STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

SCALLOWAY CASTLE

We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.
SCALLOWAY CASTLE

SYNOPSIS
Scalloway Castle stands in Castle Street, at the east end of the town of Scalloway (Skalarvargr means ‘bay of huts’), on the west side of Mainland and 6 miles from Lerwick. The castle complex originally consisted of a tall tower house, with ancillary buildings, courts and gardens around it, spread over a low natural promontory surrounded on three sides by the sea. Only the tower house remains.

The tower house was built around 1600 by Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney and Lord of Shetland; his name and the date could once be made out on the armorial plaque above the front entrance. It was to be his main residence on Shetland, and its construction effectively made Scalloway Shetland’s new capital, replacing Tingwall three miles to the north. He didn’t have use of it for long. Forced to flee the Northern Isles in 1609 because of his violent nature towards the islanders, ‘Black Patie’, as he was known, was arrested and imprisoned in Dumbarton Castle; and eventually executed in Edinburgh in 1615. Nonetheless, Scalloway Castle continued to serve as the centre of administration and justice in Shetland until the late 17th century.

The four-storey building comprises a main block with an almost square jamb, or wing, containing the entrance and main stair. The ground floor housed service offices, including a kitchen, the first floor a great hall, and the upper floors a number of chambers, including Earl Patrick’s private, three-roomed apartment. The building retains numerous fine architectural details, including corbelled turrets and an innovative scale-and-platt stair.

The castle came into State care in 1908, the first significant medieval structure to be protected in Scotland under the first Ancient Monuments Act of 1882.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- **1581** – Robert Stewart, illegitimate son of James V, is created Earl of Orkney and Lord of Shetland.
- **1591** – Earl Robert’s son, Patrick, already being styled Lord of Shetland, builds the New Hall, or Old House of Sumburgh (now known as Jarlshof) as his Shetland residence. In the following year he feus to Sir William Bruce of Symbister adjacent land and gives him keeping of the place during his absence.
- **1593** – Earl Robert dies in his chief Orkney residence, the Bishop’s Palace, Kirkwall. His son Patrick formally succeeds as Earl of Orkney and Lord of Shetland. He quickly acquires a reputation as a man of ostentatious lifestyle and one prone to violence in order to get his own way.
- **1599** – Patrick is building Scalloway Castle as his Shetland residence. Scalloway lies just three miles from the Law Ting Holm of Tingwall, the chief meeting place for the head court or lawting, presided over by the foud, or sheriff (then Laurence Bruce of Muness). The construction of Scalloway is probably presided over by Andrew Crawford, the Earl’s master of works, and
John Ross, his master mason. Andrew Crawford dies soon after and is buried in the kirkyard at Tingwall.

- **1602** – Earl Patrick is accused in the Court of Session, Edinburgh, by Laurence Bruce of Muness and Andrew Bruce of Scasta, that at Whitsun 1599 he had compelled their tenants, servants and labourers to carry stone and timber, to make and carry mortar, and to work at Scalloway Castle at their own expense. One of Laurence Bruce’s servants, Henry Wardlaw, is also held for a time in the prison in Scalloway Castle. (Earl Patrick is subsequently accused of using forced labour to build the castle.)

- **1605** – James Law is appointed Bishop of Orkney by James VI, who also tasks him with curbing Earl Patrick’s powers. Around this time Earl Patrick is enlarging his other Shetland property, at Sumburgh (Jarlshof), as well as building a new residence in Orkney, the Earl’s Palace, Kirkwall, and completing his father’s other Orkney residence, the Earl’s Palace, Birsay.

- **1609** - Earl Patrick is compelled to flee the Northern Isles for Edinburgh, where he is arrested and taken to Dumbarton Castle. Scalloway Castle, however, continues to be used for local administration and the delivery of justice. Bishop James holds courts in its great hall in 1612 and 1613.

- **1614/15** – following a failed uprising in Orkney by Patrick’s illegitimate son, Robert, in which his father is complicit, both father and son are tried, found guilty and executed. Earl Patrick’s execution (February 1615) is reportedly delayed whilst he learns to recite the Lord’s Prayer!

- **1640** – a new blade is purchased for Scalloway’s guillotine, the ‘Maiden’, indicating the castle’s continuing role in the administration of justice in Shetland. (It was probably Earl Patrick who moved the place of execution from Tingwall to a new Gallow Hill beside Scalloway.)

- **1643** – Orkney and Shetland are granted by Charles I to the 7th Earl of Morton, who borrows money to repair Scalloway Castle.

- **1650s** – during the ‘Commonwealth’ Cromwellian soldiers are quartered in and around the castle.

- **1675** – the minister of Tingwall regularly preaches in Scalloway Castle because the kirk at Tingwall is in need of repair. In the following year the castle also is recorded as having doors and windows broken, and roof timbers too rotten to repair.

- **1690s** – Martin Martin visits and records that ‘several rooms have been curiously painted, tho the better part be worn off.’ He also notes that ‘this ancient house is almost ruinous, there being no care taken to repair it’.

- **1754** – the 14th Earl of Morton permits Sir Andrew Mitchell of Westshore to remove much of the freestone dressings for re-use in his mansion house at Sand (the harled laird’s house is still there).

- **1908** – the 1st Marquess of Zetland entrusts Scalloway Castle into State care, the first significant medieval structure in Scotland to be protected under the first Ancient Monuments Act (1882). The Ministry of Works carry out extensive masonry consolidation works thereafter, including reforming doorways robbed of their stonework in the 1740s.

**Archaeological Overview**

Little archaeological work has been carried out at Scalloway Castle, and what was done has unfortunately not been published.
Small-scale excavations took place within the area in State care in the early 1970s. Apparently, extensive remains associated with the occupation and abandonment of the castle were found, but no final report was ever produced.

Excavations in the surrounding area in 1979 and 1980 by Derek Hall and Bill Lindsay, for the Urban Archaeology Unit, revealed the presence of deposits ranging from the 17th to the 20th century, some of which were associated with the castle outbuildings.

There should still be continuing potential to learn more about the wider castle environment, whilst a standing building survey might contribute more archaeological information regarding the building history of the tower house itself.

**Architectural/Artistic Overview:**

Today, Scalloway Castle is represented only by its most important component, its tower house. All accompanying buildings, courts and gardens have long disappeared.

The towerhouse

Architecturally, the structure is an impressive example of a Jacobean (late-16th/early 17th-century) tower house. It demonstrates the sophisticated nature that the form had reached by this date, with features such as an integral kitchen, a broad scale-and-platt stair (as distinct from a spiral one) and suites of accommodation.

Although largely unremarkable in the wider Scottish context, Scalloway’s tower house is exceptional in Shetland. Other than Loch Strom Castle, which is of uncertain date and about which little is known, castellated structures were unknown in Shetland until the construction of Scalloway and Muness c.1600. In fact, these are the only castles built in Shetland. (The Old House of Sumburgh, now better known as Jarlshof, is not a castellated dwelling but a laird’s house of late-16th-century/17th century date.)

Scalloway’s large tower house is four storeys and an attic high and built on the L-plan, with a jamb, or wing, attached at the south-west corner. It is built of rubble (originally harled), with freestone dressings of Eday (Orkney) sandstone. It was built as a self-contained residence, with a kitchen and storage vault on the ground floor and residential rooms above.

The architectural details are sophisticated. For example, above the entrance doorway in the jamb has been an impressive armorial plaque with an inscription, sadly now much worn. The inscription was recorded in the 18th century as reading:

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PATRICIVS STEVARDVS ORCHADIAE ET ZETLANDIAE
COMES I V R S
CUJUS FVNDAMEN SAXVM EST DOM'ILLA MANEBIT
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LABILIS E CONTRA SI SIT ARENA PERIT
A D 1600
[Patrick Sewart, Earl of Orkney and Shetland, James V(I) King of Scots
That house whose foundation is rock will stand,
but will perish if it be shifting sand. AD 1600]

Another notable detail are the corbelled turrets at the wall-tops, which have continuous mouldings topped by two tiers of chequer-set corbels with shotholes in the gaps between. These are identical to ones at Muness, built by Laurence Bruce, Earl’s Patrick half-uncle, around the same time, and the same guiding hand is suspected at both. We are fortunate in knowing the names of Earl Patrick’s master of works (Andrew Crawford) and master mason (John Ross), and it seems probable that these two were responsible for both of Shetland’s castles. (Andrew Crawford’s tombstone survives in Tingwall Kirkyard.)

Scalloway’s internal layout follows the standard format of Jacobean times, with notable innovations. For example, (a) it has a broad scale-and-platt stair, rather than the standard spiral, giving access to the great hall on the first floor, and (b) the hall has two fireplaces, not just one. Both features are also present in the Earl’s Palace, Kirkwall, also built by Earl Patrick c.1606. The arrangement of the Earl’s private apartment is also remarkably similar to that in Kirkwall. That Scalloway is less ambitious in its planning and scale, and in terms of architectural detail, doubtless reflects the more peripheral nature of Shetland within the Earldom.

Social Overview:
The builder of Scalloway Castle, Earl Patrick (or ‘Black Patie’ as he is referred to in Shetland), has come to symbolise not simply general oppression but the tyranny of rule from outside Shetland (ie, mainland Scotland) since its incorporation into the nation in the 15th century, and its perceived destruction of traditional Shetland ways. The construction of Scalloway was used at the time by the Stewarts’ enemies as an example of their despotic impositions upon Shetlanders, and the building stands as a symbol of Patrick’s harsh rule. As a consequence, many Shetlanders have a hostile, or at best ambivalent, attitude towards the castle, although this does now seem to be fading.

In the last 30 years, the local community and the Shetland Amenity Trust have taken a greater interest in the castle as an important element of the town’s heritage. They have financed and installed an introductory exhibition (in the form of interpretation panels in the ground floor vaults) and fitted ‘heritage’ windows throughout.

There have been calls locally for the tower house to be re-roofed, so that the building can be given some form of community use.

Spiritual Overview:
The castle was built 50 years after the Protestant Reformation (1560) and so will not have included a chapel either in the tower house or the ancillary buildings. The Earl’s household would have worshipped at, and been laid to
rest in, Tingwall Kirk. The tombstone of Andrew Crawford, inscribed with the words ‘sumtym servant and maister of vark to the Erle of Orknay’, and the builder of Scalloway Castle, is still in existence there.

In the 17th century the great hall in the tower house was pressed into use as a church by the minister of Tingwall because of the parlous state of his own kirk. (The present Tingwall Kirk was built in 1788-90.)

Today, Scalloway Castle plays no perceived spiritual role.

Aesthetic Overview
Scalloway Castle’s rugged wall-heads still loom over the bustling port of Scalloway. However the original setting of the castle has been significantly altered by the creation of a new quay and associated buildings.

The castle, when viewed close up, still retains a rugged grandeur, the rubble stone walls enlivened by fine architectural details such as those attractive corbelled turrets at the wall-heads. The heraldic inscription over the entrance doorway, although faded, provides another point of added interest.

Internally the ground-floor vaults conjure up images of the sinister ‘Black Patie’, whilst the broad scale-and-platt stair takes the visitor up to the lighter, and remarkably spacious, great hall. Spiral stairs take one further up, to provide fine glimpses out over the town and port to the surrounding hills and the sea beyond.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?
- What besides the surviving tower house stood on the site? We know from the minimal excavations carried out at the site that the castle complex comprised ancillary buildings, courts and probably gardens. More investigation should add more light.
- What use was made of the castle after the demise of Earl Patrick? Whilst the period of Earl Patrick’s brief occupation is relatively well documented, we know very little detail about what happened thereafter. A thorough examination of the documentary archives, etc, might shed valuable light on the castle’s role in, for example, the administration and justice of Shetland in the 17th and 18th centuries, and its temporary uses as a Cromwellian barracks and parish kirk.
- Where is the Gallow Hill, outside Scalloway (also known as the ‘heiding hill of Berry, or Houl’), established by either Earl Robert or Earl Patrick?

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points
- Scalloway is one of only three castles (the others are Loch Strom Castle and Muness Castle) built in Shetland.
- The castle was the first significant medieval structure taken into State care following the passing of the first Ancient Monuments Act in 1882.
- The castle was built for the infamous Patrick Stewart, Earl of Orkney and Lord of Shetland, but more popularly known as ‘Black Patie’ because of his perceived ruthless oppression of the Shetland people.
• Scalloway Castle replaced Tingwall as the centre of administration and justice in Shetland, and maintained that role for over two centuries, until itself being replaced by Lerwick.

• The surviving building is a fine example of a Jacobean tower house, and demonstrates Earl Patrick’s awareness of current architectural thinking. Its construction is associated with Patrick’s master of works, Andrew Crawford, and his master mason, John Ross. The similarities in layout and detail with Earl Patrick’s chief residence in Orkney, the Earł’s Palace, Kirkwall, and his half-uncle’s residence at Muness, strongly suggest that the same guiding hands were involved in all three buildings.

• The building possesses some fine details that put it on a par with its contemporaries in mainland Scotland, including corbelled turrets and an innovative scale-and-platt stair.

Associated Properties
(other relevant places in Shetland) – Jarlshof (Old House of Sumburgh); Law Ting Holm; Muness Castle; Sand House (Mainland); Shetland Museum & Archives; Tingwall Kirkyard

(associated places in Orkney) – Bishop’s & Earl’s Palace, Kirkwall; Earl’s Palace, Birsay

Keywords:
tower house; armorial inscription; great hall; scale-and-platt stair; corbelled turret; Earl Patrick Stewart (Black Patie); Tingwall; Lerwick

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