MAYBOLE CASTLE

List 33

Probably first quarter of C17, enlarged in C19. L-plan, 4-storey tower, the stair in the southern wing. Harled, with ashlar dressings, rubble-built 2 storey crowstepped gabled extensions to south and west added prior to 1856. Entrance on NE elevation with door in simply moulded jambs, 1st floor windows irregularly placed, 1 on south east, 1 on north east elevation enlarged. 2nd floor with 2 windows to NE, 1 to SE. Large angle turrets corbelled out above 2nd floor at Ne and NW angles each with 3 windows, conical cap and finial. 2 attic windows to NE with 3 decorative semi-circles forming pediments flank large wallhead stack; similarly detailed dormers on SW. Southern stair wing with corbelled top storey formerly prospect room, with oriel window to SW. Crowstepped gables, slate roofs. Rubble built GARDEN WALLS. Banded vermiculated GATE PIERS with pyramidal caps supported at angles on ball feet.

Notes: built as town mansion of Earls of Cassillis, hereditary bailiffs of Carrick. Probably built for John, 6th Earl, who was appointed Extra-ordinary Lord of Session at the Restoration. Refs: C&DA, III, 498-502. A.

ACC, PC 13.11.1951, 91-92

Nov 1951. Proposed for listing by Department of Health.

Tranter

The pleasant little town of Maybole was once the capital of Carrick, one of the most turbulent areas of all Scotland, and this fortalice was the town house and capital messuage of the Earls of Cassillis, chiefs of the powerful clan of the Kennedys and known long as Kings of Carrick. It is not a town house in the usual sense, but a typical defensible fortalice, probably of the late C16 or early C17. Such buildings seem to have been a necessary precaution amongst the fierce Kennedys, even within their towns, for it is said that at one time there were no fewer than 28 baronial dwellings, turreted and string, within Maybole's burgh limits. This attractive building consists of a lofty L-shaped tower, 4 storeys and a garret in height, with large circular turrets corbelled out at the Ne and SE angles, and a stair-wing projecting to the SW. A later two-storeyed addition extends to the N. The main tower is of harled rubble, but the turrets and the projecting watch-chamber at the head of the stair tower are of worked ashlar. the SE turret has been renewed above the level of the corbelling. The building is richly decorated externally with carved stonework, the dormer pediments and the chimney copes being especially notable. The original entrance was, as usual, in the foot of the stairwing, but was superseded by the present doorway in the east front of the addition.

The basement is vaulted, and the well-lit hall occupied the first floor. The upper floors are subdivided, and the turrets cintain tiny apartments. The chamber at the summit of the stair tower deserves special mention. It projects slightly on continuous corbelling to give added space, and is provided with an exceptionally fine bow window, one of thefew early examples in Scotland. The interior of this chamber is panelled. It adds very considerably to the appearance of the castle, internally and externally. Presumably its builder, probably Gilbert Kennedy, 5th Earl of Cassillis and Lord High Treasurer of Scotland, planned it for his personal use rather than as merely the usual stair-head watch-chamber. The house which is in a good state of preservation still belongs to the Marquis of Ailsa, present Earl of Cassillis and head of the Kennedys. With such owners it was inevitably the scene of many stirring events. It has been said to be the place of confinement for life of the romantic Countess of Cassillis, reputed to have eloped with Sir John Faa, the

King of the Gypsies. The ballad *Johnnie Faa'* tells how the gypsies came to Lord Cassillis' gate, and *oh, but they sang bonnie*; and how the lady with her maids tripped down the stairs, and yielding to the glamour of the chieftain, followed the gypsy laddie. Her Lord, returning home at even, furiously pursued the fugitives to dire effect:

We were fifteen well-made men, black but very bonnie,
And we ere a' put down but ane, for a fair young wanton ladie.

It seems probable that it was the same earl who is celebrated as having roasted the Commendator of Crossraguel Abbey, Allan Stewart, in 1570. The Kennedys were evidently loth to fall in with the Reformation - indeed we read of mass being sung in Maybole Collegiate Church as late as 1563 in the presence of 200 Kennedys armed with jacks, spears, guns and other weapons. The last abbot of Crossraguel was Quintin Kennedy, and the Earl his nephew. So when a Stewart was given the Abbey lands as Commendator thereafter, action was obviously to be anticipated. The Stewart was pounced on by the Earl, carried to Dunure Castle, and in a vault there 'roasted in sop' until he consented to sign away the property 'with all clauses necessar for the great King of Carrick to haste him to hell'.

SF, July 1973 — Article, Maybole Castle, by Catriona Findlay. Photocopy herewith.
Suggests that heraldic stone in garden, dated 1703, is part of Town Cross, removed in 1773. Road past castle built in 1805. Castle "re-roofed, repaired and extended" and a garden wall built, in 1812, for use by the estate factor.

BI 11/127 October 1900 — Maybole visited by Glasgow Tech.Arch Students. The castle is a very fine example of Scottish Domestic architecture of the castellated type. The south gable, with its thoroughly Scottish oriel - one of the few medieval examples of this feature left in Scotland - is especially fine. The oriel is enriched with several heads, supposed by local authorities to be portraits of the actors of the story which forms the subject of the well-known ballad of the elopement of the wife of the 6th Earl of Cassillis with a certain 'Johnnie Faa''.

Abercrummie, quoted in C&DA, III, 498

[Castles] at each end of the street. That on the east belongs to the Earle of Cassillis; beyond which eastward stands a great new building which be his granaries". Probably built in first quarter of C17. John, 5th Earl, †1615, was succeeded by his nelhew, John, 6th Earl, a person of virtue and distinction, who was President of the Court of Session. In 1649 he was sent to Holland to negotiate the Restoration of Charles II. †1668. Probable that he built Maybole and restored Cassillis.

4th Period [1542-1700]. S gable fronts principal street. Simple quadrilateral plan, with square jamb at SW angle containing principal stair. Entrance on probably on W side, where gateway in high wall would lead into paved court, entrance in re-entrant angle of stair tower; now concealed by modern additions. Walls 4' thick. Date: late: decorative details, large turrets, &c suggest contemporary with Huntly Castle, i.e. 1st quarter of C17.

Basement vaulkted. 1st floor: Hall 31' by 18', now altered. Lit by 2 large windows in E, overlooking garden, 1 to south fronting street, there have been 2 windows on W. Windows enlarged. Upper floors: bedrooms, with dressing closets, in angle turrets. Upper works: Turret at top of staircase is corbelled out, contains small room, with bow window on W. ?rare example of English architecture in Scotland. Wooden panelling in situ. Ornamental dormers and chimney heads.

U Glasgow, Hunterian Art Gallery — The Mackintosh Collection contains original drawing of Maybole Castle by C R Mackintosh, in sketchbook.

Reg Mag Sig, III, no.112	Charter granted by James V to Gilbert, Earl of Cassillis "et erga prepositum et prebendarios ecclesie collegiate de Mauboille et pro edificiis fabricandis in villa de Mauboille". Creates Maybole a Burgh of Barony, 14.11.1516.
AO, Tu 25.3.1834, 1e	To let.
2SA [9/1837], 1845, 344	"... in excellent repair..."
SC6/72/23	New builidng is of 1849, **David Cousin**, architect. [Cf: Newark]
Imp Gaz sc, 1855, III, 403	"recently repaired"
C&DA, III, 498	[1886] Altered in recent years, and now occupied by Lord Ailsa's factor.
AA, Th 19.2.1953, 7	has photographs.
GROUNDS	
ACC Planning, 1643	May 1939. Lavatories, Maybole Castle vegetable Gardens, for Maybole T.C,.

ST JOHNS COTTAGE, 40 Kirkmichael Road, 308101

List 42	Early C19 picturesque pavilion type cottage, with symmetrical 1 and 2 storey garden front, symmetrically planned with 2 wings to SE. Stugged ashlar with droved dressings. Entrance at NE in single storey half-pitched wing, central door with flanking windows, all in shallow round-headed recesses; single course of masonry of 2 storey central block rises above outer roof to support eaves and higher piend roof. Garden front with central, 2 storey canted bay flanked by single storey half-pedimented lean-to bays. Outer windows in shallow round-headed recesses. Return 3 bay elevation to SW, with bow at left. All windows with 12-pane sashes except small rectangular upper windows in canted bay. Shallow pitched or piended slate roofs. 2 corniced stacks on mid-partition walls. Fine central stair under a dome with delicate cast-iron balusters, simple plasterwork and painted panels in the dome. A.
AA, Th 14.4.1831, 1d	To sell, in Edinburgh, W15.6.1831: Lands of Bogend or St Johns. 7A 2R inc 1A 31F of plantations. "There is on the property an excellent mansion-house built within these few years containing dining room, drawing room, 4 bedrooms ... there are a stable, byre and gig house at a little distance from the house". There is an inference that the house is the property of the late David Ramsay WS.
Edin Even Courant, 19.5.1831	Mansion house "built within these few years".
AA 29.9.1831	To sell, "built within the last few years".
AA, Th 12.12.1839, 1e	To let; has dining room, drawing room and 3 bedrooms on ground floor, and 2 bedrooms on 1st floor.
AA, Th 6.2.1851, 1d	For sale. Dining room - drawing room - 5 bedrooms. Stables, &c.
C1861 605-10-26	Andrew Watters, retired [ ], b Campsie, m69. Spo, 47, b Dalrymple. Children, 14-7, all b Glasgow.
AA, Th 25.2.1864, 8e	Died, St John's, 21st February 1864, William Richard Paterson, Esq. aged 64.
AO, Tu 6.7.1875, 1a	To let. Drawing room, ante-room, dining room, 4 bedrooms, &c. The house 'is at present undergoing papering and painting and other improvements, and the furniture will be suitably added to.'
Sas Abr 4966 of 1883	1883 refs to Wilhelmina Macadam Ramsay, sometime of St John's Maybole and now residing in Montreal, and her brother, Thomas Kennedy Ramsay, now on the Queen's Bench, Montreal, and residing there.
AO, Tu 22.5.1883, 1d	Roup, 30.5.1883, of all household furniture.
[VR 1892-93]	Charles Crawford of St Johns
Site Visit 250499, Maybole Cemetery	Charles Crawford of St Johns, 87, died 13.6.1899. He was a tanner.

[VR 1902/03] – VR 1912/13	Reps late Charles Crawford per Miss Margaret Crawford
VR 1913/14	Agnes Crawford or Girvan, Margaret Crawford, Helen Crawford and Mary Crawford per Miss Margaret Crawford
[VR 1923/24] – [VR 1933/34]	Agnes Crawford or Girvan, Margaret Crawford and Mary Crawford
[VR 1943/44] – VR 1949/50	Mary Crawford
VR 1950/51	Testamentary Trustees of Mary Crawford (per Kilpatrick and Wilson, solicitors, Ayr)
ACC Planning, A3826	July 1951. Electricity supply.
VR 1951/52 - [VR 1953/54]	Major Philip and Mrs Margaret Anderson
[VR 1963/64] – VR 1967/68	Philip Anderson
VR 1968/69 – VR 1969/70	Executors of Philip Anderson
Hay Steel 70044	1970, alterations to St Johns, for William Paterson Jamieson: **James Hay & Steel**, Kilmarnock.
VR 1970/71 - [VR 1972/73]	William Jamieson
Registers	Sold, 2000, for £240,000
Registers	Acquired, 2020, by Lindsey Anne Allcock, Atherton, Lancs. £640,000: £544,000 loan from Yorkshire Building Society.

© Rob Close 2026