

CONSTRUCTION CLUES

Robert the Bruce gave the lands of Arnele to Robert Boyd of Kilmarnock in 1315. The Boyd family built the castle in the mid 1300s. The rectangular 'hall house' was converted to a 'tower house' over time. Portencross Castle is both a scheduled ancient monument and a grade 'A' listed building. It boasts a vaulted great hall, which is rare in a Scottish hall house.



There have been three main phases of construction through successive generations of the Boyd family. In more recent times, the castle has been maintained as a monument.

FOR TEACHERS

During a visit, pupils should record as many architectural changes to doors, windows and walls as possible, using drawings and sketches.

Investigate why changes were made to Portencross Castle. For example, what changes were for defence, or to add living space, or perhaps just for the sake of fashion?

Make an illustrated glossary to give the meanings of architectural terms used for a castle including: *barrel vault, battlements, buttress, chamber, corbel, elevation, garderobe, great hall, hall house, masonry, parapet, plan, quoins, string course, tower house, vault, wing*. What other words can you add to this? What is the best way to display this?

CURRICULUM FOR EXCELLENCE LINKS:

LITERATURE

- LIT 1-05a,
- LIT 2-05a
- LIT 1-06a
- LIT 2-06a
- LIT 3-06a
- LIT 2-24
- LIT 3-24

EXPRESSIVE ARTS

- EXA 2-04a
- EXA 3-04a
- EXA 2-06a
- EXA 3-06a

FRIENDS OF PORTENCROSS CASTLE

This leaflet was produced by Friends of Portencross Castle (FOPC).

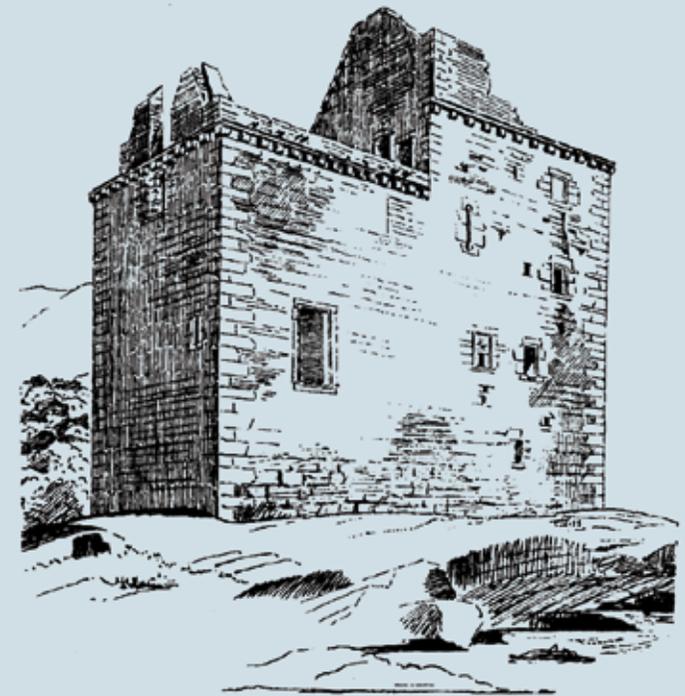
FOPC is a recognised Scottish Charity (No. SC028181) dedicated to conserving the castle and providing access to the building.

In 2007 FOPC was awarded grant support from The Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and the Architectural Heritage Fund. With additional support from local charities, North Ayrshire Council and many individuals, FOPC was able to raise just over £1 million pounds for the costs of the project. Grant support does not include maintenance. As a result FOPC has to raise costs for staff, maintenance, education materials, website and overheads. We will remain open with the help of donations and by having events and functions at the castle.

Please donate if you can. You can become a Guardian. Find out more from our web site www.portencrosscastle.org.uk or pick up details at the castle during opening hours.



THE ARCHITECTURE OF PORTENCROSS CASTLE



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Portencross Castle from the east (MacGibbon & Ross 1889)

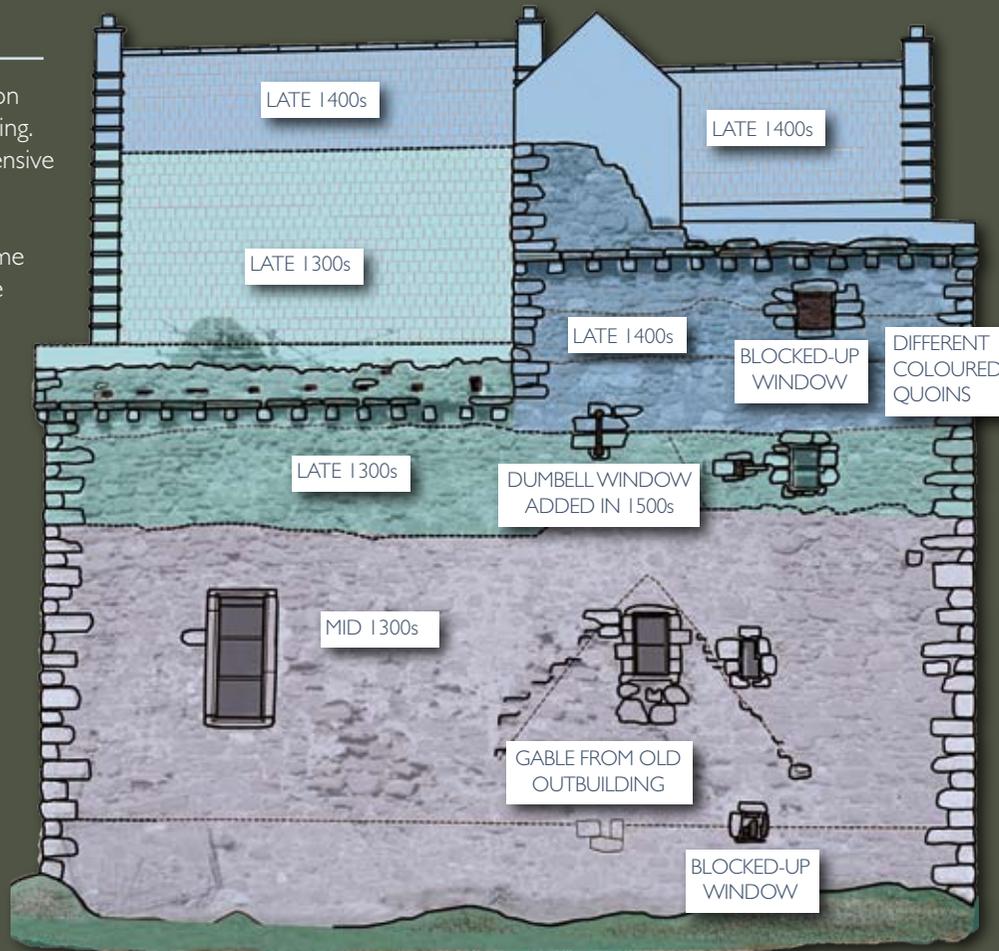
Mid - late 1300s HALL-HOUSE TO TOWER HOUSE

The first phase of building was the construction of the hall-house - the lower part of the building. There may also have been a 'barmkin' or defensive wall, outside the castle.

Were the east and west wings built at the same time? Look at the details on each of the castle wings, especially the details round the windows. The similar details might point to these features having been built at the same time. But notice how the east wing is less weathered than the west wing. Is this due to an age difference between the wings, or is it because of the prevailing south-westerly winds scouring the stone of the west wing?

The accepted view is that the east and west wings were not built at the same time, although there was probably a lower east wing which would have been for defence. This would make it one of only two castles like this in Scotland (the other being Whittinghame in East Lothian). So Portencross Castle was built as a traditional 'hall house' (phase I) and was converted over time into a tower house.

The original hall house the possible barmkin and lower wing



Later 1400s
UPPER FLOORS AND ATTICS

After the 1600s ADJUSTMENTS AND ABANDONMENT

The Boyd family made some final alterations at this time, including to the parapet walkway. They raised the spiral staircase to reach the new upper attic rooms and walkway. The Boyd family finally abandoned the castle, sometime after 1660.

After that time, fishermen made use of the building and they may have enlarged the basement windows. It was probably still in use after the roof blew off in 1739 because the vaulted ceiling would have protected the great hall. Fishermen may have altered the shape of the fireplace in the great hall. After this period, sporadic work took place to repair and preserve the castle.

1900s onwards REPAIR AND RECONSTRUCTION

In the 1900s a concrete roof along with lintels and buttressing were added alongside many other small repairs. Photographs and paintings during the last two centuries detail the many minor changes to the castle that people have made. When the castle became the responsibility of successive energy companies, various repairs were carried out under their direction. During FOPC's recent work to restore the castle, the entrance to a pit prison was discovered under the spiral stair.

Original watercolour by Derek McLean, February 2010



If you look carefully, you can trace the original upper line of the house above the great hall and see where the next phase of building began. The drawing above shows each phase of the castle as seen from the south-west side. As you walk round the building, notice that the corner stones on the upper level are slightly different and must have come from a different part of the quarry or some other source. Much of the stonework would have been taken from the immediate area around the castle. As the height of the hall house was raised, the vaulted ceiling of the great hall was constructed, possibly with a chamber above. The battlements were also raised and altered. The windows were probably enlarged, the stairs steepened and a ground floor doorway added.

