SEAGATE CASTLE

List 14

A fine example of a town house of the end of the C16, the sea once reaching to its walls. The gateway possesses features which at first sight appear to resemble Norman work, but closer examination shows that the mouldings of the arch and jamb resemble later Gothic work of collegiate and parish churches. The mansion is said to have been inhabited up to the end of the C17, mostly as a townhouse of the Eglinton family. A.

Refs; C&DA, iv, 234-240.

KS, Sa 9.2.1924, 8bcd

Historic Keeps 37. Seagate Castle.

Tranter

Although this fine building stands within the Burgh of Irvine, it is in no sense a town lodging, having all the attributes of a castle or fortalice in its own right, and it may well incorporate all that is left of the original famous strong castle of "Irewin", of great antiquity, under the shadows of which the town arose - a stronghold of note as early as 1184. Be that as it may the present structure, ruinouse as it is, represents a very magnificent fortified house of mainly C16 date, towering above the small houses of the street known as Seagate. The standard of workmanship and decoration is high, and obviously the house has been of great strenght as well as importance.

The plan is somewhat involved, consisting of a lengthy main block of three storeys flanking the street, to the east of which have projected three towers, two round and one of triangular shape, a peculiar provision which may have been dictated by the ground formation. It has been suggested that this last is part of the more ancient castle, although the walls are of no great thickness. The south half of the long main block and one round tower are now reduced to the basement storey and foundations, but the remainder is fairly entire as far as the wallhead. There has been a courtyard with curtain walling and subsidiary buildings to the east. The entrance is by a vaulted pend slapped through the northern half of the main block. This has a handsome ornamental arched doorway decorated with dogtooth and starred mouldings, with pillar uprights. The pend archway is vaulted, with moulded ribbing, and gives access to the courtyard, not to the house proper. On either side of it are vaulted guardrooms, unconnected with the remainder of the building. Above the decorative entrance is an elaborate triple panel-space, now empty. The Hall, on the first floor, is enhanced with two large windows enriched with elaborate mouldings externally. The eaves course has been projected on corbelling, which seems to indicate a former parapet, although dormer windows have later been sunk through this. The remaining circular stair tower to the east has been corbeleld out to the square at its top to provide a watch-chamber, though this is now fragmentary.

The kitchen occupies the north end of the basement, and has a magnificent arched fireplace eight feet deep, with an unusual open drain constructed in the floor paving to a cesspool in the courtyard. To this cesspool also comes a flue from garderobes on the upper storeys - a most advanced provision. These upper storeys are reached by the wheel stair in the round tower, by a doorway at its foot; there is no internal access, as a further defensive precaution. Off the northern-most first floor room, above the kitchen, is another small guardroom in the north west angle, with a trap door in its floor giving the only access to an unpleasant pit or prison in the thickness of the walling below.

A modern plaque near the pend entrance declares that the Treaty of Irvine was signed here in 1297. Whether or not this was so depends on

this castle incorporating the earlier stronghold. It is also declared that it became the jointure house of the noble family of Montgomerie of Eglinton in the late C14. On bosses of the ribbed vaulting of the pend are the arms of Montgomerie, and of Drummond, relating to Hugh, 3rd Earl of Eglinton, who married, as his second wife, in 1562, the Lady Loudoun, who had been Agnes Drummond, daughter of Sir John Drummond of Innerpeffray. The afirementioned plaque mentions that Mary Queen of Svots visited here, with her Marys, in 1563 and was entertained by this earl. He was a noted supporter of the Queen, and fought for her at Langside. The castle was inhabited by various members of the Eglinton family, until about 1746 the 10th Earl had the roof taken off and the timbers used in a church at Ardrossan.

McWilliam — ... plenty of examples of a more formal arrangement [than at Palace, Culross or Tankerness, Kirkwall], all from the latter part of the C16; the Earl of Eglinton's Seagate Castle in Irvine, with its round arched pend and weird revivalist ornament, [Mar's Wark and Argyll Ludging, both Stirling]

Annals Kilmarnock Glenfield Ramblers, II, 1898, pp 62-64

Photocopy herewith.

ASH, Sa 8.2.1873, 2d [C16] — Contract in Burgh Records, Glasgow, 1568, between Hugh, Earl of Eglinton, and **George Elphinstoun**, 'glaisin wricht', Glasgow, by which Elphinstoun 'suld uphold and maintane the places of Ardrossan, Eglintoune, Polnoun, Glasgow and Cumray in glaisin work, as also the place of Irvine".

KH 30.1.1930 — Bronze tablet commemorating Treaty of Irvine and Mary Queen of Scots dates from 1930.

HUT

ACC Planning, A1875 — January 1950. Hut, Seagate Castle, for 1195 (Irvine) Squadron, on behalf of H.P. No.66 (Scottish)(Reserve) Group, RAF Turnhouse.

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