

**PORTENCROSS CASTLE
HISTORICAL DESK ASSESSMENT**

iCosse

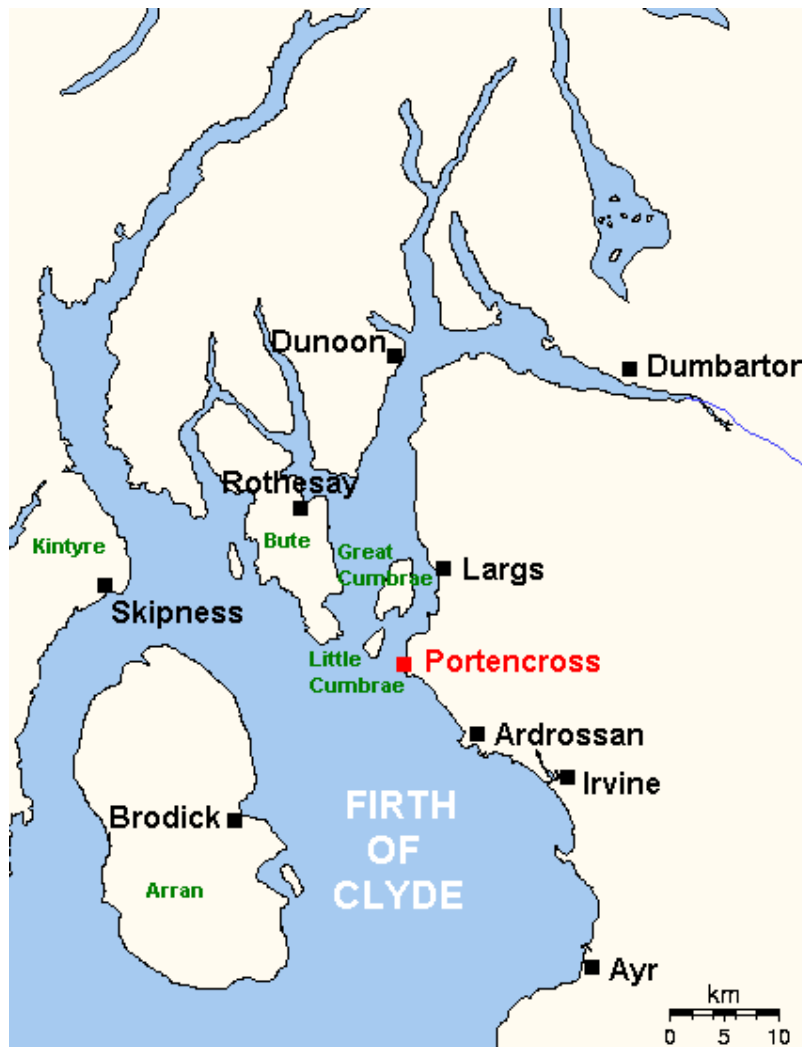
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PORTENCROSS CASTLE

1.0 Location

Portencross is situated on the north-west coast of Ayrshire (Fig*1), at the south-west corner of a headland that stretches from Goldenberry Hill in the north (139 metres in height) to Farland Head in the south, which itself lies just south-west of Auldhill (73 metres). A raised beach has been cut into the coastline creating a broad terrace beneath the cliffs on which the village is sited (designated in 1971 for its geological interest as Portencross Coast SSSI).

The site is located at the southern entry to the narrow channel that runs between the Cumbraes and the Ayrshire coast, an important strategic position which overlooks the eastern of the two principal N-S channels that allow entry into the upper Firth of Clyde and thence to the interior of the country. The sea-routes to the west connected the Firth with the Hebrides and the Highlands, the northern isles of Orkney and Shetland, and over the North Sea to Norway, while the routes south led to Ireland, the Isle of Man, Wales, England and, eventually, Europe.



Figure*1 – Location map of Portencross

2.0 The Early Historic Period

The district around Portencross was once part of the Brythonic kingdom of Strathclyde (*Srath Chluaidh*, Gaelic for *Valley of the Clyde*), one of the regional powers that evolved during the post-Roman period. It occupied the south-west corner of modern Scotland and appears to have evolved from the territories of the tribe identified by the Romans as the *Damnonii*, and at its greatest extent may have stretched from the Firth of Clyde down to the river Derwent in Cumberland. Strathclyde was bordered by the Northumbrians to the south and east, the Picts to the north and north-east, and the Scots of *Dal Riata* to the west and north-west, and much of the history of early historic Scotland is that of the power-struggles that occurred between these nations.

It seems that from at least as early as the 5th century AD the caput of the kingdom was *Alt Cluid* (*Clyde Rock*, now known as Dumbarton [*fort of the Britons*] Rock), e.g. in AD 450, the soldiers of *Ceredig of Alcluith*, king of Strathclyde, were admonished in a letter written by St Patrick for attacking places in Ireland that he had converted to Christianity. *Alt Cluid* retained its pre-eminence until AD 870 when it was besieged and sacked by the forces of Olaf, king of the Viking kingdom of Dublin, who is recorded as having returned home with two hundred ships laden with slaves and looted property: recent research has indicated the possibility that, as a result, the power-base moved up the river to the religious centre at Govan and the royal residence to the north of this at Partick.

Following the siege of *Alt Cluid*, *Arthgal f Dyfnwal*, king of Strathclyde, was executed in Dublin, and his son, *Rhun f Arthgal*, brother-in-law of the Scots king, Constantine I, became the new ruler, although apparently as a sub-king owing fealty to the king of Scots. Exactly what this meant in reality is difficult to ascertain, but Strathclyde appears to have continued to operate as a distinct entity in some form until sometime in the 11th century when the royal lineage died out and it was effectively subsumed into the greater kingdom of Scotland. It has been argued that it was not actually fully absorbed into the kingdom of Scotland until the early-12th century, when the future David I founded the cathedral at Glasgow dedicated to *Kentigern* (*Mungo*), apostle of Strathclyde.

The fate of Strathclyde was reflected in the the Scots' kingdom's relationships with the other powers of the early historic period. Moray (notwithstanding its ruler, the famous *Mac Bethad mac Findláich* (1040–1057), taking the Scottish throne in 1040) was subjugated by the Scottish kings around 1130, followed by Galloway between 1185 and 1235, but *Dal Riata* evolved into the Lordship of the Isles and flourished as a powerful entity in its own right until the title was forfeited by James IV in 1493.

How these macro-political changes in the early historic period were reflected in localities such as Portencross is difficult to ascertain without considerable further research. Excavations carried out at Auldhill indicate that as well as a timber-framed fort dating from the first millennium BC, the site appears to have been re-occupied during the iron age and/or the early historic period. Finds indicate a date range between the 7th and 10th centuries, and there is some structural evidence that may suggest that there was a contemporary stone-built dun here, possibly of a type found 'on similar summits around the Firth of Clyde' (Caldwell, 1998, 31).

Locally there is another, undated fort at Seamill, occupying 'a tongue of land projecting from the end of the S. bank of the ravine of Kilbride Burn, a situation comparable with that of a number of like structures along the Ayrshire coast' (RCAHMS; NMRS Number: NS24NW 10), and inland to the south-east there is another on the summit of Knock Jargon (NMRS Number: NS24NW 21). Whether either of these was occupied during the medieval period is not known as yet. A date in the 10th century for the end of occupation at Auldhill would,

however, appear to conform to recent research findings which indicate that similar sites across Scotland were abandoned around this time (Driscoll, 1998, 40).

Although the site is known as Auldhill, this name does not appear on any maps until 1820, and it appears more likely that it was originally known by the name of *Ardneil* (alternatively spelled as *Arnele* and *Arneil*, the title that appears on several medieval charters):

The name Ardneil is Gaelic for Neil's hill. The Ordnance Survey maps now identify the summit of the cliffs about half a mile to the north of Auldhill as Ardneil Hill but it is likely that it was Auldhill which was the original Ardneil, the fort being Neil's residence. When this Neil lived is impossible to say with any certainty. Gaelic may have been spoken in these parts from the 8th century A.D., and the name cannot be later than the 13th century.
(Caldwell et al, 1998, 33)

Who this historic figure (or family) may have been and what their relationship was with the rulers of Strathclyde is virtually impossible to define, but it would appear likely that whoever lived on the site during this period also controlled the land around their hill-top settlement. If so, it seems likely that it was the caput of an estate that analysis of later charters and landholdings indicate at one time may have consisted of the whole peninsula of land to the west of the modern road from Seamill to Fairlie (Caldwell, 1998, 33).

The location on the coast would also have given the inhabitants of Auldhill a vital access to the sea, which by the 5th and 6th centuries was the predominant routeway for trade and communication. The importance of naval power can be seen as early as 681 when the fleet of the northern Pictish king, Bridei, is recorded as having 'devastated' the Orkney Islands. However, the most significant manifestation of sea power was provided by the Norse who became the dominant political force in the waters around north and west Scotland during the 9th and 10th centuries, taking control of the Hebrides and establishing kingdoms in Dublin and the Isle of Man. Their assault on *Alt Cluid* in 870 was probably only the most visible of their attacks on the coastal sites of Strathclyde, and Ardneil's location overlooking the channel into the upper Firth of Clyde would obviously have made it well known to the Vikings.

One other significant element of the area's history during the early medieval period is the Hunterston Brooch:

It was discovered, in 1826, by two labourers engaged in quarrying. It lay close to the surface, nearly at the foot of a precipitous cliff on the Hunterston Estate, called the "Hawking Craig", a small spur of the Goldberry Hill to the northward of the Ardneill Banks, which form the extreme western point of Ayrshire. Between the Hawking Craig and the sea is a level piece of ground, where local tradition affirms that a skirmish took place shortly before the celebrated battle of Largs, fought on Tuesday 2d October, 1263... It was in this preliminary combat that this beautiful brooch is assumed to have been lost.
(Paterson, 307, 1866)

Whatever the circumstances of its loss and subsequent rediscovery, it is the largest and most sophisticated of this type of brooch to have been found so far and was in all probability made at a royal site such as Dunadd:

The brooch, now in the National Museum of Antiquities of Scotland (NMA) Accession Number: FC 8) is a fairly massive casting of silver, mounted with gold, silver and amber insets; it is datable to the later 7th century. It bears secondary 10th century runic inscriptions reading 'Melbrigda owns this (brooch)' and 'This brooch belongs to Olfriti'.
(RCAHMS; NMRS Number: NS15SE 5)

The skill of its craftsmanship and the value of its materials mean that the Hunterston brooch was an object of the highest quality and the owner of such a object, whether he was local or an incomer, must have been of a very high status in society and its loss would have been considerable. Although its origin is obscure, its beauty and sophistication provide us with a rare glimpse into the both the aesthetics and values of the society which produced it, and may give us a hint as to the status of the area around Portencross at the beginning of the second millennium.

3.0 The Post-Norman Period

3.1 The Sheriffdom of Ayrshire

The introduction of feudal structures into Scotland is identified as having been begun under the influence of Margaret, the second wife of Malcolm III (1057-93), and sister of Edgar Atheling, one of the claimants to the English throne of Edward the Confessor in 1066. She is credited by historians through the ages with introducing the language (she never learned Gaelic) and many of the customs of England to the Scottish court.

Possibly the most important part of this process was the introduction of the feudal system of landholding: this had political, social and economic implications not only for the power of the crown, but also for the development of Scotland from that time on. The feudal system was predicated by the basic tenet that the king was the universal landowner and fountain of justice. With its origin in the political and military requirements of medieval society, the principal relationship in feudal landholding was that between superior (or lord) and vassal (or tenant). It was of primary importance to the superior that the land was granted to men who were loyal to him, and capable of supplying the military service required where the duty in the tenure was military. The process of granting property to loyal vassals in order to exert military and political control became common practice, particularly in areas where the crown's influence was marginal or under threat.

From the late-11th century onwards the Canmore kings encouraged the settlement of barons into Scotland from England and even directly from France and Flanders. Most of these settlers were established in small fiefs of one knight's fee, but some larger feudal estates were created in areas which were not directly under crown control. An important date in this process was 1124, the date when Malcolm and Margaret's youngest son, David I, ascended to the throne following the death of his brother Alexander I.

David had spent much of his youth in the English court of William II Rufus (1087-1100) and Henry I (1100-35), along with his sister Matilda (Henry's wife from 1100), and was known there as the 'flower' of English chivalry and princeliness. As well as issuing the first Scottish coinage, founding burghs and establishing new-style sheriffdoms, David speeded up the process of Anglo-Normanisation in Scotland by increasing grants of land to English and French families such as the Huntingdons, the Lindsays, the Somervilles and the Bruces.

The history of the Bruce family illustrates the complex nature of society during this process of feudalisation of Scotland and England. Originally from Brix (or Brieux) in Normandy, they were kinsmen of the Duke of Normandy and heirs of the kings of Brittany. They appear to have acquired their first land in Britain in 1101 when Henry I granted lands in Yorkshire to Robert de Brius, son of Adam, Lord of Brius (Brix). Robert de Brius met David I at Henry's court, and, following his enthronement in 1124, David I enfeoffed him in the Lordship of Annandale in the troublesome area of Galloway. It was through the line of Robert the Bruce's great-grandmother (the daughter of David of Huntingdon who was a grandson of David I) that he was able to successfully prosecute the Bruce claim to the Scottish crown in 1306.

Alongside the construction of a centralised system of government based on Anglo-Norman barons holding sway over large areas of the country, the crown developed a feudalised bureaucracy to service his possessions. The great offices of state such as Chancellor, Chamberlain, Constable, Justiciar, and the King's Council dealt principally with national concerns, while local matters were the responsibility of Courts of Barony and Sheriffs.

The Courts of Barony were in the power of the Barons, i.e. the '*great men*' who held lands direct of the Crown by a grant *in liberam baroniam*. Barony tenure established an administrative unit, and baronial rights included a responsibility for keeping ordinary public justice within the confines of the barony. To assist in this endeavour the baron had the rights of *fossa and furca* - the ditch and the gallows - interpreted as the power of life and death over anyone living in his barony.

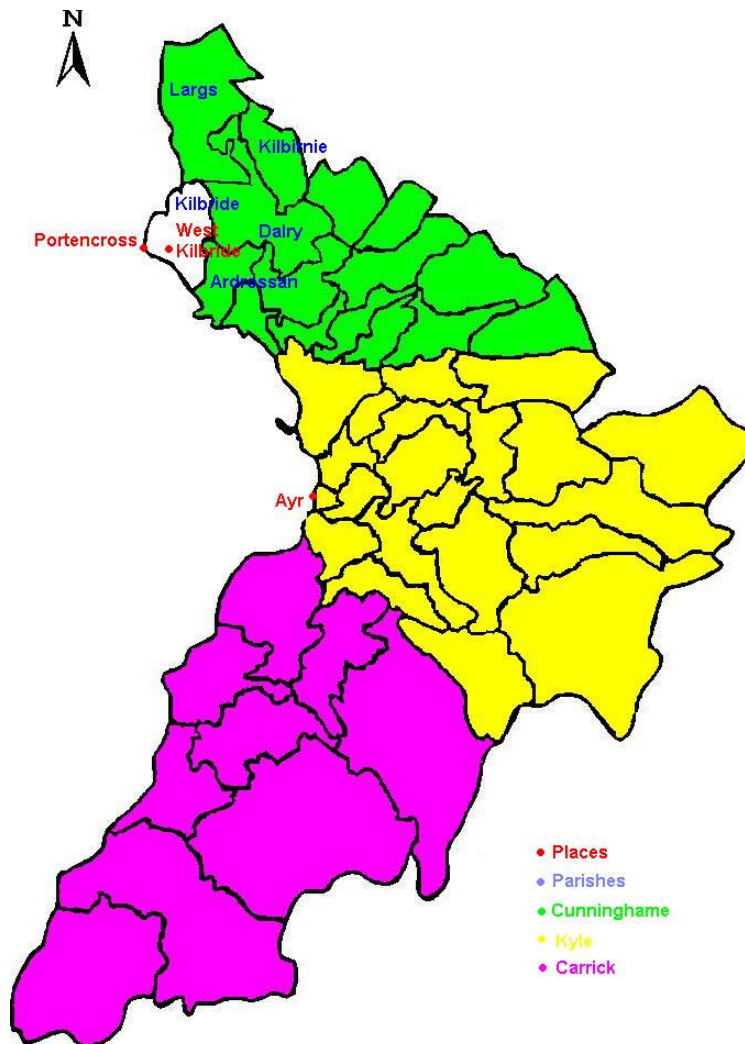
The conversion of the kingdom of Scotland from a Celtic system traditionally based on custom to the strictly organised and regulated Anglo-Norman feudal model did not happen in one revolutionary act, but developed over a period of time. The granting of land by the Crown to stabilise and control a region also created a decentralised but strong form of government which provided local magnates with both the legal status and the power to establish themselves and - disasters aside - to continue to operate successfully within the structures of the feudal model.

Around the same time as he was enfeoffing the de Brius family in the Lordship of Annandale (the late-1120s), David I gave the Lordship of Cunninghame to another Anglo-Norman baron, Hugh de Morville. His family came from lands in Normandy that had been given to David by his brother-in-law, Henry I, and Hugh was a member of the young prince's military retinue when he acquired the lands in the south of Scotland from his brother, Alexander I. As well as Cunninghame, David granted de Morville the barony of Lauderdale and a number of estates in England, and also made him Lord High Constable of Scotland sometime after 1138.

It is probable that Cunninghame was a pre-existing district, possibly a sub-kingdom of Strathclyde, although it too could be subdivided into two distinct lordships - Cunninghame and Largs - both of which belonged to the de Morvilles and their heirs. Later in the 12th century when William the Lion (1165-1214) created the sheriffdom of Ayr, it was through the amalgamation of Cunninghame with two other historic districts (or baileries), Kyle and Carrick (see Fig*2).

Kyle was also sub-divided into two parts: to the north of the River Ayr was 'Kyle Stewart', lands held by the Fitzalan's (the future Stewart Kings of Scotland) since the 11th century; to the south was 'Kyle Regis', or 'King's Kyle', lands historically retained by the monarch under royal authority from the royal castle at Ayr. This had been erected by William at the mouth of the river Ayr in 1197, shortly before he created a Royal Burgh there at the junction of the principal land route from the south to the west coast (from the royal burgh of Dumfries to Ayr) and the road north.

The name Carrick comes from the Gaelic word for '*a rocky place*', and it is believed that it was actually part of Galloway until 1186 when *Donnchad mac Gillai Brigte* (great-grandfather of Robert the Bruce) became the first *normaer* (or *earl*) of Carrick. Maybole was the historic capital and later a stronghold of the Kennedy family who built the castle on the High Street sometime in the 16th century.



Figure*2 – The Sheriffdom of Ayr (after McLure, 2002)

3.2 The de Ros Family

In common with the general policy of feudalisation across the country, the de Morvilles themselves granted tracts of land to incoming families in return for their loyalty and service. Amongst these were the de Ros family:

The earliest supposed member of the family is Godfrey de Ros who witnessed charters by Richard de Morville, Lord of Cunninghame from 1162 to 1189, and his son William, Lord from 1189 to 1196...
 (Caldwell, 1998, 32)

It is not known when the de Ros family arrived in Cunninghame, where they came from, or what relation they were to other families of that name:

There were several landowners called de Ros (Ross) in Cunninghame and elsewhere in southern Scotland by the 13th century. It is most probable that they were all descended from a family which originated in Normandy and held the important border fortress of Wark-on-Tweed. It should be said, however, that there is a lack of surviving evidence to prove the

relationships of the Cunninghame Rosses and it is not impossible that they were a separate family, perhaps of local origin, or even related to the Earls of Ross.
(Caldwell, 1998, 32)

This branch of the family may indeed have come from Normandy, but there are also records for families of that name in Dol in Brittany in the 11th century. Their feudal superiors there were the Fitzalans, the Stewards or *Dapifers* of Dol, and the 4th Dapifer, Alan Fitz Flaald had come to England with William the Conqueror in 1066, becoming the Sheriff of Shropshire. His second son, Walter FitzAlan, was invited to Scotland by David I and was given lands in East Lothian, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire, including Dundonald. In the 1150s he was appointed Lord High Steward of Scotland, the highest position in the country below the Crown. His grandson, the 3rd High Steward, adopted the title as the name of his family (the Stewarts), and the 7th to hold the title became King Robert II in 1371. Further research may uncover a link between the Dapifers of Dol and their vassals in Brittany, the de Ros family, in the settlement of Ayrshire by Norman families in the 12th century.

Another possible origin for the family in Britain is the Battle Roll which recorded four knights of that name as having fought with William I at Hastings: Anquetil de Ros, Golsfrid de Ros, Serlon de Ros, and Guillaume de Ros. By the mid-13th century de Roses are recorded as holding estates at Belvoir Castle, Wark on Tweed, and Hamlake (Helmsley or Helmesley), the latter believed to be descended from Guillaume de Ros. William de Ros, 2nd Baron de Ros of Helmsley, was one of the unsuccessful candidates for the Crown of Scotland in 1291 by reason of his descent from Isabel, an illegitimate daughter of William the Lion.

In Scotland there were de Roses in Moray sometime before 1219, originally in the lands of Geddes, but by 1280 at Kilravock, where the family became known by the surname of Rose. In Cunninghame, by the end of the 13th century, families called de Ros held the lands of Stewarton and Ormesheugh, and probably others as well, such as Dunlop and Giffin (Caldwell, 1998, 32). They also possessed Arnele and Kilbride, and it was in the former that they erected a castle (possibly in the form of a motte-and-bailey) on the site of the dun on Auldhill, sometime in the 12th or 13th centuries.

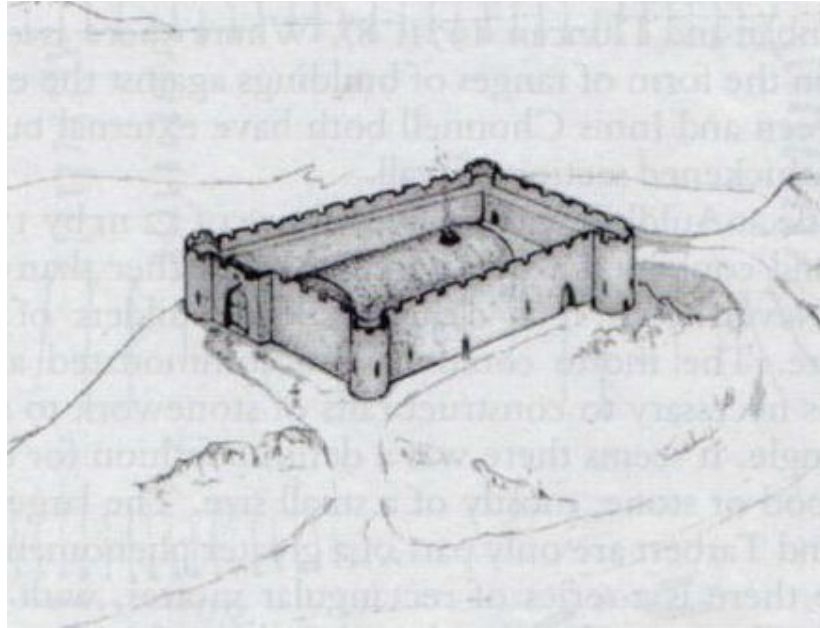
Excavations carried out by Caldwell et al (1998) in 1987-89 produced evidence that indicated that a rectangular, timber building surrounded by a palisade had been erected first, overlain by a rectangular, stone-built platform some 16.6m by 12m that has been dated to the late-13th or early-14th century:

In the interior of the stone enclosure on the motte is a rectangular building, identified as a hall. ... As first built it measured about 6.5m by 4.5m internally and had rounded corners.
(Caldwell, 1998, 39)

It appears, however, that *'not too many years after...the hall was extended eastwards to give it an internal length of about 10m.'*

The evidence indicates that the structures on Auldhill are the remains of a first-floor hall-house, or a small enclosure castle:

*Our preferred interpretation is that the stone walls are the remains of an enclosure castle (see Fig*3) containing a hall... ... There is in Scotland a series of rectangular stone enclosure castles dating to the late twelfth and the thirteenth century, the majority of them being situated in the Highlands and Island.*
(Caldwell, 1998, 69)



Figure*3 – ‘Reconstruction drawing of the stone castle, Auldhill’ (Caldwell, 1998, 69)

The construction at Auldhill of a post-Norman castle on the site of an earlier fortification appears to be paralleled at other sites in the locality:

A number of medieval castles in Cunninghame seem to be built on earlier residences. Within sight of Auldhill are Montfode Mount and Ardrossan Castle. The former appears to be the motte of the Montfode family, and the latter is a stone castle of the late 13th century, both on earlier forts or homesteads. A few miles to the east, Dalry Courthill has been identified as a motte built over the burnt remains of an early historic or medieval hall.
(Caldwell, 1998, 69)

Recent excavations at Dundonald Castle have revealed a similar pattern of occupation, dating, like Auldhill, back to prehistoric times. There appears to have been a motte-and-bailey of timber construction which probably dates from the mid-12th century (when David I granted the lands to Walter FitzAlan) built over an earlier hill-fort that appears to have been abandoned sometime around 1000 AD. Also paralleling Ardneil (‘Neil’s Hill’), Dundonald is Gaelic for ‘Donald’s Fort’, and again this may refer to one of the sub-kings or regional rulers in the area during the hegemony of the kingdom of Strathclyde. It was probably Alexander, the 4th High Steward of Scotland (c.1214-c.1283), who built the stone enclosure castle over these earlier structures sometime in the late-1200s.

All of these may be examples of sites being re-used simply because they were deemed the most suitable (defensively or otherwise) during each period, but this could also be evidence of the deliberate re-use of existing estate centres by the new landowners, implying continuity of land forms and boundaries between the pre- and post-Norman periods.

The Lordship of Cunninghame passed by marriage from the de Morvilles to the Lords of Galloway in 1196, and from them to the Balliol family in 1234. As a result, by the time the Wars of Independence began at the end of the 13th century the de Roses owed allegiance directly to John Balliol:

The most prominent member of the Ayrshire Rosses, Sir Godfrey, and his two sons Godfrey and William, were amongst the Scottish prisoners rounded-up from the castle of Dunbar in

1296 immediately after the battle there. All three are later found in the service of the English with others of their name. Sir Godfrey was Sheriff of Ayr for Edward I by 1305. His son Godfrey was later to be Sheriff of Ayr for Edward Balliol in the 1330s. The inevitable result for many of the family was forfeiture and exile in England. The Godfrey de Ros who held West Kilbride and Ardneil appears to have belonged to another branch of the family. A Robert, son of Robert de Ros of Cunninghame, was arrested in London in 1314 and was imprisoned in the Tower of London. He was described as a scholar, studying at the schools of Paris, and may have been one of the Ardneil branch of the family.
(Caldwell, 1998, 32-33)

The date of 1296 for the capture of the de Roses at Dunbar is of interest when compared with the archaeological evidence that posits a date sometime in the late-1200s or early-1300s for the construction of the stone enclosure and hall building on Auldhill. Notwithstanding their capture and apparent change of allegiance, it would seem that the family retained their possessions in Cunninghame (and may even have enhanced them) as Sir Godfrey was given the high status position of Sheriff of Ayr nine years later. Some sources record that Robert I gave the estate of Arnele and other lands in Cunninghame to Sir Robert Boyd in the year of his coronation, 1306, while others state that this was done in 1315. Both dates could be correct, with the latter a confirmation of the earlier grant.

Whatever was the date of the transfer of tenure, following the campaigns of 1332 and 1333 Edward Balliol successfully won the crown back for his family and the younger Sir Godfrey de Ros was appointed to the position of Sheriff of Ayr at which time he would have, no doubt, reclaimed his ancestral possessions.

Edward Balliol's tenure as king was brief and in reality he held power only tenuously throughout most of the country, with the result that his appointees also were under constant threat from those who opposed the English-backed puppet king:

Sir Godfrey was attacked in Cunninghame by supporters of the Bruce cause led by the Stewart and the Earl of Moray, and was persuaded to throw in his lot with them – but only briefly. When Edward III invaded Scotland in force in 1335, Sir Godfrey returned to his original allegiance after Cunninghame had been overrun by the English. It is not clear how long the Rosses held onto their Cunninghame possessions but it could have been as late as 1340 or 1341. In May 1342, four of the English king's 'vallets' – Godfrey, Thomas, Robert and Jack de Ros are noted as having lost their lands in Scotland. Sir Godfrey was killed in English service in Scotland sometime before April 1344 when his two sons petitioned Edward III for aid in recompense for their lands they had lost in Scotland. They continued to get English support but not the restitution of their lands, despite an Act of the Scottish Parliament to that effect in January 1364.
(Caldwell, 1998, 34)

It appears that the stone hall and enclosure at Auldhill could have been built at any time during this sequence, and it is just as possible that these changes were effected by the Boyds in the period 1306/15-1333 as it is that they were carried out by the de Roses prior to this. Further research would be required to illuminate this matter, but archaeological evidence does indicate that occupation of the site ended sometime in the mid-1300s and that the buildings were dismantled and their stone removed, possibly for re-use at Portencross Castle on the coastline below Auldhill (Caldwell, 1998, 41).

3.4 The Boyds

3.4.1 The Boyds of Kilmarnock

The origins of the Boyd family are not known, and there is disagreement about whether they were an incoming family like the de Morvilles and the de Roses, or a native family who became successful under the feudal system. The first record of the family is for a Robert Boyd who witnessed a contract for land in Irvine as *Dominus Robertus de Boyd, Miles* in 1205. As such, they would appear to have been vassals of the de Morvilles at this time.

In a charter in 1262 another Robert Boyd is mentioned as having distinguished himself against the forces of the Norwegian king Haakon in the Battle of Largs and, as a result, was granted lands in Cunninghame by Alexander III:

It is said that, at the Hill of Goldberry, a detachment of the Norwegians was attacked and defeated by a detachment of Scotsmen under Sir Robert Boyd, ancestor of the noble family of Kilmarnock, for which services he received a grant of land in Cuninghame.
(Paterson, 304, 1866)

Following the defeat of the Scots' forces at the Battle of Dunbar in 1296, a Robert Boyd is recorded as having sworn an oath of allegiance to Edward I on the 28th of August, but afterwards joined the cause of independence. It was probably the same Sir Robert Boyd who served alongside Robert I at Bannockburn in 1314 and was rewarded with various parcels of land, as recorded in a charter of 1316:

Robertus, etc. Sciatis nos dedisse concusisso et hae presenti carta nostra confirmasse Roberto Boyde militi dilecto et fideli nostro, pro homagio et servicio suo, omnes terras de Kylmernoc, de Bondingtone et de Hertschaw, que fuerent Johannis de Balliolo in dominico, totam terram de Kilbryde et totam terram de Ardel, que fuerant Godfridi de Ros, filii quondam Reginaldi de Ros, et totam terram que fuit Willelmi de Mora in tenemento de Ardel, cum pertinenciis. Tenendas et habendas dicto Roberto et heredibus suis de nobis et heredibus nostris in feodo et hereditate, et in unam integram et liberam baroniam, per omnes rectas metas et divisas suas, cum libere tenentibus predictarum terrarum, videlicet de terra de Meneforde, de terra Ricardi Brune, de terra Johannis de Kylmernoc, de terra Willelmi de Gobenskethe, de terra Jacobi de Templetone, de Achendolosk, de terra Roberti Scot in Ralphistone, de terra Laurencii de Mora in tenemento de Dalry, et de terra de Yngles Ardel, libere quiete plenary et honorifice, in boscis planis viis semetis moris maresiia pratis pascuis et pasturis in aquis stangnis vivariis, molendinis et multuris, in aucupacionibus piscacionibus et venacionibus, cum furca et fossa soc et sac thol et them et infangandthefe, et cum omnibus aliis libertatibus commoditatibus aysiamentis et justis pertinenciis suis tam non nominatis quam nominatis. Preterea concessimus predicto Roberto Boyde ut ipse et heredes sui habeant teneant et possideant predictam terram de Hertschaw per omnes rectas metas et divisas suas tantum in liberam forestam firmiter prohibentes ne quis sine licencia dicti Roberti vel heredum suorum speciali infra dictam terram de Hertschaw secet aucupet aut venetur super nostram plenariam forisfacturam Faciendo nobis et heredibus nostris dictus Robertus et heredes sui pro omnibus terris supradictis servicium unius militis in exercitu nostro, et unam sectam ad curiam nostram de Are ad singula placita nostra ibidem tenenda. In cujus rei, etc.

This document specifies that Robert Boyd received:

- all the lands of *Kylmernoc* (Kilmarnock), of *Bondingtone* and of *Hertschaw* that had belonged to John Balliol;
- all the lands of *Kilbryde* and all the lands of *Ardnel* which had belonged to *Godfridi de Ros*, son of *Reginaldi de Ros*;
- all the lands of *Willelmi de Mora* in the tenement (lands) of *Ardnel*.

It also details that he should hold in free barony the lands of:

- *Meneford*
- *Ricardi Brune*

- *Johannis de Kylmernoc*
- *Willelmi de Gobenskethe*
- *Jacobi de Templetone*
- *Achendolosk*
- *Roberti Scot in Ralphistone*
- *Laurencii de Mora* in the tenement of Dalry
- *Yngles Ardnel* ('English Ardnell').

Sir Robert Boyd was captured at Halidon Hill in 1333 and died soon afterwards. He was succeeded by his son, the first Sir Thomas Boyd who died in 1365 and was in turn succeeded by his son, also Sir Thomas, who himself died in 1410. It was one of these two who were responsible for the construction of the tower-house at Kilmarnock (Dean) Castle sometime after 1360. The younger Sir Thomas had two brothers: William being the progenitor of the Boyds of Badenheath, near Kirkintilloch, and Robert the first of Portencross.

Sir Thomas' great-grandson, Robert, was raised to the peerage as Lord Boyd of Kilmarnock in 1454 and became one of the most important men of his age. He was created a regent of the realm in 1460 during James III's minority and in 1466 he took possession of the young king and was made the sole governor of the realm. It was during this period that he built the high status palace wing at Dean Castle. In 1469, he negotiated the marriage between James and Margaret of Norway and in the process secured the Orkney and Shetland islands for Scotland as part of the wedding dowry. His son, Thomas, married the king's sister Mary in 1467, and was given the titles of Baron Kilmarnock and Earl of Arran in the same year.

The family's great power was to lead to its downfall, however, and in 1469 Robert, his brother Alexander, and Thomas were summoned to Edinburgh to answer charges of treason against the king. Robert and Thomas fled to England and Denmark respectively, but Alexander was executed. Robert died in the same year, and was succeeded as Lord Boyd by his grandson, James.

The family continued to take part in national life, but never again at such an exalted level. The 10th Lord, William, was created the 1st Earl of Kilmarnock in 1661, but his great-grandson, also William, chose to support Prince Charles Edward Stuart in the 1745 Rebellion and, after being captured at the Battle of Culloden, was executed in London in 1746. His son, James, however, fought on the Government side and so was able to claim back the family estates: by this time they were living in their townhouse in Kilmarnock, Dean Castle having been largely destroyed in a fire in 1735. In 1758, James inherited the Earldom of Erroll on the death of his mother and as a consequence he changed his name to Hay and sold the Kilmarnock estates to his cousin, the Earl of Glencairn., thus ending the connection between the Boyds and Kilmarnock after almost 450 years.

3.4.2 The Boyds of Portencross

Robert, third son of Sir Robert Boyd of Kilmarnock, tempore Robert II obtained the lands of Ardnell and others, probably in patrimony, from his father; and consequently was the first of the Boyds of Portincross.

(The Maitland Club, 1858, 160)

As referred to above, the progenitor of the Boyds of Portencross was Robert, the third son of Sir Thomas Boyd, the grandson of Sir Robert Boyd:

He appears as a witness to a charter dated 1372, and was still alive in 1444 when a charter was given him of the lands of Ardnell by his nephew, Thomas Boyd of Kilmarnock.

(Caldwell, 1998, 34)

He was succeeded by his son, also Robert, who married '*Giles Craufurd of the house of Auchinames, and by whom he had his successor, also named Robert.*'

This Robert married Giles, daughter of Campbell of Stevenston, and who was recorded as '*his relict in 1531.*' His son, the fourth Robert, married Isobel, the daughter of John Mure of Rowallan: he had a charter from his father, dated 6th June 1520, for the lands of Knockindale in Kyle-Stewart. Their son and successor was the fifth Robert, who married Elizabeth, the third daughter and one of the co-heiresses of David Fairlie of that Ilk (all data about the Boyds of Portencross from Boyd, 1924).

His successor was his son, Archibald, and both of them fought beside Queen Mary at the Battle of Langside in 1571, the year before Robert died. Archibald was succeeded by his eldest son, Robert, who was a signatory of the will drawn up by his brother Hew who died in October 1610 where he was designed as '*Ard. Boyde, vnder ye hill.*' This document states that Hew was a '*burges of Irwen*' ('*burgess of Irvine*'), and the contents show us what kinds of '*guids and gear*' belonged to a respectable merchant during this period:

Ane gray naig, by the airschipe hors

Item, tway ky, with the stirks

Item, thrie zoung ky in Ireland

Item, in the borne and borneziard, Ten bolles beir, pryce of the boll, with the foddir

Item, sex bolles salt, pryce of the boll

Item, twa kists of hogheids with als mony rungis to set thame vp

Item, auctein fir daills

Item, auch dussane of Ireland buirdis, at fourtie shillings ilk dussane

Item, twa stanes of woll, pryce of the stane

Item, sax feddir beddis, by the airschipe...with their furnitour

Item, Tuentie twa pair of scheittis, by the airschip

Item, buird claithes, and five dussane of serveitts, by the airschip

Item, thrie dussane and ane half of pewdir plaitis, with twa dussane and thrie trunscheouris

Item, an brasin basen

Item, thrie pynt stopis and thrie choppein stopis

Item, twa brasyne chandleris

Item, thrie little kists and ane chyre

Item, sax sylwir spwnis..with twa brokin spwnis

Item, thrie auld gunis

Item, the abuilzement of the defunct's bodie

(Paterson, 1866, 317)

The seventh laird was another Robert, and he married Jean, second daughter of Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie, who died in December 1621:

... in an inventory of the effects within the fortalice of Portincross, taken in 1621, it appears, inter alia, to have contained 'ten fedder beddis, with their furnishings, which is so far illustrative of the manners of these times; for it is clear two or three of these must have belonged to each chamber.'

(Paterson, 1866, 310)

Jean's will also includes details of other property and, more interestingly, provision for her children:

After listing much property and gear including 'ane quhyt hors, pryce xl lib; Item ane dvne hors pryce xl lib; Item, four auld pleughe naigis, pryce of the piece x lib; Item aucht tidieky,

pryce of thame all lxxxxvi' she makes these legacies: '...to help our bairnes Nans, Elspeth and Barbara Boyds, eftir this maner, viz, to Nans 800 merks, to Elspeth 700 merks and to Barbara 500...' etc. Adding this proviso: 'And I leif my brother Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie, and George our brother, to be overseers to my bairnes; and ordanes thame with my husband, to gif the portion that is left to ony of my dochteris to the rest of our bairnes, incais, as God forbid, ony of thame abuis their bodeys in harlotrie.'
(Tranter, 1965, 58)

He had five sons and three daughters, who survived their mother, the eldest of which, Robert, predeceased his father in March 1634. By his marriage to Elizabeth, daughter of Alexander Cunningham of Carlung, he left a son, Robert, who succeeded his grandfather on 19th July 1658 in the lands of Ardneil and others in Cunninghame and Kyle-Stewart:

... in the five merk land of Ardneill within the parochin of Kilbryde and Bailyarie of Cunninghame; to the 30 shilling land of the Maynes of Hellingtown; the 2 merk land of Muir of Hellingtown; the half of the Myln of Hellingtown; the 46 shilling 8 pence land of Knockindaill; the 4 merk land of Harrickhill of old extent, within the Bailyary of Kyle-Stewart.

He married a daughter of Gavin Blair of Auldmuir, son to the Laird of Blair, and died sometime between March 1694 and September 1695. He was succeeded by his only son, Robert, who married Antonia, second daughter of Sir Robert Montgomerie of Skelmorlie, but both of their children, Hew and Liliass, died young.

When Robert died sometime before 1714 he left no direct heir and the titles and estates passed to his sister's son, William Fullarton. He took the surname of Boyd, and in 1714 he married Grizel Campbell by whom he had a son, John, and four daughters. In 1746 (also reported in some records as 1737) he alienated the ancient family estate of Arnele/Portincross to Patrick Crauford, Esq. of Auchnames, and afterwards acquired the lands of Balnakill, in Kintyre, where he died. He was succeeded by his only son, John Boyd, who died without issue at Skipness sometime around 1784.

3.5 The Parish of Kilbride

There are the ruins of five houses or castles in the parish, viz., Portincross, Law, Corsbie (sic), Hunterstoun and Southanan.
(Paterson, 1866, 309)

The subdivision of the post-Norman landscape around West Kilbride into a number of smaller estates took place over a long period, as areas of the major landholdings like Arnele and Hunterstoun were granted or sold off. Further research is required to define the detail of this process, but an examination of the history of the principal castle sites in the parish can provide an outline chronology for the development of the area (see Fig*4).

Examination of documentary sources can also provide information relating to other elements of the landscape:

Between Portencross and Hunterston there is a property called Thirdpart. In 1547, John Cuninghame of Glengarnock was given sasine of the five merk land of old extent of Third part of Ardneil. Adjacent to Thirdpart is the Campbelton already mentioned. Writing at the beginning of the 17th century the topographer Timothy Pont quotes an 'old comon Rithme' to the effect that Campbelton was one of the properties gifted by Alexander III to one of the Crawfurds for service at the Battle of Largs in 1263. In 1535, this five merk land of old extent

was sold to Robert Hunter of Hunterston by Sir William Cuninghame, Lord of the fee of the Earldom of Glencairn.
(Caldwell, 1998, 33)



Figure*4 – Location map of castle sites in and around the parish of West Kilbride
(Pastmap, Crown copyright 2006)

3.5.1 The Hunters of Hunterston and Little Cumbrae

The official listing for Hunterston Castle records that the 3-storey tower-house dates from the 15th or early-16th centuries, and has a 17th century house abutting it. However, Davis (1991, 287) states that it is ‘*maybe much older*’, probably because of the antiquity of the estate and of the Hunter family themselves:

The Estate of Hunterstoun, comprising Hunterstoun and Campbeltoun, two coterminous properties...is situated on the coast to the westward of Southannan. It is the only portion of the parish which, from its earliest division in the C12, has remained unalienated, and is the seat of the Hunters of Hunterstoun, or of that Ilk, a family of great antiquity.
(Paterson, 327, 1866)

Some authorities believe that the Hunter family arrived in Ayrshire with the de Morvilles and that they settled at Hunterston in the 12th century, but documentary evidence appears to indicate otherwise:

In 1374, Robert II granted William Hunter a charter of that land of Ardneil formerly given up by Andrew Campbell, Knight, to be held of the Crown for one silver penny at Ardneil at Whitsunday. Later documents in the Hunter charter chest show that this was not the property

known as Campbelton but the five pound land of old extent of Ardneil Hunter, known since the 16th century as Hunterston. Earlier genealogists would have us believe that the Hunter family was settled here as early as the 12th century but this seems incapable of proof on the basis of the surviving documents. There was certainly an Aylmar de Huntar of Ayrshire who did homage to Edward I in 1296.
(Caldwell, 1998, 33)

Their name (from the Latin 'Venator') derives from their position as keepers of the local Royal Forests, but the date of elevation to this high office is not actually known:

The last mention of it is in a grant by James V, dated 31st May 1527, in which the island of Little Cumbrae was conferred on Robert Hunter of Hunterstoune and his spouse, Janet Montgomerie, and their heirs, "of which island and lands, with pertinents, the said Robert and his predecessors were in times past for us and for our predecessors the hereditary keepers."
(Paterson, 334, 1866)

Exactly when Little Cumbrae was designated as a Royal Forest is not known, but it was apparently in existence at least as early as the late-14th century:

The Auld Castle was built prior to the year 1375, for in the spring of that year King Robert II. made it his place of abode for a season. The fact is proved by a charter which the king, in the midst of his hunting and fishing expeditions, found time to seal and authenticate by the royal sign manual. Again, in the spring of 1384, the king is sojourning in the same island, and from his royal residence there dates another charter.
(Lytteil, 1886)

It is presumed that the king would have had a suitable place to stay on the island, but it is not entirely clear whether the tower-house on Castle Island dates from this period, or whether it was a replacement for an, earlier, 14th century (or earlier) structure built by Robert II or one of his Stewart ancestors. The official listing only states that it was 'occupied by Robert II in 1375 and 1384', but recent research has produced an alternative date for this structure:

A category of its own is formed by licences issued by the king or Parliament for reasons of national security or as a safeguard against pirates or enemy invasion. ... Some of them refer to the small but sturdy tower house of Little Cumbrae; several times over, the king demanded of the tenant that a mansionem be built there: in 1527 of Robert Hunter of Hunterston, in 1532/33 of Robert Semple, and in 1534, again of Robert Hunter. In 1537, finally, the fief was granted to Hugh, Earl of Eglinton, with the explicit permission that a tower, too, could be built (see below). In 1545, at long last, there stood a tower on the island; it was built, hence, between the years 1537 and 1545.
(Zeune, 1992, 113)

Further research is required to clarify this matter, but we are left with the possibility that the castle is 16th century in origin and that the earlier structure was demolished to make way for it or has been incorporated into the later fabric.

Hunting was a vital part of a noble life for medieval royalty and aristocracy across Europe, and was seen as far more than simply a pastime: it was an important arena for social interaction, essential training for war, and a privilege and measurement of nobility. Controlled areas like Royal Forests and deer parks were also important elements of the manorial economy for the supply of food, wood and other resources.

Charlemagne, king of the Franks and Holy Roman Emperor, was known for his pack of hunting dogs, and it was during his reign that the concept of the 'Royal Forest' became law. This created tracts of land where game (the *venison*) was protected and the cutting of wood and vegetation (the *vert*) was controlled too. As a result, permanent game parks recognisably similar to those in medieval Britain existed in mainland Europe from at least as early as the 9th century.

William the Conqueror brought the infamous 'Forest Laws' to England after the Conquest. This was a distinct legal system with its own courts and royal officials which operated alongside the common law and under which controlled lands could fall under several designations:

- i. Forest
This was the highest level of land, normally in the ownership of the King and only hunted on by his servants or by royal licence. The four animals covered by forest law were red deer, fallow deer, roe deer, and wild boar. These animals could be hunted outside the forest by others but not pursued through the King's lands.
- ii. Chase
A chase was similar to a forest but the right of hunting was granted to some nobleman other than the King. Transgressions, principally poaching, were punishable by common law rather than forest law. The beasts of the chase included fallow deer, roe deer, fox, and marten.
- iii. Park
A park was an area enclosed by a fence or pale, used to contain the beasts of the forest. The principle function was to provide meat for the table and transgressions were again treated under common law outside the forest. The animals were similar to those in the chase.
- iv. Warren
The public had the right to hunt any beast over common land unless such right had been restricted by some special royal grant, usually a 'right of free warren' over a specific area, giving the holder exclusive rights over the nominated animals within the area rather than an enclosure like a park. The animals of the warren were principally the hare, coneys (rabbits), pheasants, partridge, woodcock, etc., plus beasts of vermin and the chase such as fox, badger, martin and otter.

Punishments for breaking the Forest Law could be severe. In 1087 the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle recorded of William that:

He made many deer-parks; and he established laws therewith; so that whosoever slew a hart, or a hind, should be deprived of his eyesight. As he forbade men to kill the harts, so also the boars; and he loved the tall deer as if he were their father. Likewise he decreed by the hares, that they should go free.

His son, William Rufus, also a keen hunter, increased the severity of the penalties for various offences to include death and mutilation, including being blinded, or having hands or testicles cut off. Usually, however, transgressors were fined or imprisoned, although for severe cases you could be outlawed (which in reality was a form of death penalty).

The most famous of these controlled 'forests' is the New Forest in Hampshire, which William created in 1079. Another is Sherwood Forest, which by the 13th century covered nearly

100,000 acres, almost a fifth of the entire county of Nottinghamshire. There were a number in Scotland, the most famous possibly being Holyrood Park.

As a Royal Forest, therefore, Little Cumbrae was a place of high status where only royalty and those they favoured were allowed to hunt and even to visit and the position of Keeper of the Forest was one of great importance. When *William Hunter*, of *Arnele-Hunter*, was recorded in the Exchequer Roll of 1453 as *Custos* or Hereditary Keeper of the Forest of the *Little Cumbray*, it was said to be well stocked with deer and rabbits, but by the early-16th century the incumbent, the minor *Robert Hunter*, apparently found himself unable to cope with serious trespassers and poachers. As a result, the Regent Albany, representing the young James V, granted, on the 28th October 1515, a charter to Hugh Montgomerie, first Earl of Eglinton:

that the ile of Litill Comeray, liand within our baillerie of Cunynghame, and schirefdome of Are is waistit and distroyit be divers personis that slais the dere and cunyugis thair of, and pastures bestis thairintill maisterfully be way of dede without licence, tolerance, or consent of Robert Huntare of Hunterstoun, forestar of heritage of the said ile the quhilk personis the said Robert may nocht resist, because he is nocht of substance and power without supple and help:-Tharefor we, with advise and consent of our said tutour ands governour for reformacion, gud reule, and saufte of the said ile in tyme cummyng, hes maid constitut and ordanit...Hew Erle of Eglintoune and his assignais ane or maa, our fearis, correkaris and supplearis of our said ile of Litill Comeray...
(Paterson, 1866, 341-2)

When the Earl died in 1545 he left 'all and hale the ile of Litel Cumrays, with the tour and fortilage' to his heir. In 1565 Queen Mary, on her marriage to Darnley, conveyed 'The isle of Cumry' to the Semples of Belltrees, but it was later returned to the Eglinton family (Brotchie, 1911, 174).

In his Description of the Western Isles of 1594, Bishop Donald Munro was still able to observe that:

Besides this (the Greater Cumbray) lyes ane iyle callit Cumbray of the Dais (deer), because there is many Dayis intill it.
(Brotchie, 1911, 174)

The age of the Royal Forest was coming to an end by this time, and the removal of James VI to England in 1603 probably meant that Little Cumbrae's traditional role was over and the role of Keeper was to become, in time, purely ceremonial.

3.5.2 The Craufurds of Crosbie and Auchenames

Corsbie Castle stands amidst some fine old wood, about a mile east of the village of Kilbride. It was inhabited at the beginning of the seventeenth century, when Timothy Pont made his survey. He says: "Crosby toure is the habitatione of William Craufurd of Auchnaims, by divers thought to be chieffe of the Craufurds. He holds the same of the Earls of Glencairne. This surname is very ancient, and did memorable service under King Alexander 3d, at the batell of Largis, by quhome their good service was recompensed with divers great lands and possessions. According the old common rithme:- 'They had had Draffen, Meithweine, and rich erth Stevinstone, Cameltonne, Knockawart, and fair Lowdoune.'
(Paterson, 311, 1866)

The current Crosbie Tower dates from the 17th century, but the estate is much older:

The first Craufurd of Crosbie appears to have been Sir Reginald de Craufurd, uncle of William Wallace...
(Paterson, 322, 1866)

Thomas Craufurd of Auchinames appears in a charter of confirmation by Robert II, dated at Arneil, on the 24th October 1401, and at the beginning of the 17th century Timothy Pont describes 'Crosby-Toure' as *'the habitatione of William Craufurd of Achinames.'* This must refer to an earlier building on the site, possibly the one in which William Wallace was sheltered.

By the 1820s the Crafurds of Crosbie and Auchinames had abandoned Crosbie in favour of a *'neat cottage residence'* at Portencross, but in 1837 Edward Craufurd of Crosbie and Auchinames had the castle *'restored in good taste'* (Davis, 1991, 224).

3.5.3 Law Castle

Law Castle - also known as Kilbride Castle - is a tower-house that stands on a hill just to the east of the village of Kilbride. It is said to have been built in 1468 by Thomas Boyd for his bride, Mary, sister of James III (see 3.4.1. above), and appears to have been completed by 1510.

In the early-17th century, Timothy Pont described Law as *'a strong grate Dounjon'* (Davis, 1991, 317), but it later fell into ruin before being fully restored in 1998.

3.5.4 Southanan

Southanan was one of the mansions of the Sempill family, to whom the property belonged from the time of Bruce. It is situated close upon the sea; and though it has long been in a state of decay, it still bears evidence of its former splendour. The site is beautifully wooded and is altogether one of the most delightful on the coast.
(Paterson, 314, 1866)

The original castle at Southanan dates from sometime before 1596 when it was enlarged by Robert, 4th Lord Sempill:

The ruins standing close to the later mansion represent one of the former seats of the Sempill family. ... William Harvey tells us the "It was erected by a Lord Semple from a design which he procured in Italy, and was one of the most ambitious buildings built during the reign of James VI."
(Davis, 1991, 376)

The castle appears to have been dismantled and mostly pulled down in the late-18th century and the materials used to build dykes and farm buildings.

4.0 Portencross Castle

Fine example of a 14th century Scottish stronghold and a conspicuous object to all voyagers on the Clyde. Unusual L-plan, the wing being placed at the end of the oblong keep and not at the side as is usual; entrance doorway on ground floor and another on 1st floor, both in the re-entering angle but on different faces; whole of ground floor is vaulted, as well as the hall on 1st floor; a peculiarity is that such a small building as this should have two kitchens; arrangement of stairs allowed servants entering by the lower door to reach upper floors and battlements without going through the hall and disturbing its occupants; hall is lighted by two

large windows with stone seats; rooms in tower were evidently bedrooms and are provided with fireplaces and garde-robres.

(Official Listing Citation, HB NO.14280)

4.1 The Pre-Castle Landscape

Very little is known about the origin or the development of Portencross Castle. There is no surviving charter or other document granting permission to build a castle, and no references in any later documents to a date of foundation. Further research in the form of archaeological excavation or a standing building survey would undoubtedly add valuable knowledge to the discussion on the history and development of the site, but, for the purposes of this study, extrapolation from other sources is the only available method of enquiry.

As discussed above, the lands of Arnele held by the de Ros family from sometime in the 12th or 13th centuries, during which time they built a series of fortified dwellings on the site of earlier structures on Auldhill. The final phase of these developments appears to have been a first-floor hall-house or a small enclosure castle dating from the late-13th or early-14th centuries. The end of the de Ros family's period of tenure at Arnele seems to have been protracted, starting with the capture of Sir Godfrey de Ros in 1296 and his return as Sheriff of Ayr in 1305. Some records indicate that Robert I gave the lands of Arnele to the Boyds in 1306, the year of his coronation, while others indicate that this happened in 1315, the year after Bannockburn. The son of Sir Godfrey was back in 1333, however, when he served as Sheriff of Ayr, but it seems that by 1340 or 1341 their claim to the land was effectively over.

The lands of Arnele became the patrimony of a branch of the Boyds of Kilmarnock, the progenitor being Robert Boyd, the youngest brother of Sir Thomas Boyd who was baron from 1365 to 1410. As discussed above, it was either this Sir Thomas or his father who began construction of Dean Castle sometime after 1360.

It is evidence from Royal charters signed at Arnele that seem to provide some of the strongest evidence for the earliest construction date for Portencross Castle:

There are no authentic references to a castle at Ardneil prior to the 1370s though various writers have averred that Robert Bruce granted a charter at Ardneil in 1307. The charter in question is actually one of 1400 by Robert III, confirming to John Fullerton the lands of Kilmichael in Arran. The error of dating copied by so many historians seems to have been perpetrated originally by Sir Walter Scott in a note to canto 6 of Lord of the Isles. The charter of Robert II to Fergus Fullerton, dated Ardneil 1372, and cited by Lamb is evidently a misreading of a charter of 1391 by Robert III. These two documents apart, there are fifteen acts of Robert II dated at Ardneil, covering the period from March 1371 to the year of his death in 1390. The Ardneil of these documents is not likely to have been the castle on Auldhill but the castle of Portencross.

(Caldwell, 1998, 34)

There are also documents recording payments made in connection with royal visits to the castle in 1382, 1387, and 1388. The occurrence of so many charters and other documents from this period has previously led to the assertion that Portencross was the site of a royal castle such as Dundonald or Rothesay, but it appears that the frequency of visits made by the first Stewart king may actually have been because it was 'a convenient resting place for the king on his travels between his castles of Dundonald and Rothesay, or when hunting on Little Cumbrae, three miles across the water' (Caldwell, 1998, 34).

The evidence from the excavation on Auldhill appears to indicate that the hall or castle there was dismantled sometime in the mid-14th century, and this would seem to corroborate

Caldwell's assertion that the charters of 1371 onwards were issued while the king was staying at Portencross Castle. This would provide an earliest time-frame of construction of pre-1371, and, taking into account the archaeological data from Auldhill and the evidence that construction work was begun at Dean Castle in the 1360s, it would appear that the likeliest date for construction of the first phase of Portencross Castle lies between the late-1360s and 1370. This would also indicate the probability that it was the first Robert Boyd of Ardneil/Portencross who was responsible for the work.

The use of Portencross Castle as a departure point for journeys to other locations in the Firth and Clyde (and possibly beyond) raises the issue of why the site of the principal dwelling-house was removed from Auldhill down to the coastline, and whether the late-14th century phase discussed above was the first development of the site. As discussed above, a location on the coast would have given the inhabitants of Auldhill a vital access to the sea, which by the 5th and 6th centuries was the predominant routeway for trade and communication. The growth in power of the Norse kingdoms of Man and Dublin in the 9th and 10th centuries, and the consequent rise of the Lordship of the Isles in the Hebrides in the mid-12th century were all based on maritime power.

As such, it seems unlikely that the people who lived in an important coastal location such as Auldhill would not have had access to their own vessels, and this raises the issue of how the coastline at Portencross was utilized and from what period. The inhabitants of 'Neil's Hill' in the early medieval period would almost certainly have used boats to fish and to travel, either along the coast or across open water to Little Cumbrae, Kintyre or even Ireland.

The Old Harbour at Portencross is situated beside the castle, and it is listed as late medieval because of this, i.e. it was constructed to serve the castle. However, it may be equally valid to argue that the castle is sited where it is because of the existence of the harbour, i.e. the latter pre-dated the late-14th century development. If so, then the harbour could date at least from the period when the de Ros family built and occupied Auldhill, and therefore should be seen as an element of that pre-14th century landscape and land use pattern. This would also raise the possibility that the location of Portencross Castle was chosen to respect this pre-14th century landscape, and may indeed have formed an important part of it, i.e. the site of an earlier phase of development relating to the harbour and its role in the use of the sea. However, the possibility that there was an earlier building on the site of the castle or near to it could only be investigated using archaeological excavation.

4.2 The Castle

4.2.1 Interpretation of the Castle Fabric

The first analysis of Portencross Castle was provided by Macgibbon and Ross in 1889:

A ruin, situated on a rough but level rocky platform, which juts into the Frith of Clyde about two miles from West Kilbride Railway Station. Although on a low situation (the rocks being only a few feet above high-water level), it is a conspicuous object to all voyagers on the Clyde. On the land side the site is overshadowed by the high and precipitous cliffs of Ardneil, densely covered with coppice-wood. The castle is a fine example of an early Scottish stronghold, and, although entirely neglected, is in a fair state of preservation. The plan is somewhat peculiar, the wing being placed at the end of the oblong keep and not at the side, as is usual with buildings of the L plan. The main block measures 58 feet 1 inch from east to west by 31 feet in breadth, and is about 35 feet 6 inches high to the parapet walk, above which it rises about 15 feet more to the top of the existing masonry of the smaller limb, which is higher than the main portion. There is an entrance doorway on the ground floor, and

another on the first floor, both being in the re-entering angle, but on different faces. The whole of the ground floor is vaulted, as well as the hall upon the first floor.

In approaching the castle it is apparent that there has been a wall containing an outer gateway between it and the edge of the rock; the checked rybat of the jamb being wrought on one angle of the building. A path about 8 feet 6 inches wide leads to the door, inside of which a steep and dark straight flight of steps leads in the thickness of the wall to the first floor, where it terminates, and from the landing a wheel-stair in the south wall leads to the top. The central wall containing the staircase divides the castle into two parts. The large apartment on the ground floor has the rock for its pavement, and seems as if it had at one time been a stable. The large window at the north-west angle (which, however, is doubtless an insertion), is protected by being opposite a place where the water is deep. All the other windows on this floor are easily accessible, but they are mere slits.

A peculiarity of this structure is that such a small building should have two kitchens, one on the ground floor and the other on the first floor. It may have been considered necessary, in a castle which was frequently inhabited by royalty, that a kitchen should not only be conveniently placed for the hall, but also that another kitchen should be provided for the servants and retainers, who would probably be somewhat numerous. It will further be observed from the plans that servants or others entering by the lower door could reach the upper floors and battlements without going through the hall and disturbing its occupants; while all entering by the upper door had to go through the hall. The dark lower kitchen is 8 feet 8 inches wide by 6 feet 9 inches long, or, with the arched fireplace, 11 feet 2 inches long. A rough doorway has been slapped into this kitchen from the outside. That an opening should have been cut through here during the later occupation of the castle is not to be wondered at, as the original entrance to this kitchen off the stair, with steps up and down in the dark passage, is very awkward. At the top of the stair to the first floor, a door on the right hand leads into the hall, and another on the left into the upper kitchen. The hall is 24 feet long by 16 feet 6 inches wide, and 19 feet 4 inches to the top of the vault. There seems to have been an upper room in the vault, reached by a doorway from a landing in the wheel-stair, but it is now built up. A large window over the hall fireplace gave light to this apartment in the vault. The hall itself is lighted by two large windows with stone seats, that on the south side having evidently been enlarged at a later date. A mural chamber at the south-west angle enters off one of these windows. A service window opens from the kitchen into a recess adjoining the entrance passage. At the top of the wheel-stair there are two doorways, both leading into the main block, one into a chamber in the roof space over the hall, and the other into the parapet walk which runs round the building. After passing round this walk, a flight of steps about 6 feet wide is reached leading up to the parapet walk of the wing, which is about 8 feet higher than the walk of the main block. This additional height permits of the introduction of two floors above the kitchen, and there was besides a place in the attic, which has evidently been enlarged at some later period by raising the parapet on the south side and including the walk in the room. These rooms in the tower were evidently bedrooms, and are provided with fireplaces and garde-robres.

(Macgibbon and Ross, 1889, 151-156)

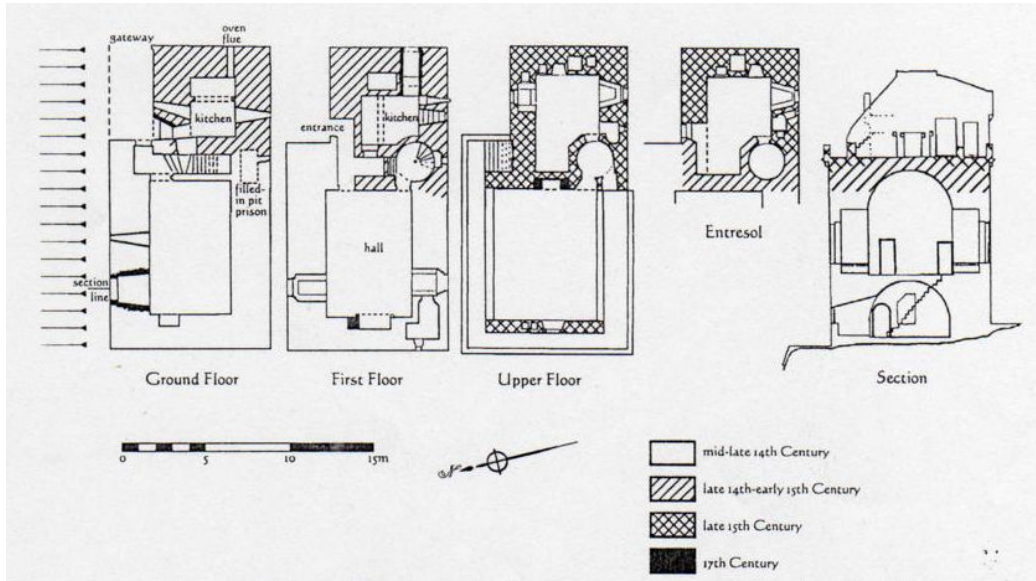
Having compared the fabric of Portencross with other structures in their study, they surmised that it belonged to what they defined as 'castles of the Second Period', i.e. 1300-1400. As such, they thought that, alterations and additions aside, it was largely constructed in one principal phase and seemed to bear close comparison to three other L-plan castles of the Second Period, i.e. Cessford Castle in Roxburghshire, Dalhousie Castle in Midlothian, and Ravenscraig Castle in Aberdeenshire.

However, Caldwell (1998, 74) posited that the fabric contains evidence for four distinct phases of development of the castle (see Fig*5):

- Phase*1 – '...as originally built in the mid- or late-14th century, it consisted of the present main block, measuring 9.5 m by 12.1 m, with walls over 2 m thick. It had a

hall at first floor level over a vaulted cellar, and probably an attic above, and may conveniently be called a hall-house.'

- Phase*2 – 'The wing at Portencross was added prior to the mid-15th century...'
- Phase*3 – '...the whole structure significantly modified after that, probably in the later part of the C15, by the heightening of the jamb and the creation of the present attics and battlements'
- Phase*4 – 'In the late-17th century further alterations were made to provide accommodation for more than one family of local fishermen.'



Figure*5 – 'Plans of Portencross Castle, based on MacGibbon and Ross (1889)'
(Caldwell, 1998, 74)

4.2.2 Phase*1 – The Hall-House

The original hall-house is built of large cut blocks of purplish-red sandstone which could well have been quarried from the outcrops around the castle. They are mostly rectangular and laid in rough courses with lime mortar. The quoins and dressed stones around doorways and embrasures are of a white sandstone that occurs two miles away in a quarry at Kaims Hill. The ground-floor entrance doorway at the north-east corner has a segmental arc and a cavetto moulding. ... It is checked on the interior to take a door but there are no signs of the slots which might have been expected to secure a main entrance with heavy beams. Its jamb stones are set in a matrix of small packing stones, suggesting they may have been tampered with. It gives access to a vaulted passage with stairs up the floor above, and another finely executed doorway with a segmental arch, checked both inside and out for doors, giving access to the ground floor. The vaulted ground-floor chamber is ventilated rather than lit by a narrow loop overlooking the harbour. The floor appears to be a mixture of bedrock and paving slabs and there is a small wall cupboard low in the back wall.

The steps of the stair leading up to the first floor have obviously been replaced. ... At the top the vaulted passage over them has been cut back to provide head-room. The east wall of the hall is built of small slab-like stones different in character to the rest of the walls and would appear to be largely a rebuild, but the doorway off the stair incorporates several jamb stones which are probably from the original entrance. There was probably a small lobby here in the thickness of the wall, prior to the construction of the circular stair. A hatch in the floor gave access to a small pit prison below, with its own ventilation loop in the south wall.

The debris which now completely fills it would have been packed in when the construction of the circular stair made continued use impossible.

The hall is a spacious chamber, 7.7 x 5 m, originally unvaulted. In its west wall was a large fireplace, one jamb of which survives, and it was flanked in the north and south walls by windows with ample stone seats lining the recesses. Off the southern window recess is a large cupboard or garderobe in the south-west corner of the building, with its own small window facing west. Above the hall was an attic, the floor of which was supported on beams slotted into the side walls. Access to it may have been by ladder.

(Caldwell, 1998, 74-76)

The identification of a possible hall-house phase at Portencross places it within one stream of current theory which suggests that many of the complexes identified as tower-houses may actually have begun as first-floor hall-houses of a type found across England following the Norman Conquest:

At Aros on Mull, Carrick on Loch Goil, and Skipness in Kintyre are rare examples of 'hall castles'. There were doubtless more, but being less substantial structures they have not survived so well the rigours of time. ... The present structure at Skipness Castle looks on first examination to be a mighty enclosure castle dating from the close of the 13th century, but embedded in the fabric are substantial remains of an earlier hall castle. This comprised two free-standing buildings, one a two-storey residence, with the lord's hall on the upper floor - hence the generic name - and the other a single-storey chapel. There may well have been other structures as well, and everything would probably have been enclosed by a defensive wall of earth and timber.

(Tabraham, 1997, p.37)

The single best survival of a hall-house in Scotland which has not been incorporated into a later development is Rait Castle in Nairnshire. The manor of Rait first appears on record in 1238, but on architectural grounds the hall castle appears to have been built towards the end of the 13th century by either Sir Gervaise de Rait, the Constable of Nairn Castle, or his younger brother, Sir Andrew (Tabraham, 1997, p.55). The site is not naturally defensive, being low-lying and overlooked by a steep hillside on the south, and *'the house itself appears more of a dacha than a castle'* (Gifford, 1992, p.284):

Rait, like Skipness, is a two storey building, measuring about 20 by 10m (66 by 33 ft), with an unvaulted basement and an upper hall. The hall was entered from the outside through an impressive doorway, protected by a portcullis and a drawbar. There would have been a screen, closing off this end from the hall itself and forming a lobby; it may have had a minstrels' gallery above it. At the far end of the hall from the screen would have been the high table, the 'hie burde', where the lord and his family took their meals, bathed in sunlight streaming through the large windows confined to this end of the hall and heated by the handsome hooded fireplace. A projecting round tower, entered from the 'hie burde' end housed the lord's private apartment and a narrow rectangular projection on the other side of the building was the latrine. The basement, unheated and indifferently lit, was probably used for storage. There seems also to have been an attic in the roof space, from which access was gained to a defensive wall-walk. The kitchen and other service rooms were probably housed in timber buildings outside in the barmkin or courtyard; the remnant of one such structure is visible attached to the gable beside the doorway. All were enclosed within a perimeter wall.

(Tabraham, 1997, 54-55)

As it is possible that the putative first phase hall-house at Portencross was built to replace the final phase building on Auldhill, further comparison between the two sites could be of interest both locally and nationally, especially with regard to the development of the tower-house type across Scotland as a whole:

There is still no consensus of the emergence and early development of the tower-house type in Scotland, though its roots could lie in the later 13th century.
(Fawcett, 1994, 20)

Placed within this context, Portencross may be part of a nationally insignificant group of small, hall-house type structures, or maybe provides a good example of a much wider phase of development of the tower-house type across the country as a whole:

It remains to be seen whether other hall-houses of similar size, style and date to Portencross can be identified. Portencross might be a special case, a miniature, simplified version of the enormous hall-house (normally, but misleadingly, called a tower-house) built by King Robert II at nearby Dundonald. On the other hand, the RCAHMS have recently identified a small unvaulted hall-house incorporated into a tower-house at Torthorwald in Dumfries and Galloway. Perhaps more await discovery.
(Caldwell, 1998, 74)

4.2.3 Phase*2 – The East Wing

At a later date the hall-house was remodelled, principally by the addition of a jamb to provide extra accommodation and kitchen facilities. The resultant tower-house was typical of several others in having an L-plan, but different from them in having its wing off a short, rather than a long face of the main block... Choice of position for it was limited by the sea on two sides and the need not to block the south hall window. By placing it to the east it was also possible to make the entrance more secure. The rocky ledge alongside the harbour was built up with rubble to provide a path to the door set in the re-entrant angle at ground floor level. Access was further restricted by a gate at the north-east corner of the new wing, as evidenced by the rebate cut in the quoins of the wing and the springing for an arch.

Apart from the gaucheness of the design the evidence that the jamb was not part of the original scheme of building is the treatment of architectural details, for instance the use of lintels on doors and passages. There is no obvious evidence for dating it, but we can suggest it was built sometime in the late-14th or first half of the 15th century.

The erection of the jamb must have involved the removal of most of the east wall of the hall-house. The stone used is mostly the same purplish sandstone as in the main block, with white sandstone for the quoins. There is no obvious joint in the masonry of the south wall as the quoins of the south-east corner of the hall-house have been taken out, but the eastern portion is less weathered and the blocks of stone are laid more regularly. A circular stair was inserted at the junction between main block and wing, starting at first floor level and providing access to the upper storeys and roof. There is a corbel in the south face near the south-east corner, between the first-floor and the entresol, which may be a relic of a timber gallery at this point.

The ground floor of the wing is entered by a door off the stairs from the ground floor entrance. This is contrived very awkwardly with a window embrasure in the wing wall to provide enough width for access. The room is vaulted, has two loops for ventilation in stepped embrasures to raise them well clear of the ground, and a third loop positioned to command the ground floor entrance. A capacious fireplace in the east wall with a large flue, was obviously intended for cooking. The front of the fire is now marked solely by two corbels in the side walls, positioned to support a hood. Low in the back wall is a small blocked opening for an oven. ...

The room in the first floor of the wing was supposed by MacGibbon and Ross to have been a second kitchen. On the assumption that the castle all dated to the time of Robert II, they reasoned that two kitchens would have been necessary, one to cater for the requirements of the royal guest and his retinue, the other for the laird and his family. The evidence for this second kitchen on the first floor is confined to a hatch in the west wall which would have

served well for passing food into the hall, and a corbel adjacent to the hatch, identified as the support for a hood of an enormous fireplace taking up the northern third of the chamber. There are no signs of a flue in the wall above...and the serving hatch would have, most inconveniently, been in the fireplace itself. Nevertheless, the identification of this chamber as a kitchen with a large fireplace does not appear unreasonable. It should also be pointed out that several other Scottish L-plan tower-houses like Craigmillar, Neidpath and Cessford were planned with a kitchen in the wing adjacent to the hall. We might assume that it was the desire to have such a conveniently located kitchen which was one of the main motives behind the development of the L-plan.

The main entrance to the remodelled castle was the door at first-floor level in the north wall of the wing. Two slots below it were for supporting a timber platform and steps. Access to the hall was along a short passage, and to the private accommodation above from the mural stair leading off the hall. In the original arrangement of the wing there would have been at least one storey above this kitchen.

The hall was now vaulted and it is probable that the attic floor was done away with, thus creating an impressive chamber, almost 6m high, with an extra window high up in its west wall.. The vault is made of bright red sandstone blocks and the exterior walls corresponding level to its haunches are predominantly of basalt.

(Caldwell, 1998, 76-77)

As with the putative hall-house phase, the addition of a service wing may be just one example of a developmental sequence that was quite common throughout the corpus of early stone-built castles in Scotland, helping to define what later on became what we recognize as a tower-house.

4.2.4 Phase*3 – The Tower-House

In a third and final rebuilding the upper part of the wing, from above the first floor, was remodelled and heightened. A fourth storey was added to it, and attics and battlements created or rebuilt on top of both blocks. The walls of the fourth storey of the wing include many blocks of red and white sandstone and several of the quoins are of red sandstone. The new walls are thinner...thus creating a significantly larger floor area for the new rooms. The window openings are not chamfered like earlier ones in the castle, but are checked for shutters. A window lighting the circular stair above the entresol is a narrow slit with eyelets top and bottom. It must date to the mid-15th century at earliest, when such loops make an appearance in the artillery work at Threave Castle. (Zeune [1992, 74], however, uses typology to estimate the date of the dumb-bell gun loop at Portincross Castle to the period 1500-1550)

A date in the later part of the 15th century would also be appropriate for the battlements, with a parapet projecting only very slightly on a continuous cavetto moulding supported by a course of corbelling. The corbels, and the slabs they support, are a mixture of red and white sandstone, perhaps because several of the elements are reused from an earlier scheme.

With the rebuilding of the north wall of the wing the first-floor kitchen fireplace disappeared. Perhaps the kitchen on the ground floor now sufficed for the needs of the lairds of Portencross. The first floor may have served for storage. Above that were two storeys with fireplaces, relatively large windows with seats in their embrasures and wall cupboards or garderobes. At the very top was an attic, also accessed from the circular stair, now all but disappeared. Above the hall vault there was another attic with a fireplace, reduced in width sometime after its creation. It reused corbels from the parapet as supports for its mantle-piece. The battlement walk surrounded both attics, with steps up from the main block to the wing. There were doorways off the circular stair to both levels.

(Caldwell, 1998, 77)

The addition of the extra floors would have completed the transformation of the hall-house into a recognizable tower-house. What should not be forgotten, however, is that the castle at Portencross would not have stood in isolation:

The tower-house was only one element of a larger complex which, according to the inventory of the deceased wife of the laird of Portencross in 1621, included a barn and barnyard. There are now no traces of these on the ground, but the impression of a substantial gable of a building can be traced in the harling remaining on the south face of the castle. At the south-west corner of the tower-house a lump of masonry, traces of mortar on the bedrock and the deliberate cutting back of some of the quoins, suggests the former existence of a barmkin wall extending from this point westwards before returning to enclose the level grassy area to the south of the castle.
(Caldwell, 1998, 77)

Excavations at Threave Castle, which dates from the later-1300s, revealed the foundations of a number of contemporary structures:

Except when they had to take refuge in the tower in times of siege, most members of the earl's household, his servants and guests would be housed in the scattering of less substantial but still carefully built structures beneath its walls. One of these was probably the main hall of the castle, a more public room than the hall in the tower. Also found through excavation was a walled harbour, immediately to the west of the tower, a reminder – if any were needed on an island site – of the importance of communications by water at a time when roads tended to be execrable.
(Fawcett, 1994, 22)

Apart from the features identified by MacGibbon and Ross, there are no obvious indications for the locations of ancillary buildings or for a barmkin wall at Portencross. As discussed above, the principal landscape feature near to the castle is the Old Harbour, although recent research has identified three potential fish-traps in Ardsneil Bay, some 0.5km to the south-east, which could possibly be part of the economic hinterland of the site.

4.2.5 Phase*4 – The Post-Boyd Period

The castle is said to have been abandoned by the lairds shortly after 1660, after which it was occupied by local fishermen and other tenants. It was probably at this time that an extra doorway was made in the ground floor of the wing and many of the windows were enlarged. In some cases lintels and jambs of red sandstone were used, in other the lintels are made of wood. The present hall fireplace also dates from this time. The castle was unroofed in a storm in 1739, and has been in ruins ever since.
(Caldwell, 1998, 77)

As is the case with the interpretation of Phases*1-*3 above, the evidence for the alterations made post-1660 by the new tenants are based on observations made by Caldwell during and after the excavations on Auldhill. As such, they provide an invaluable template for our understanding of the fabric and development of Portencross Castle, with the identification of a 14th century hall-house phase in particular elevating the site's importance as an example of early tower-house development in Scotland. The next step would be to commission a full standing building survey and, where appropriate, a fabric analysis to confirm (or otherwise) this sequence so that a more complete understanding of this nationally important complex is arrived at.

5.0 Early-Modern and Modern Portencross

5.1 The Map Evidence

As discussed above, the name given to the estate from the earliest historic records is *Arnele*, but by the time the earliest maps were being produced this title – where it is used at all - had been reduced to a lesser designation of a place rather than the area as a whole. The name Portincross does not appear in documents until 1572 when it was referred to in a contract between Robert Lord Boyd and Robert Boyd of Portincross for the sale of the lands of Portincross. This document refers to *'the ten merk land of Portincroce and Ardneill with the toure fortalice maneir place and thair pendiclis and pertinentis land'* (James, 2003, 5)

The earliest surviving map which shows the area (Fig*6) dates from *ca.* 1636-52, and was produced by Robert Gordon of Straloch as part of the project to complete (and correct where required) the mapping of Scotland begun by Timothy Pont in the late-1500s. The map is little more than a hand-drawn sketch and the inscriptions are not the most legible, but he clearly records the castle as *Paincors* and the headland as the *Poynt of Paincors*.

When Blaeu's *Atlas novus* was published in 1654, however, the area is inscribed with the more familiar terms of *Porten kross* and *Ardnel* (Fig*7). Some thirty years later, when John Adair produced his *Mape of the west of Scotland* (Fig*8), the headland is again denoted as *Pencors*, as is also the case in General Roy's military map of 1747-55 (Fig*9) where it is spelled as *Pencorse*.

From that point on, however, the use of any variation on *Pencors* ceases, and only varieties of *Portincross* appear. Andrew Armstrong's *New Map of Ayrshire* of 1775 (Fig*10) records it as *Porting Cross*, while both Thomson's 1820 *Northern Part of Ayrshire* (Fig*11) and Aitken's *Map of the Parish of West Kilbride* (Fig*12) use the slightly more recognizable *Portin Cross*.

The first use of the modern spelling of Portencross does not appear until the 20th century in J.G. Bartholomew's *'Survey Map of Scotland'* of 1912 (Fig*13) and this appears to have been the accepted form of spelling from that point on in all maps.

There appears to be an element of contradiction between the documentary source of 1572 and the cartographic evidence as, apart from Blaeu's map of 1654, the available mapping evidence appears to indicate that the name of the site until the mid-18th century was *Pencors*. The use of this term by Roy in 1747-55 is especially interesting as his maps were by far the most accurate and well-researched to be produced in the period before the Ordnance Survey began publishing in the mid-19th century. Further research would be required to determine if *Pencors* is used in any documents during this period or whether the two terms are complementary or interchangeable, e.g. *Portincross* could be a reduction through usage of the phrase *Puirt Pencors*, *'puirt'* being the Gaelic term for a well-sheltered beach suitable for small boats to be launched from.

The entry produced by the Rev Mr Arthur Oughterson for the Parish of West Kilbride in the Old Statistical Account of 1796 (Vol.XII, pp.404-424) uses Portincross and provides an alternative interpretation of the history of the name:

The promontory, near to which, this port and castle are situated, is the extreme point of land directly W. from Edinburgh. To this day, the track of a line of road, can be distinctly traced through the country, leading from the capital to this port. From this circumstance, as well as from the very name, we conclude it must have been a place of some importance. In these barbarous and remote times, there could be no trade carried on in it, to give it that consequence. Neither can it be imagined, there was so much communication between the Highlands and the main land, as that this place might be converted into a mere ferry port, for

the conveniency of passengers, who, we may believe, would hardly be induced, either from profit or curiosity, to visit these inhospitable regions.

The most probable account, therefore, of the matter, seems to be, that this was the place where they took boat to go over to the celebrated monastery of I. Colm Kill, the most ancient foundation of the kind in Scotland, and which, it is well known, was for many ages, the burial-place of our Scottish Kings. And, as this monastery was established long before any other in this country, it may be supposed that, in that period of the gloomy reign of superstition, many pilgrimages were made to it. Hence the name Portincross, being a compound of Portis and Crucis; because, from this port, was the nearest and most direct passage over to the royal cemetery, and from it too, the pious travellers took their departure to do penance, or make their offerings at the sacred place. What corroborates this conjecture somewhat is, that at Lochranza at the N. end of Arran, there is an old castle, where, tradition reports, the companies passing to the western isles (whether these funeral or pilgrimage processions, is uncertain), were wont to stop and refresh; and then, as may be concluded, crossing over the narrow Isthmus of Cantire, and again taking boat, after sailing through the sound between Islay and Jura, were immediately at Iona, the object of their destination.

Unfortunately there is absolutely no evidence to corroborate the Rev. Oughterson's 'conjecture' about the *Portis Crucis* or the connection to Iona.

Armstrong's map of 1775 shows a drawing of the castle and denotes it with the term, 'ruins' (as is the case with *Fairley, Southannan, Tarbett, and Monfodd*). This would appear to reflect the loss of the roof of the castle in '*the windy January*' of 1739 (Paterson, 321, 1866).

It is reported that the Boyds continued to live in the castle '*until after the restoration of Charles II (i.e. post-1660) when it was relinquished for a mansion-house of a very different style of building, where they resided until the alienation of the property*' (Paterson, 1866, 318). This is presumed to be Auchenames House that is sited to the north-east of the castle, but unfortunately none of the 17th and 18th century maps record any buildings there, including the Roy map of 1747-55 which is usually assiduous in noting down even the smallest dwelling-houses.

It is also reported that '*Robert Boyd of Portincross, having lost his eldest son, disposed the barony of Portincross and Ardneill to his grandson, William Fullarton Boyd, eldest son of Grizel Boyd, his only daughter*', and he '*alienated the ancient family estate to Patrick Craufurd of Auchinames on 19th November 1737*' (Paterson, 1866, 319). Again there is no record of this in any of the 18th century maps, and it is not until Aitken's map of 1827 that two 'cottages' are recorded alongside the name, '*J. Crawford of Auch names Esq.*'.



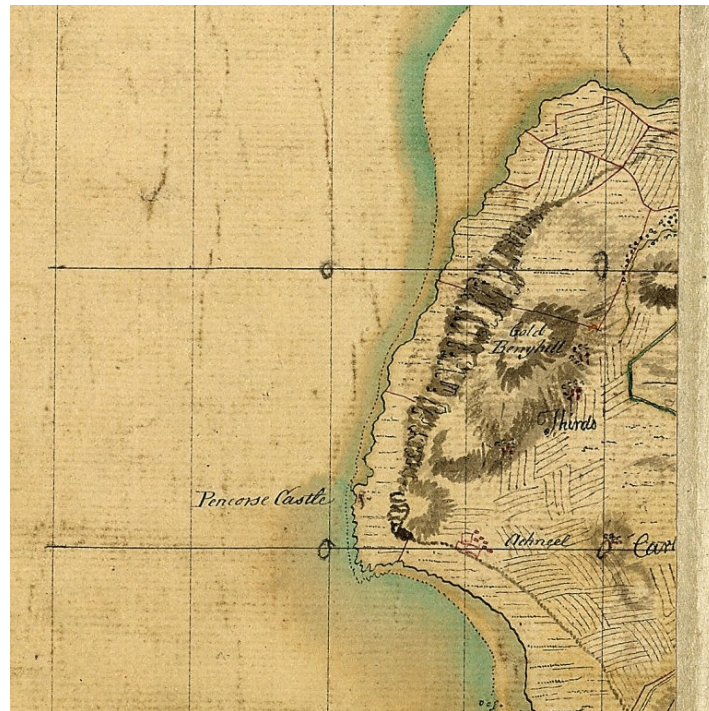
Figure*6 – Detail from *Cuningham*, ca.1636-1652, Robert Gordon (National Library of Scotland)



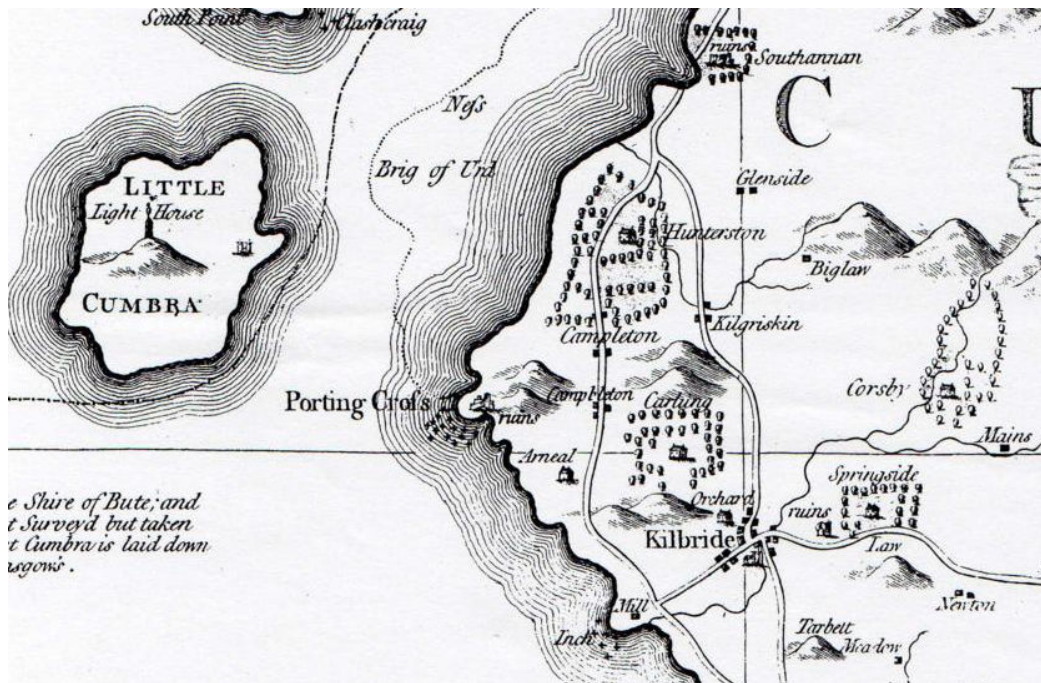
Figure*7 – Detail from *Cuninghamia ex schedis Timotheo Pont Blaeu*, 1654 (National Library of Scotland)



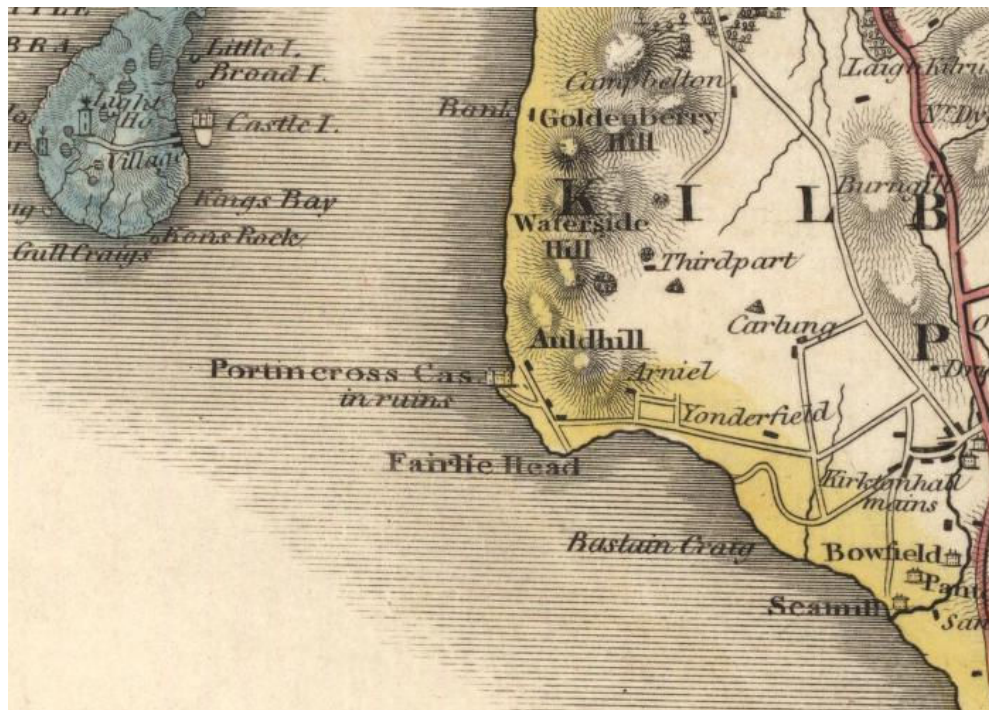
Figure*8 - Detail from *A map of the west of Scotland containing Clydsdail, Nithsdail, Ranfrew, Shyre of Ayre, & Galloway*, by John Adair, ca.1685 (National Library of Scotland)



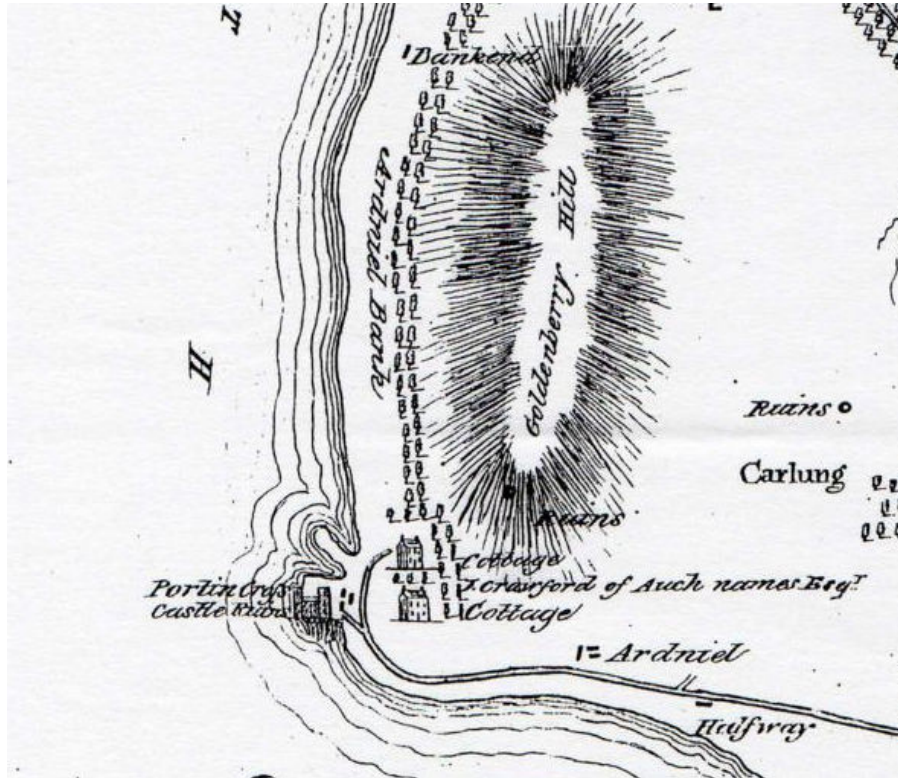
Figure*9 – Detail from *Ayrshire*, General William Roy, 1747-55 (British Library)



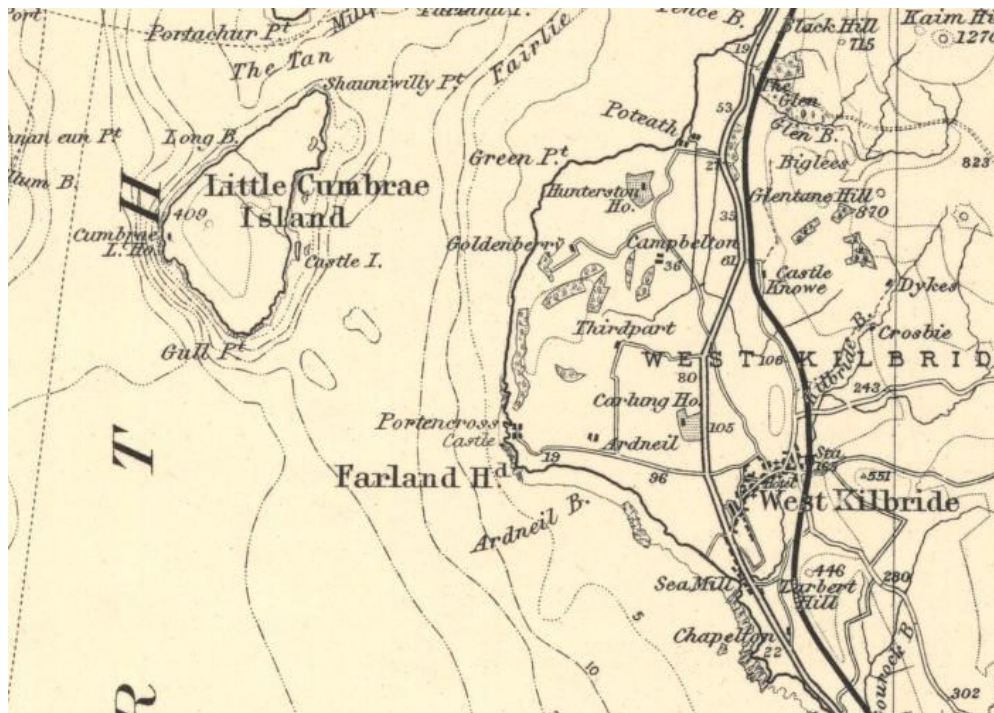
Figure*10 – Detail from *A new map of Ayrshire*, Andrew Armstrong, 1775
(National Library of Scotland)



Figure*11 – Detail from *Northern Part of Ayrshire*, J. Thomson & Co., 1820
(National Library of Scotland)



Figure*12 – Detail from *Map of the Parish of West Kilbride*, Robert Aitken, 1827
(North Ayrshire Archives)



Figure*13 – Detail from *Bute and Arran*, J.G. Bartholomew's 'Survey Map of Scotland', 1912
(National Library of Scotland)

5.2 The Portencross Cannon

An old rusted cannon lies on the green by Portincross Castle. It is one of five fished up in 1740 from a vessel of the Armada, which lies beneath the waters a few yards off the point on which the castle stands. Defoe in his tour tells us – “Now we are upon the western coasts, I shall mention that an attempt was made by diving to come at one of the largest ships of the Spanish Armada, stranded in 1588” near Portincross. Captain Rae, who dived down, “found the vessel to be very entire, to have a great company of guns aboard, but to be full of sand.” A company was formed to recover the treasure supposed to be in the hold, but, as the chief promoter died, it came to nothing, and the silver bar and Spanish doubloons of the old galleon are still ten fathoms deep a few yards beyond the rocks of Portincross Castle. (Brotchie, 1911, 85)

In August 1740 Sir Archibald Grant, 2nd Baronet of Monymusk, in company with a Captain Rae, began diving operations off the shore beside Portencross Castle:

The divers dragged a lead weighted line along the sea floor, diving whenever the rope was disturbed. At ten fathoms and about a quarter of a mile from the shore, Captain Rae, submerging in a dive bell, found something. It was a warship! By means of powerful iron tongs several brass cannons and an iron one were raised. The exact number recovered is problematical. One authority gives five brass and the aforementioned iron one; another estimates twenty. According to the latter source one of the partners in the diving venture died and operations ceased, leaving, it is said, about sixty guns unrecovered. (Hewitt, 1966, 53)

While the last figure must be an exaggeration, the account of the operation also records that one of the brass cannons had a Tudor Rose with the inscription ‘Richard and John Phillips brethren made this piece, 1584.’ These men are historically attested as gunfounders during the Elizabethan period. By contrast, the iron cannon is recorded as having a Spanish Crown and Coat of Arms just below the touch-hole. Unfortunately, the five brass cannon were sent to Dublin to be smelted down, and only the iron cannon was left at Portencross:

More accurately it is what is known in Elizabethan times as a demi-cannon. There is little difference in length between it and the cannon but the latter had a larger bore and fired heavier shot. It is nearly eight foot long with a six inch bore and would have fired thirty pound of iron shot. Its exact age is almost impossible to determine but it would appear to be a type of gun in common use, and carried by large ships, for over a century after the defeat of the Spanish Armada. Traditionally it came from “one of the large ships of the Spanish Armada which sank in about ten fathoms of water at no great distance from the shore.” (Hewitt, 1966, 53)

The attribution of the wreck as an Armada ship of 1588 relies almost entirely on local tradition and the evidence from the Portencross cannon. Most of the ships lost by the Armada were actually wrecked by severe weather conditions as they attempted to return home via the north and west coasts of Scotland and Ireland. Unlike the Irish examples where Spanish ships foundered at various points along the coast there, there are no contemporary accounts in Scotland of an actual Spanish wreck on the Clyde. Two ships were definitely wrecked on the Scottish coast: the *El Gran Griffon* was lost on Fair Isle and the *San Juan de Sicilia* became the famous ‘Tobermory Galleon.’

On the 23rd September 1588, the 800 ton *San Juan de Sicilia* dropped anchor in Tobermory Bay and made a deal with the local chieftain, Maclean of Duart, whereby he would supply provisions for their voyage home in return for a company of Spanish troops to assist him in

settling some local feuds. The ship remained at anchor in Tobermory for more than a month, but on the 5th of November a Dumbarton merchant who was apparently involved in the replenishment of the ship, but who was actually an agent of Sir Francis Walsingham, fired the powder on the ship and sank it (Martin and Parker, 1999, 223).

The route chosen by the Armada ships was far to the west of the Irish coastline, but some of the worst storms in recorded history blew them eastwards, back towards land. Although some of the ships did come ashore to replenish their water and food supplies, it seems unlikely that any would have strayed as far into the Firth of Clyde as the Portencross peninsula. Having said that, there are sixteen large ships still unaccounted for, and it is possible that the Portencross wreck is indeed one of these. If not an Armada ship, it could have been the wreck of another Spanish ship as their navy was frequently in Scottish waters after 1588.

According to the records, the wreck site has not been dived by professional archaeologists so definitive answers may still be produced if this is done in the future. The location of the site is said locally to be indicated by a directional compass cut into the rock on the seaward side of the castle (se Fig*14).



Figure*14 – The ‘rock compass’ at Portencross (March 2007)

The site is complicated by the fact that there is another, later wreck on the same location:

‘Within the very same place where the Spanish ship went down, a fine vessel belonging to Glasgow, the richest that ever was fitted out from this country, and the property of Glassford and Company, was also lost, in the spring of the year 1770. This disaster was occasioned, not by stress of weather, but through the inadvertency of the ship's company, in allowing the vessel to drift too far in during night, ere the light-house was perceived, and in endeavouring to put her about, she missed stays, and went upon the rocks.’

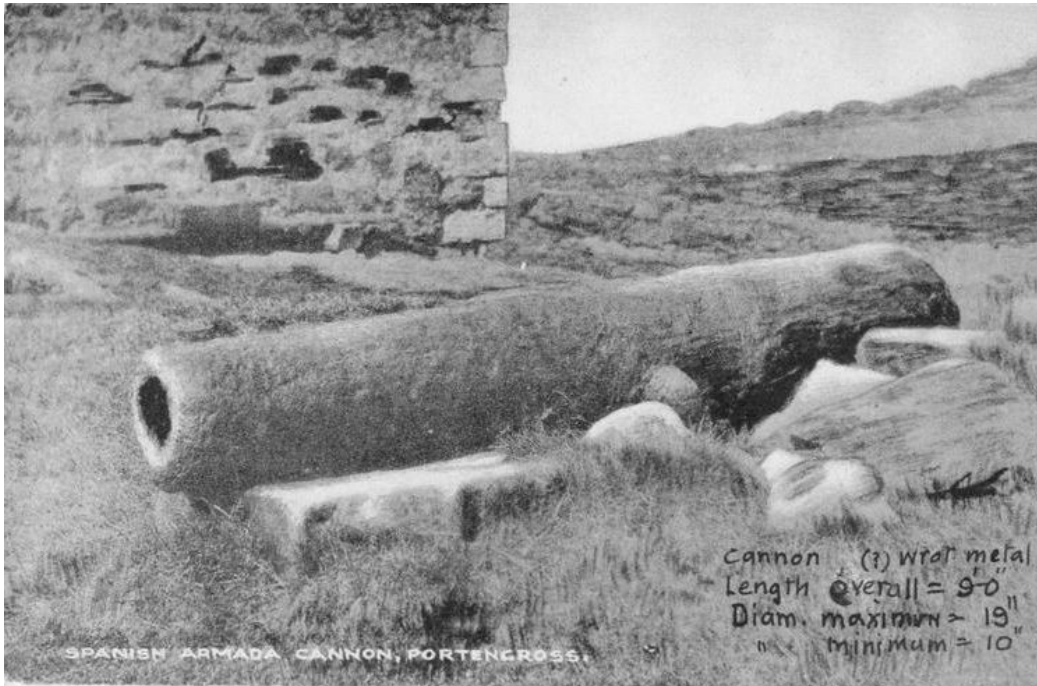
(RCAHMS: Lady Margaret: Portencross, Firth Of Clyde; NMRS Number: NS14NE 8002)

The Lady Margaret was a three masted wooden sailing ship launched in 1769. She left Greenock on 17th January 1770 destined for the James River, Virginia, under the command of Captain James Kippen but was hit by a violent storm. The captain decided to return to Greenock but on 23rd January she was swept eastwards onto the rocks just south of Portencross Castle.

Whatever the truth behind its origin, the Portencross cannon remained at the castle from 1740 onwards, protected from rust and decay by a coating of tar (Fig*16). In 1990, the castle's owners, Magnox, took the cannon away for conservation works and re-sited it outside the Hunterston Power Station (see Fig*15). At some point after this it was passed onto the National Museums in Edinburgh, and it was recently returned to Portencross where it is now in the care of the Friends of Portencross Castle (Fig*17). However, at some point while it was away from Portencross, it appears that the tar which had protected the cannon since its recovery in 1740 was removed and, as a consequence, it is now suffering badly from rust and decay.



Figure*15 – The Portencross Cannon outside Hunterston Power Station, ca.1990



Figure*16 – ‘Spanish Armada Cannon, Portencross’, n.d. (North Ayrshire Archives)



Figure*17 – The Portencross Cannon (March 2007)

5.3 Modern Portencross

The renting out of Portencross Castle to fishermen in the late-17th and early-18th centuries appears to have been a reflection of the importance of the industry at that time:

portencross castle
 conservation management plan: desk study
 icosse
 june 2007

In the districts of the parish, situated upon the shore, fishing was pursued to an extent that ought not to be overlooked in this account. It appears, from the best information, that, at the beginning of this century, upwards of 30 boats, belonging to the place, were employed annually in the herring and cod fishery: each boat had four men, when at the herring-fishing. From the month of July to October, they were all occupied in this branch. In the months of February and March, about a dozen of these boats, doubly manned, stretched away to the coasts of Galloway, Ireland, and Cantire, in search of cod, ling, and oysters. The number of men employed in these fisheries, when in their most flourishing state, could not be less than 150... It has declined and been lost.

(The Statistical Account of Scotland, 1796)

The Rev. Oughterson also records that there were about forty farms in the parish at the end of the 18th century, but it was at this time that the population began to increase as urban dwellers began to move to the area for its fresh air and coastal location:

On the narrow strip of flatter ground between the Clyde and the peaty, inhospitable hills which run from the archaeologically rich Knock Ewart above West Kilbride...lie a string of towns: West Kilbride, Seamill, Fairlie, Largs, Skelmorlie. This is Glasgow merchants' get-away-from-it-all country: an idyllic retreat from the city. The first flowerings of this new economy began in the 1790s, as Gilpin successfully changed our perception of wild places from fearful and awesome to picturesque. The peak of this trade was the years either side of 1900...

(Close, 1992, 78)

As discussed above, it seems that it was the two cottages built by John Craufurd that were the first new private residences in Portencross in the early-19th century:

As early as 1829, John Craufurd of Auchenames and Crosbie had two cottage residences at Portencross, Auchenames House being then known as North Cottage. In 1845 the residence of the Craufurds of Crosbie and Auchenames was described as a "neat cottage residence" close to Portencross Castle ruins. The present mansion incorporates in its main garden elevation an early 19th century house, slightly altered in fenestration, with additions (in the form of gabled bays at either end) built in 1904. The walled garden is dated 1839, and the rearward additions to the house (including a belfry) may date in part from this period. The remodelling and additions of 1904 were to the designs of Fryers & Penman, Largs, for W. Adam of Overton, following his purchase of the estate from Craufurd of Auchenames.

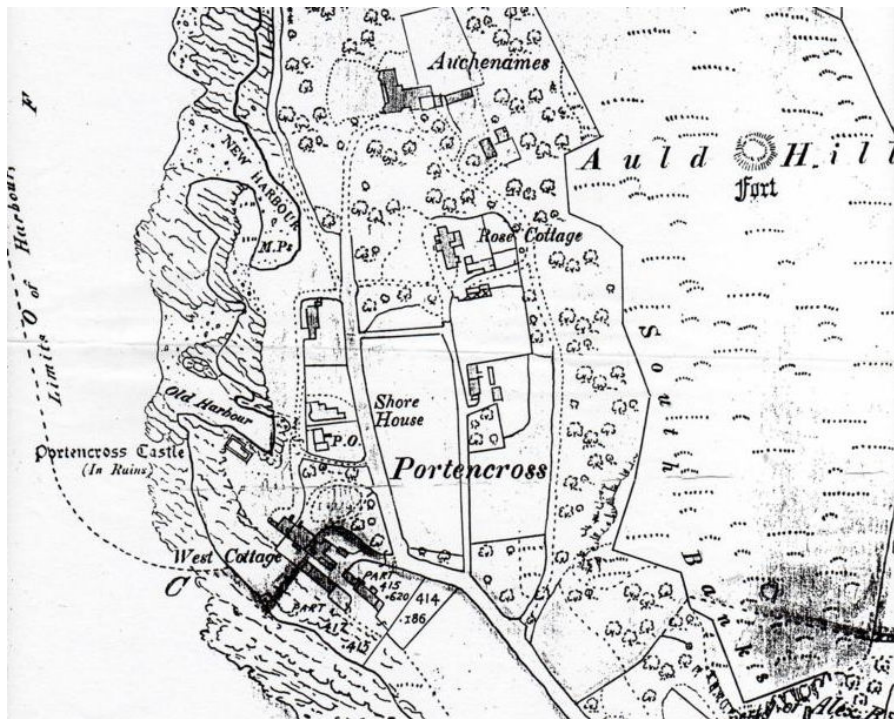
(Davis, 1991, 153; see Fig*18)

The exact sequence of the development of the village requires further research, but map evidence indicates that by 1899 and 1926 (see Fig*19) most of the present village had been constructed, e.g. Rose Cottage, the Post Office, West Cottage and Castle Cottage (Figs*20 and *21). The latter two are listed as Category C(S) by Historic Scotland as picturesque Victorian estate dwellings dating from sometime around 1860. Auchenames House, however, is not listed.

It also appears that the North Harbour was developed sometime in the early- to mid-19th century. It is recorded that it was known as *Port Crawford* in 1846, and there is a tradition that there was a regular ferry service to Skipness at this time for both cargo and passengers, the latter paying one shilling each for the trip.



Figure*18 – Auchenames House, Portincross, n.d. (North Ayrshire Archives)



Figure*19 – Ordnance Survey, 3rd Edition, 1926



Figure*20 – *General View of Portincross*, n.d. (North Ayrshire Archives)



Figure*21 – *Post Office, Portincross*, n.d. (North Ayrshire Archives)

The picturesque nature of the castle and the village also attracted artists and early photographers who looked to capture the rugged and romantic scenery (figs*22 and *23).



Figure*22 – *Portincross Castle*, William Young, 1886 (Dick Institute FAA242)



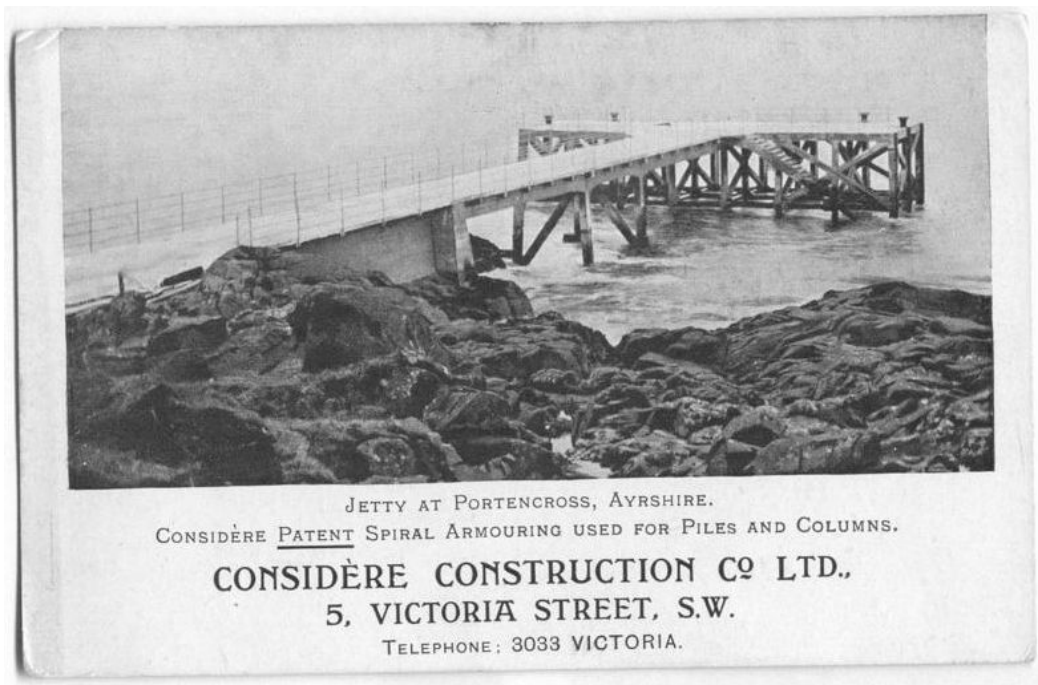
Figure*23 – *Portincross Castle*, 1886 (Ayr Public Library AY/2396)

The growth of the towns and cities in the 19th century impacted upon Portencross in another way as it gradually became a tourist destination:

Thanks to individual enterprise, Portincross is thinking of "birsin' yont." A pier at which steamers may call is in process of building. Feuing ought to follow, and indeed betwixt the the fine sandy beach of Ardneil Bay and the Portincross pier there is room and to spare for a future holiday haunt.
(Brotchie, 1911, 84)



Figure*24 – *The Pier, Portincross*, n.d. (North Ayrshire Archives)



Figure*25 – *Jetty at Portincross, Ayrshire* n.d. (North Ayrshire Archives)

The pier is said to have been able to accommodate vessels of up to fifty tons, and was used both for tourist boats and for the shipping of local produce to markets further up the Clyde (Figs*24 and *25).

For most of the 20th century Portencross was owned by William Adam, who lived in Auchenames House and charged only modest rents to his tenants in the cottages surrounding his walled garden. A farm on his estate also employed several men and they lived in tied-houses. In 1935 it was reported that *'Today Portincross village consists of only about half a dozen cottages and a few larger houses set in beautiful gardens'* (Colvilles Magazine, June 1935, 119-120).

In 1976, the South of Scotland Electricity Board (S.S.E.B.) bought the entire Hunterston Peninsula, including Portencross, to build the Hunterston A and B power stations. Portencross was not developed, but its site apparently was earmarked for the development of the Hunterston C power station which, in the end, was never built. As a result, the village was put up for sale again in 1983, at which time only ten of the seventeen houses were occupied and the population was down to ten people. The sitting tenants were offered first options to buy their homes, but the castle was kept in the ownership of the electricity board (see Fig*26). It was during this period that a number of works were carried out to the fabric of the castle, including the insertion of a concrete roof.

Portencross Castle was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1955 and as a Category A Listed Building in 1971. Auldhill was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1993 and both of the harbours were listed as Category B in 1996.

In 1998, British Nuclear Fuels (B.N.F.L.) decided to sell the castle and the Friends of Portencross Castle was formed to prevent the property becoming a private property and to keep it a freely accessible public amenity. After almost seven years of negotiation, B.N.F.L. passed the title of the castle and associated land to the Friends.



Figure*26 - Aerial photograph of Portencross, 1984 (RCAHMS 65342)

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