous lighting system. There is a step down into Room 6A.

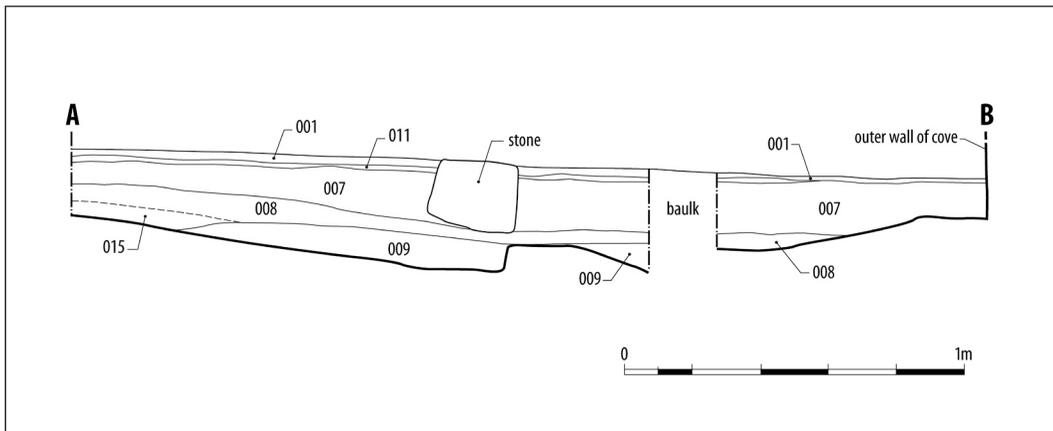
ROOM 6A

This room is essentially the end of the Main Passage as it curves slightly to the west at the rear of the Cove and becomes wider. A recessed bench is present on the southern side of the room.

At the rear of this room is a circular alcove with a rock-cut bench around its sides which appears to be unfinished. The floor of the room slopes towards this alcove, which is separated by a step down from the rest of the room. The floor near the entrance to Room 6 also appears to be unfinished, as it is uneven.

Drain 2, which runs the length of the Main Passage, runs from this room, through the sump (F12) and terminates just inside Room 3A.

This room was filled with modern debris, which comprised sections of cemented bricks, stones and soil. Beneath the debris a sequence of deposits *c* 0.4m thick overlay the stone floor (illus 4). This sequence comprised a thin layer of trampled earth (context 001) over a thin layer of crushed pink shale (context 011), which in turn lay over a layer of grey clay (context 007), beneath which lay a layer of crushed pink sandstone (context 008, merging into context 015). Beneath this lay another layer of grey clay (context 009) on top of the stone floor. It is possible that the



ILLUS 4 Section through deposits in Room 6A



ILLUS 5 View of the Tunnel

grey clay layers resulted from episodes of flooding, and that the sandstone and shale layers were put down to provide new floor surfaces. Equally, the entire sequence of deposits could have been laid as one event to provide a make-up layer to raise the surface of the floor. The trample layer in this room (context 001) is the same as the trample layer found elsewhere within the Cove.

At the north-western side of the alcove in Room 6A, a small opening is present. Excavation revealed that this leads to a small tunnel leading to the north-

west, which was partially filled with rubble and soil. The mouth of the Tunnel and a 3m length were cleared of rubble to reveal a rock-cut drain set into its floor (illus 5). This drain has a single layer of flat stones laid over the top of it. The Tunnel is 0.7m wide and 1m high. It was described by Coles in 1911, who claimed that it could be followed for a distance of 18 feet (approximately 6m), and from his account it would appear that at that time Room 6A was free of rubble and soil infill. The full length of the tunnel could not be explored; the structural engineer indicated that its rear was unsafe, as a roof-fall appeared to have blocked the end of it.

THE WELL

Drystone walling filled two openings on the southern side of the junction of the Main Passage and the Rear Passage. Their sills lay at a height of about 0.8m above the floor of the passages. Removal of this blocking revealed a circular chamber which was filled to the roof with soil containing debris including stoneware ginger beer bottles, glass, metal and stone and brick rubble. In the roof is a skylight, which had a corbelled cap.

The fill was half-sectioned and removed, to reveal a circular feature, *c* 1.3m in diameter at the top and *c* 1m in diameter at its base, which is *c* 2.2m below the sill of the opening on the north-east side (illus 6). This feature has been interpreted as a well. The well was filled to the roof with an homogeneous upper fill (context 012) of rubble and dark grey clay with frequent modern finds, a middle fill (context 013) of pink degraded sandstone mixed with grey clay and stones; and a lower fill (context 014) of grey gritty soil with fragments of wood and stones. The datable glass and ceramic finds from the well are discussed below (Haggarty and Murdoch *infra*). The ceramic

evidence provides a *terminus post quem* for the basal deposits within the well of c 1820. The uppermost fills of the well contained fragments of stoneware ginger beer bottles, a type which went out of use in the 1920s. Taken as a whole, the finds evidence suggests that the well was filled up, probably in a single event, at sometime in the mid- to late 19th century. It is likely that the well was filled because it was beginning to collapse, due to the deterioration of the surrounding stone; certainly a complex shoring operation was required to stabilize the well following the removal of the blocking during the excavation. Concrete reinforcement was required before the shoring could be removed.

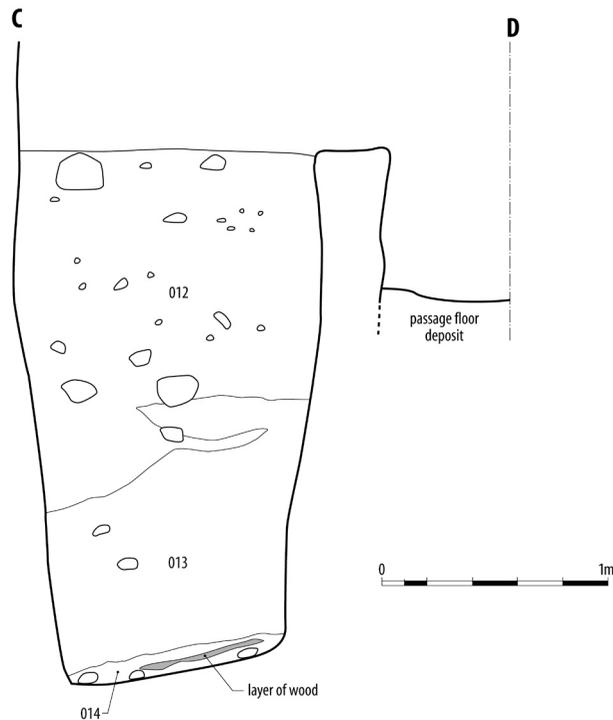
The blocking concealing the well is neither mentioned nor illustrated by Coles (1911).

THE MAIN PASSAGE

Within the Main Passage, a large rock-cut pit was revealed lying outside the entrance to Room 4 (F12; illus 7). This pit, or sump, measures 1.2–1.5m across and 0.7m deep maximum and was filled with layers of clean sand and crushed sandstone (contexts 101–2 and 104–6).

Leading into the sump are two drains: Drain 2, which runs the length of the Main Passage, terminating in Room 6A and Room 3A; and Drain 3, which runs along the centre of the Main Passage beyond the sump. The stepped profile of Drain 3 suggests that it was once covered. It was concealed beneath floor trample.

The Reverend Donald Skinner conducted some limited clearing-up operations in the 1970s, and noted the presence of a drain running along the right-hand edge of the Main Passage (Drain 1 or 2; illus 2). He also noted the presence of a 'two foot square cavity' set within the Main Passage opposite the entrance to the room containing the punch bowl (Room 4). This feature is likely to be F12, the sump. From his account it appears that the drain and the sump may have been at least partially excavated at this time, and the re-cut (context 107), visible in the top of F12, is likely to be the 'cavity' he noted. It also appears from his account that the sump was covered by 'topsoil', which is likely to be floor trample, and that he covered it over again for safety.

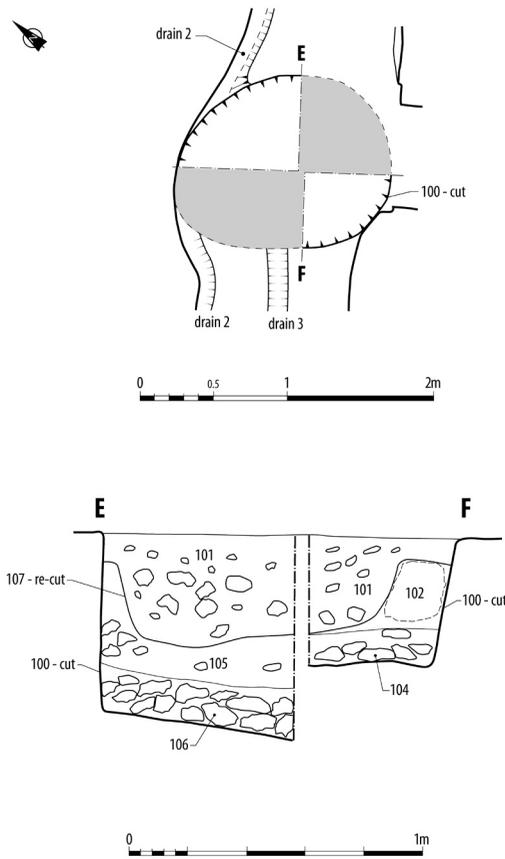


ILLUS 6 Section through the Well

A shallow rectangular feature (F14; illus 2), measuring 0.85m by 0.45m, is cut into the floor of the Main Passage between Room 3 and the sump.

THE REAR PASSAGE

The floor of this passage was covered in a thin layer of hard-packed trample, which thickened between the entrances to Rooms 4 and 5 and towards the Main Passage. The end of the passage was blocked by a wall, reaching to the ceiling, and constructed of mortared angular sandstone blocks. It is behind this blocking that Paterson was reputed to have been buried (see Oram above). Upon removal of the blocking, it was found that the passage leads to another entrance to the Cove (illus 8). A set of steps, constructed of large stones packed into place with soil, leads into a garden behind the cottage. Further excavation revealed that rock-cut steps are present beneath the soil-packed stone steps. Cut into the back of the fourth step from the top is a triangular-shaped cut, which points to the south. It is unclear whether this is a man-made carving or a characteristic of the decaying of the rock.



ILLUS 7 Plan and Section through F12

The original rock-cut steps are badly degraded at the top and the base of the flight. This has evidently led to several steps being re-cut, resulting in tall steps with very narrow treads. The uppermost steps were damaged due to the shattering of the bedrock along its bedding planes. Thus, the secondary flight of steps seems to have been a necessary refurbishment in order to keep this entrance in use.

Directly beneath the blocking wall was a partially completed rock-cut step. This was perhaps an unfinished attempt to lower the floor level within the passage.

OTHER FEATURES

Throughout the Cove there are numerous small holes drilled into the rock. These have been variously interpreted as ventilation holes and channels for

pipes. A number of them appear to relate to door fittings due to their locations. The doorways to some of the rooms appear to have carved jambs. A niche is located within the Main Passage on the southern side of the entrance to Room 4, adjacent to the south-east side of F12. Its size and shape suggest a plinth for a statue or a small cupboard.

GRAFFITI

Graffiti were recorded on some of the surfaces within three of the rooms. Some of it could not be made out but it seems primarily to consist of initials or individual letters and random scratchings.

The bench surface in the south-west of Room 2 has simply the letters ‘SRJH’ carved into it. A slight space between the two pairs of letters suggests they could be two pairs of initials.

The bench in Room 3 has extensive graffiti. The initials ‘PB’, ‘JL’, ‘AB’, ‘DI’ and possibly ‘TI’ and ‘VI’ can be made out, while individual letters (‘G’ and ‘M’) can also be discerned. A possible Masonic square and compass symbol is present (illus 9). Masonic square and compass symbols often have the letter G within them, to represent God, perhaps lending some deeper meaning to the solitary letter ‘G’ recorded. A cluster of three small circular depressions is also present.

The graffiti in Room 4 are clustered at the west end of the table’s surface, around the ‘punch bowl’. A possible Masonic square and compass symbol is again present (illus 10). The initials ‘FE’, ‘BR’ and ‘PR’ are present, along with the letters ‘T’, ‘M’ or ‘W’, and a further ‘R’. A series of numbers has been interpreted as the year 1889. A series of marks could possibly form the figure of a cat, while a further enigmatic mark adjacent to the square and compass defies interpretation (illus 10).

THE COTTAGE ABOVE THE COVE

Mike Cressey

The interior of the cottage above the Cove was recorded by a rapid photographic survey and the production of a measured sketch plan prior to its conversion to the main room of the museum. The full survey is available in the site archive. The cottage is of 19th-century date and the interior was of late 19th- or early 20th-century date. The rear wall of the cottage was removed in January 2003 by the building contractors as part of the construction



ILLUS 8 View of the secondary steps blocking the rear entrance

works associated with the museum. The uppermost steps of the flight of stairs from the Rear Passage were present beneath this wall. At the time of the survey, the steps led into a garden behind the cottage: now they form the main access from the museum into the Cove.

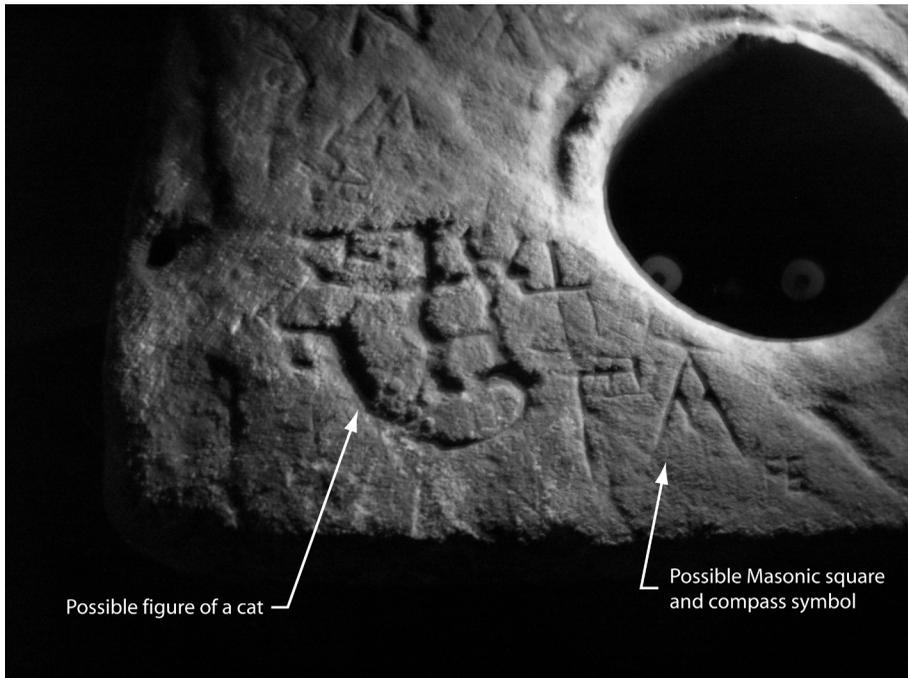
FINDS

A large number of finds were recovered from various deposits within the Cove, in particular the Well, the

blocking in Room 6A and the Room 1 fireplace. These comprise metal objects such as nails, tools and bucket fittings, ceramics of various types, clay pipes, glass including bottles, jars and light bulbs, plastic objects, stoneware bottles and marble bottle-stoppers, coal, leather and animal bone. Full catalogues of the finds form part of the site archive. The earliest material was 17th-century in date, extending into the 20th century. The disparity between the ceramic and glass dates from some contexts indicates the mixed nature of the assemblage (for example, Room 6A rubble,



ILLUS 9 Detail of graffiti in Room 3



ILLUS 10 Detail of graffiti in Room 4

and F14; 18th-, 19th- and 20th-century finds), while others show good concordance (for example Room 1 fireplace; early-mid 19th century).

CERAMICS

George Haggarty

The majority of the ceramics date to the 19th century and therefore relate to secondary activity within the Cove. There are several sherds which date to the 17th or 18th centuries and which could be residual from the Cove's earliest use, or could represent re-worked material incorporated into the deposits.

This earlier material comprised a fragment of blue and white Chinese porcelain saucer, dated to *c* 1770 and found within the rubble of Room 6A, while the fill of the tunnel contained sherds from a late 18th- or early 19th-century black glazed crock and a sherd of Scottish Post-Medieval Reduced Ware. A further sherd of Scottish Post-Medieval Reduced Ware, of 17th-century date, came from F14. A sherd of Scottish Post-Medieval Oxidized Ware came from the fill of the sump (F12), and is of 17th- or early 18th-century date.

The fill of the well contained some of the earliest ceramics. The upper blocking of the well (context 012, *illus* 6) contained ceramics dating to the first half of the 19th century and later. At 1–1.5m depth (context 012/013, *illus* 6), some of the ceramics were dated to the 17th or early 18th centuries, with a smaller component of sherds from the early 19th century. The bottom of the well (context 014, *illus* 6) produced ceramics of *c* 1820–40.

Most of the vessels comprise kitchen redwares, crocks, teapots, mugs, jugs, cups, saucers and plates. There are also marmalade jars, tiles, pantiles, flowerpots and stoneware ginger beer bottles.

GLASS

Robin Murdoch

The great majority of the glass finds belong to the late 19th or 20th centuries and are of no particular rarity. The number of shards of wine bottle is not great, considering that part of the function of the site is believed to have been for the purveying and consumption of alcohol, and there are no shards of wine glass present.

Some contexts suggest coherent assemblages. For instance, the Room 1 fireplace, with the exception of two small, probably later, clear white shards, contains

only early to mid 19th-century material. Similarly, the Well at 1–1.5m deep, contains mid 19th-century material at the latest.

ANIMAL BONE

David Henderson

Seventy-two faunal bone fragments were recovered from the Cove. Nine species of animal were recorded, including cow, sheep, equid, pig, cat, chicken, bird, cod and haddock. The equids include large horse bones and two bones from a much smaller animal that may be donkey or a small pony. The sole bird fragment is from a thrush-sized bird. Cattle bones and cat bones were the most common (14 fragments each), although eight of the cat bones, recovered from the alcove known as 'the fireplace' in Room 1, are almost certainly part of a single individual. Ten fragments of chicken bone from Room 1 are also almost certainly from one individual. Two pig bones, one from the upper fills of the well and one from the blocking in Room 5, were from a newborn, suckling pig. The fish bones were from the head; no vertebrae were recovered.

Most of the cattle and sheep bones displayed some marks of the butchery process, with many having been sawn, typical of a modern assemblage. The body parts present included mandibles, vertebrae and limb bones. It seems likely that the bones derived largely from kitchen waste.

The bones probably accumulated haphazardly during the various episodes of blocking and filling of the various rooms and tunnels within the Cove. Several bones showed marks of rodent gnawing, which may well have occurred once the material had been deposited. The unidentified bird had been chewed (and possibly brought inside by) a cat; a similar scenario may be imagined for the fish heads, and perhaps for the chicken carcass. The cat bones probably represent animals that died in the Cove.

CONCLUSIONS

Historical research has succeeded in confirming the central elements in the traditional narrative relating to the Cove. The earliest dated reference to the site occurs in 1721, within the traditional bracketed dates of 1719–24 for the Cove's excavation. Its possessor at that time was one

George Paterson, smith in Gilmerton. A possible identity for the cave-dwelling smith has been found in George Paterson, possibly a former baker and indweller in Edinburgh, who moved to Niddrie Marischal in Liberton parish with his Liberton-born wife, Janet Gray, in 1699, or their son, also George, who was born at Niddrie Marischal in 1699 and who is recorded as resident in Gilmerton by 1715. It is not known whether the elder George was ever resident in Gilmerton and the trade of the younger George is never stated. George Paterson and Janet Gray's second son, John, who may be the individual married in 1722, was a smith by trade, which may indicate a family involvement in that craft.

It is clear that from 1721 the Cove was already a visitor attraction and that it was a venue for the consumption of alcohol. There is no conclusive evidence that it ever functioned as a residence for Paterson and his family, who is described in 1721 as having a house on the surface. The 1721 Kirk Session record appears to have been the origin of later stories of its function as an illegal drinking-den. As a well-known feature of the Lothian social landscape, however, it is unlikely ever to have been involved in the illegal provision of liquor, and the censuring of George in 1721 arises from the sale of liquor on the Sabbath, not the sale of liquor *per se*. Likewise, it was too well known to have functioned as a secret clubhouse where orgies, rituals or Masonic-style activities could have occurred. That Paterson was the original excavator of the Cove is neither confirmed nor denied by any surviving record, but the balance of evidence points towards its having been his work. The excavation has demonstrated that Paterson was not buried in the Cove.

The excavations have demonstrated that many of the rock-cut features within the Cove, including graffiti, had been obscured by deposits of soil on the floors and surfaces. These deposits probably represent soil trampled into the Cove by visitors and sediment brought in by water filtration through the Cove. The shape of a number of the rooms was clarified following

the removal of rubble and soil blocking, and the position and extent of rock-cut features has also been clarified. The tunnel off Room 6A, not previously recorded by the RCAHMS survey, was discovered and excavated as far as safety would allow, and a well was identified, concealed behind rubble blocking.

The holes in the Cove's roof were probably used during the construction of the Cove, to allow material to be hauled out, and while covered now by the foundations of the buildings above, could have been blocked with stonework, wooden planks or trapdoors during the Cove's use. The Cove was excavated with picks and the walls are covered in long, sweeping arcs of pick marks which, along with the colours of the sandstone, combine to give an unusual texture in raking light. The form of the Cove is very organic and there are no squared off corners anywhere.

The Cove's rooms include three which are able to seat groups of people around tables. Other rooms provide seating around the edges of the room, and two of the rooms are featureless. It is possible that Rooms 5 and 6 were simply storage rooms, given their lack of rock-cut furniture, although they could have contained wooden furnishings. The presence of jambs and slots in the door frames suggests that many of the rooms could have been closed off from the rest of the Cove with wooden doors, enabling a degree of privacy, perhaps to allow drinking rituals, secret meetings or prostitution.

A complex system of drainage was in place. It is unlikely that the sump in the centre of the Main Passage was left open, given the poor light in the Cove, and could have had a wooden lid or metal grille fitted. Likewise with some of the gullies, particularly Drain 3, whose stepped profile suggests a covering could have been fitted. This would make sense given that this drain runs down the centre of the passage while the other two drains lie adjacent to the walls of the Cove and are less likely to be a hazard. Although the Cove was largely dry during the excavations, it is likely that rain and

condensation could bring excess water into the Cove which would need to be removed. If the Cove functioned as a drinking den, then these features may also have acted as an open sewer. The well, although not deep enough to be itself a source of fresh water from ground water, could have acted as a cistern for holding water, to be used in brewing, drinking, washing or sluicing within the Cove.

It is not known what the entrances to the Cove would have looked like, but it is unlikely that they would have been hidden, particularly given the location of one entrance on Drum Street. The Cove's layout had certainly been altered over the years, as evidenced by the number of blockings put in place: the well was infilled and its access points walled up, the rear entrance's steps were refurbished and then the entire entrance was blocked off from the inside, a second doorway into Room 6 was blocked, and the 'fireplace' in Room 1 was infilled. An entranceway in Room 1, which leads beneath Drum Street, and the tunnel remain blocked to this day for engineering reasons, indicating that the Cove may yet have further secrets to give up.

The finds and animal bone assemblages contained little material which could be directly associated with the original use of the Cove, much of it being 20th-century rubbish dumped in through the openings in the roof. However, there is pottery and glass dating to the 19th century, which includes items such as jugs, mugs, bowls and plates, and a small assemblage of 18th-century material, although none could be said to be *in situ*, deriving mainly from rubble infills and dumps of material. Given the hard surfaces within the Cove and the ease with which it could be swept out while in use, it is difficult to envisage material accumulating and remaining *in situ*.

The most likely interpretation of the Cove as a drinking establishment is based upon the historical research and the physical layout of the Cove. The presence of two possible Masonic square and compass symbols carved into the table surfaces may suggest a more cultish use,

but as with all of the graffiti it is impossible to establish the date at which it was carved, and these symbols could have been added more recently by curious investigators who thought to provide a further strange twist to the Cove's story.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CFA wishes to thank John Lawson (CECAS) for providing project management and curatorial assistance throughout. The assistance of Davey Slight of Moran Building Contractors was instrumental in overcoming many of the logistical difficulties. CFA also wishes to thank Heather Clark, Fraser McAllister, Jim McColl, Paul McMahan, David Rogers, Rod Stein and the staff of Ladbroke's for assistance during the excavations in various ways. Thanks are also due to the volunteers from Gilmerton and the Edinburgh Archaeology Field Society who worked on the site.

The excavation was funded by The City of Edinburgh Council and the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. Post-excavation work and publication was funded by The City of Edinburgh Council.

The illustrations are by Kevin Hicks and Karen Clarke. Earlier drafts of this report were commented upon by Sue Anderson and John Lawson. While thanks are due to the above, responsibility for the final form and content lies with CFA Archaeology Ltd and the author.

An archive report (Johnson 2003) has been deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland (NMRS). That document contains full details of the excavation, GPR survey and the standing building survey of the cottage that stood above the Cove. The full project archive has been deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland. Finds disposal has been allocated through Treasure Trove procedures; the finds were disclaimed and donated to the Gilmerton Heritage Trust.

NOTES

- 1 Whyte (1792, 292–388 at 313–14 and notes).
- 2 Coles (1911, 265–301).
- 3 Ferenbach (1975).
- 4 Whyte (1792, 313); Coles (1911, 266).
- 5 *Ibid.*

6 Whyte (1792, 314, note). The verse runs:

Upon the earth, thrives villainy and woe,
But happiness and I do dwell below;
My hands hew'd out this rock into a cell,
Wherein, from din of life, I safely dwell.
On Jacob's pillow nightly lies my head,
My house when living, and my grave when
dead.

Inscribe upon it, when I'm dead and gone,
I liv'd and died within my mother's womb.

7 Pennecuik (1769).

8 Whyte (1792, 313–14).

9 NAS GD247/176.

10 Perhaps significantly, the George Paterson in Niddrie, recorded around this time in the Old Parish Records for Liberton, does not appear amongst the tenants of the Wauchopes. This suggests that he was not a significant property-holder in the community at that date, and was, presumably, a tenant of one of the more substantial feuars.

11 NAS GD247/176/1, GD247/176/3. The inventory is GD247/176/3/60.

12 Whyte (1792, 313). No record of inheritance or disposal was identified.

13 OPR 693/2, 3 Sept 1699. The couple's second son, John, was born 2 December 1701 (OPR 693/2) and is probably the man who contracted to marry Margaret Clerk in 1722 (OPR 693/5), and for whom George Paterson stood cautioner. It cannot be determined whether this is George senior or George junior. The Paterson getting married is, tantalisingly, described as 'smith', but his Christian name has been obliterated by a spillage of ink over the page in the register. Presumably he was in partnership with either his father or brother.

14 Scottish Record Society 1906, 532: Mowbray to Scott. Janet Gray, identifiable as the wife of George Paterson, had been born in Liberton on 27 March 1674 (OPR 693/1) and her younger brother, George, on 12 December 1676 (OPR 693/1). Aged 24 at the time of her marriage, it is possible that Janet may already have had children before 1698 (as discussed below).

15 OPR 693/2, 12 June 1714. James named his second son, born 8 July 1716, George. George Paterson was witness to the baptism.

16 OPR 693/2, 25 September 1715.

17 OPR 693/2, 26 January 1718.

18 NAS CH2/383/7, 18.

19 OPR 693/2, 15 January 1725. Peter Paterson contracted for marriage to Jean MacMillan, both of the parish of Gilmerton, on 8 January 1724, with George Paterson as his cautioner (OPR 693/5).

20 OPR 693 *Register of Deaths* 1647–1819. This is possibly George Paterson and Beatrix Low's daughter, born in 1715, rather than the elder George's widow, who is otherwise referred to as Janet Gray in the records. The dates, however, would better suit these payments being in respect of the father rather than the son.

21 NAS CH2/383/8.

22 NAS CH2/383/7.

23 *Ibid*, 201.

24 *Ibid*, 201–2.

25 Sir John Sinclair (1791, 353–6).

26 NSA (1845, 6).

27 Grant (1883, 345–6).

28 Speedy (1892, 237).

29 Ferenbach (1975, 36).

30 Coles (1911, 271).

31 David Buchanan, 'Description of the Province of Edinburgh', translated by Ian Cunningham, quoted by David Stevenson (2004, 10).

32 Coles (1911, 269); Cant (1986, 67). It is worthy of note, however, that this tradition, referred to in passing by Coles, does not figure in Speedy's quite detailed discussion of Craigmillar Castle, which reproduces an abbreviated version of Whyte's original description of the Cove.

33 Coles (1911, 271).

34 I am grateful to Professor Stevenson for his discussion of this matter with me. For taverns and drinking-dens in Edinburgh and its immediate environs, see Stuart (1952).

35 Gillies (1886, 74).

36 *Ibid*, Chapter 6.

37 Cant (1986, 67).

38 Whyte (1792, 314 note).

REFERENCES

PUBLISHED SOURCES

- Cant, M 1986 *Villages of Edinburgh. An Illustrated Guide*. Edinburgh.
- Coles, F 1911 'Notices of the Rock-hewn Caves in the Valley of the Esk and Other Parts of Scotland', *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 45 (1910–11), 265–301.

- Ferenbach, C 1975 *Annals of Liberton*. Edinburgh.
- Gillies, J B 1886 *Edinburgh Past and Present, with Notes of the County, Historical, Descriptive, and Scientific*. Edinburgh.
- Grant, J 1883 *Cassell's Old and New Edinburgh: its History, its People and its Places*, Vol iii. London, Cassell.
- Johnson, M 2003 *Excavations at Gilmerton Cove, Edinburgh*. CFA Report No 766, unpublished archive report.
- NSA 1845 Parish of Liberton. *New Statistical Account of Scotland*, Vol 1.
- Pennecuik, A 1769 *A Collection of Scots Poems by the late Mr Alex Pennecuik, Gent, and Others*. Edinburgh.
- Scottish Record Society 1906 *The Register of Marriages for the Parish of Edinburgh, 1595–1700*.
- Sinclair, J (ed) 1791 *The Statistical Account of Scotland 1791–99*, ii, *The Lothians*, ed Withrington, D J & Grant, I R (Wakefield 1975, 353–6).
- Speedy, T 1892 *Craigmillar and its Environs. With Notices of the Topography, Natural History, and Antiquities of the District*. Selkirk.
- Stephenson, D 2004 'Gilmerton Cove and the Cave of Thorns', *History Scotland* 4:4 (July/August 2004), 10.
- Stuart, MW 1952 *Old Edinburgh Taverns*. London.
- Whyte, T 1792 'An Account of the Parish of Liberton in Mid-Lothian, or County of Edinburgh', *Archaeologia Scotica: Transactions of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*, vol 1, 292–388.

UNPUBLISHED SOURCES

National Archives of Scotland

- CH2/383/7 Liberton Kirk Session Minutes 1719–26.
- CH2/383/8 Liberton Kirk Session Minutes 1728–41.
- GD247/176 Wauchope of Niddrie Marischal Papers in the Brodies WS Papers.

Old Parish Records

- 693/1–2 Liberton, Register of Births 1624–1771.
- 693/5 Liberton, Register of Marriages.
- 693 Register of Deaths 1647–1819.

This publication is funded by a grant from the City of Edinburgh Council.