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**HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

LINLITHGOW PALACE, PEEL AND PARK



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LINLITHGOW PALACE, PEEL AND PARK

SYNOPSIS

Linlithgow Palace was one of the major royal residences of the Stewart dynasty, used chiefly as a 'pleasure palace' midway between the royal castles at **Edinburgh** and **Stirling**. Begun by James I (1403-37), following a fire that devastated the earlier castle in 1424, it was added to and remodelled by James III (1460-88), James IV (1488-1513) and James V (1513-42). Both James V and his daughter, Mary Queen of Scots (1542-67), were born there. The last building works were carried out for James VI following his 'hamecoming' in 1617, but Charles I's stay in 1633, during his coronation visit, was to be the last by a reigning sovereign. The Palace was briefly occupied by both Jacobite and Hanoverian forces in 1745 and 1746. Following occupation by the Hanoverian army in Jan 1746, a disastrous fire broke out destroying much of the North range; this marked a major change in status for the place from palace to monument, as it was not repaired and ceased to function as a high status residence.

The enclosed quadrangular palace is noted particularly for its innovative architecture and elaborate sculpture. Of particular interest are: the east entrance of James I; the lofty SW tower of James III, the first of four built; the chapel, oriel windows and barbican of James IV; the outer gateway and fountain of James V; and the courtyard façade of James VI's north range.

The palace is prominently set upon a grassy hill at the centre of the peel, or royal park, that was formerly the preserve of the royal court but which continues today as a public park for the people of Linlithgow. The peel is an invaluable archaeological resource, hiding beneath its green sward a possible Roman fort, the earlier royal castle, the timber pele built for Edward I of England in 1302, traces of royal gardens and other buildings (eg., the 'catchpule' or tennis court), and structures associated with Oliver Cromwell's occupying force in the 1650s. To the north of the Palace lies Linlithgow Loch, then as today an invaluable resource and containing at least two crannogs (artificial islands).

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview:

- 1st century AD – a Roman fort or camp is built on the site of the peel, according to the discovery of Roman pottery

- 1124x53 – David I founds the royal burgh of Linlithgow, and very probably builds a castle or manor beside it, on the site of the peel (a 13th-century reference to the 'mansum de Linlithcu' suggests the latter, as appears also to have been the case at the royal burgh of Haddington). David's grandsons, Malcolm IV and William I, both seal charters at Linlithgow.
- 1296 – Edward I stays one night at Linlithgow, at Kingsfield on the Burgh Muir, east of the town, whilst his army besiege the castle – the first recorded mention of a castle.
- 1298 - Edward I resides at Linlithgow, again on the Burgh Muir, en route to his victory over William Wallace at the battle of Falkirk
- 1301/2 – Edward I and his son, the future Edward II, winter at Linlithgow during their invasion. Prior to their arrival, Edward I has the 'king's chamber' in the castle renovated for his use and the castle defences strengthened. Prior to departure, Edward I appoints Master James of St. George, his Savoyard master of works who presided over the construction of Conwy and Harlech Castles in north Wales, to build a new, more formidable timber pele (from which the present term Peel is derived). The pele takes a year to construct, and in 1304 is used as the main ammunition base for Edward I's assault on Stirling.
- 1310 – Edward II spends a week at Linlithgow Pele.
- 1313 – Linlithgow Pele is retaken by the Scots, according to tradition through William Bunnock and his ox-cart preventing the entrance gates from closing.
- 1337 - David II instructs that the 'peill' be rebuilt for royal use. He certainly holds court there in 1343.
- 1371 – the Three Estates, Scotland's Parliament, meet at Linlithgow soon after David II's death and elect Sir Robert Stewart, Robert Bruce's grandson, as their king. Robert II (1371-1390) and Robert III (1390-1406) spend goodly amounts of their reigns at Linlithgow. Robert III spends almost an entire year (1405) there.
- 1424 - a great fire sweeps through Linlithgow, devastating much of the burgh, and greatly damaging St. Michael's Church and the royal castle. James I orders the rebuilding of the royal residence on an ambitious scale. It is likely that some of the old castle survives, as the king and queen make frequent visits to Linlithgow in the late 1420s. The Town Council also take the opportunity to rebuild St. Michael's.
- 1429 - James entertains the archbishop of Reims in what is by now being called Linlithgow Palace.
- 1437 – James I's assassination brings construction work to an abrupt halt, by which date £7000 has been expended - a tenth of the king's income. The imposing east range, containing a great hall built up on massive cellars, certainly belongs to this building phase.
- 1455 – the great bombard James II uses to besiege the Douglas stronghold of **Threave Castle** is taken from, and returned to, Linlithgow Palace.
- 1461 – Henry VI of England temporarily resides in Linlithgow Palace during his exile following defeat by Edward IV at the battle of Towton.
- 1469 - Linlithgow Palace forms part of the dowry of James' queen, Margaret of Denmark. The palace subsequently forms part of the dowries of James IV's consort, Margaret Tudor of England, and James V's two French wives, Princess Madeleine and Mary of Guise.

- 1480s – further substantial expenditure continues under James III, and it is possible that by his death (1488) the south range, SW tower and part of the west range are completed.
- 1489 – John French, master-mason employed on building the palace, is buried in St. Michael's, which he also helps to build.
- 1488x1503 - James IV completes building the palace, including most probably the west and north ranges, thus creating the enclosed inner courtyard, and adding the barbican at the NE corner. The *Treasurer's Accounts* indicate that work is largely complete by 1503, in time for his marriage to Margaret Tudor, daughter of Henry VII of England. Minor building/redcoration works continue thereafter - eg., reglazing the great hall windows in 1512.
- 1512 – the future James V (1513-42) is born in the palace.
- 1528x42 – during James V's personal reign, a new access from the south is formed, including formal outer and inner gateways. The King's Fountain is also built (1538) as the centrepiece of the inner courtyard. Queen Marie declares she has 'never seen a more princely palace'.
- 1540 (Jan) – during the Yule festivities, the premier of Sir David Lindsay of the Mount's *Interlude* (the forerunner of his most famous work, *Ane Satyr of the Thrie Estatis*) is performed before the king and queen.
- 1542 (Dec) – the future Mary Queen of Scots (1542-67) is born in the palace.
- 1583 – Robert Drummond, royal master of works, reports that the west range of the palace is 'altogidder lyk to fall down'.
- 1585 – James VI moves from **Holyrood Palace** to Linlithgow to escape the ravages of the plague, and hosts a meeting of Parliament there.
- 1590 – James VI and his queen, Anna of Denmark, reside at the palace during their 'honeymoon' tour.
- 1607 - the roof of the north range crashes down, leaving the walls standing precariously and threatening to destroy the fountain. No work is done, however.
- 1617 – James VI visits Linlithgow, during his 'hamecoming' tour to celebrate his golden anniversary as king of Scots, and instructs that the north range be rebuilt. William Wallace, master-mason, fresh from helping rebuild the palace in **Edinburgh Castle**, directs the rebuilding of the north range.
- 1633 - Charles I stays at the palace during his coronation visit. The keeper, the earl of Linlithgow, has temporarily to vacate the north range in order to accommodate his majesty, the last reigning sovereign to reside therein.
- 1650/1 – Oliver Cromwell lodges in the palace, and orders the construction of new fortifications on the line of Edward I's pele. St. Michael's is requisitioned by his cavalry as stables.
- 1663 – following the return of Charles II to the throne (1660), the Cromwellian works at the palace are demolished.
- 1679 – the future James VII & II (1685-88), but then duke of Albany, resides in the palace in his capacity as Commissioner to the Scottish Parliament.
- 1745 (Sept) – Prince Charles Edward Stuart, grandson of James VII & II, visits the palace briefly on his march south during the early days of the '45 Jacobite Rising. The fountain allegedly runs with red wine in his honour. He does not stay at the palace, preferring to camp with his troops on the Burgh Muir.
- 1746 (Jan) – William, duke of Cumberland, with a 10,000-strong government army, reach Linlithgow in pursuit of the Jacobite army. The duke and certain

troops are quartered in the palace; on their departure (1 Feb), a fire breaks out in the north range. How the fire began is not known, though it may have been set by the departing troops; whatever the cause, the fire is devastating and leads to the abandonment of the castle as a residence.

- 1769 - a dam is erected at the Mill to keep the water of the loch above its natural level.
- 1787 – Robert Burns visits and describes the palace as ' a fine but melancholy ruin'.
- 1853 – the palace, peel and loch are entrusted by Sir Thomas Livingstone, the last keeper, into the keeping of Her Majesty's Commissioners for Woods and Forests.
- 1874 the Commissioners for Woods and Forests transfer responsibility to Her Majesty's Office of Works (now Historic Scotland).

Archaeological Overview:

Palace

- Clearance work of the palace itself was carried out in the mid 19th century and no records associated with that work appear to exist. However, archaeological excavations and watching briefs in recent times have shown that the archaeological potential of the palace is likely to be high. In addition, standing building analysis has demonstrated the enormous potential that remains to be derived from this area of archaeological study.
- Archaeological excavations in the cellar beneath the King's Hall in the west range, directed by John Cannel in 1987 (reported on by Caldwell & Lewis), suggested that the range did not overlie earlier remains. Taken with evidence from the ground to the west, it would appear that the west side of the hill on which the palace sits was cut to its present level terrace at the time the west range was built in the 15th century.

Peel and Loch

- The peel and loch represent a tremendous archaeological resource that largely remains unexplored.
- Archaeological investigations in the early 20th century recovered Samian ware pottery, suggesting Roman/Iron Age occupation of the site.
- Archaeological excavations in 1966-7 by Lloyd Laing, to the west of Kirkgate and south of the palace encountered a large ditch, interpreted as possibly surviving from Edward I's pele. Pottery included 13th/14th century wares.
- Geophysical and 'key-hole' archaeological investigation by Geoquest and Kirkdale Archaeology on the historic core of the peel, between Town Bay and the Bell Burn, demonstrated that the peel contains much sensitive archaeology. Apart from the flat, low-lying ground to the east of the palace, which was reclaimed from the loch in the 19th century, elsewhere there was evidence of additional buildings of some size. A possible great ditch from the earlier castle

was located close to the NE corner of the palace; subsequently infilled with midden material, its inherently unstable nature may well have led to the settlement problems in that quarter of the palace, leading to the building of the barbican and the eventual collapse of the north range.

- The loch likewise presents a significant archaeological resource that remains almost entirely unexplored. Two crannogs (artificial islands) are visible – Cormorant Island and Rickle Island – and there may be others. The loch shore, particularly on its south side adjoining the town, will have seen extensive use, not just by the royal occupants but also by the townspeople, including for tanning and shoe-making, linen manufacture and glue making.
- Finally, there will doubtless be archaeological remains of the royal park, or hunting forest, to the north of the loch. Timothy Pont, on his map c.1580, clearly shows its encircling embankment extending well beyond both the area in state care and the adjacent M9 motorway.

Architectural/Artistic Overview:

The Palace

- Linlithgow Palace was one of the foremost later medieval royal palaces in Scotland. It still stands largely complete, though roofless, and incorporates outstanding architecture and sculpture spanning from the early 15th to the mid 17th centuries. Nothing now remains above ground of the royal castle that preceded it.
- The building development falls neatly into five phases.

Phase 1 (James I).

- The east range is built. The splendid structure incorporated a majestic entranceway, and a great hall on the first floor, flanked by royal lodgings (south) and kitchens (north), all built over massive vaults.

Phase 2 (James III)

- The royal lodgings in the south range are extended further west and north, centred on a great rectangular tower at the SW corner. It is possible that the palace acquired its quadrangular form during this phase, following the demolition of what remained of the old castle.

Phase 3 (James IV)

- This phase sees the quadrangular courtyard fully enclosed by buildings, with the phase 2 west range extended to the north and the north range built. The three remaining corners – SE, NE and NW - were provided with rectangular towers, similar to the phase 2 SW tower, all rising higher than the building ranges, and accessed via four turnpike staircases in the angles of the courtyard. Other works included a 'pretend' barbican (defended forework)

against the outer face of the north end of the east range; a substantial redesign of the great hall in the south range; and the creation of a chapel in the west range that required a comprehensive remodelling of the south courtyard elevation. The works probably also included laying out of the privy garden to the west of the palace.

Phase 4 (James V)

- The original east entranceway is closed off and a new formal access provided from the south, with outer and inner formal entrance gates. The courtyard is graced by the King's Fountain.

Phase 5 (James VI)

- The present north range is built, following the collapse of its predecessor.
- The four ranges, courtyard and external structures are detailed below:

East Range

- James I's work was remarkably innovative for its time, relying on a relatively unfortified style drawing heavily on nascent Classical ideals. Although primarily residential, it was monumental in scale, and focused on the largest hall yet built in Scotland.
- Externally, the range was dominated by a majestic entranceway, centrally placed and adorned with large-scale sculpture and heraldry, possibly French inspired (eg., Pierrefronds). Six regularly-spaced windows near the top lit the great hall behind. The large dais window to their left, and the remains of the three-towered 'pretend' barbican (defensive forework) near the north end, were part of James IV's bold and imaginative remodelling of the great hall; the barbican may well have been intended to do more than impress, for it cleverly hides the flying buttresses behind, required to prop up the sagging NE corner.
- The courtyard façade is dominated by the arched entranceway, above which are three ornate niches originally housing statues representing the Three Estates (bishops, nobility and burgesses); these rest on stone brackets carved with figures representing musicians and have carved canopies in the form of 'fairytale' castles. Surmounting all this are angels with outstretched wings, under a projecting cusped ogee arch. The first-floor round-headed door to its left was probably added in phase 3 as part of James IV's refashioning of the great hall within.
- Internally, the lower floors of the range comprise a confusing labyrinth of dark cellars, including a guardroom and prison, and kitchens. The upper floor is dominated by the great hall at the centre, which in its present form dates from Phase 3, including its regally-sized fireplace in the south wall, its three bays topped with foliate-capital piers carrying the lintel, with corbels for statues in front of the sloping chimney breast. The barrel vault high above it not only supported the phase 3 SE tower but also acted as a 'canopy of honour' for the

royal dais; the remainder of the hall was covered by a higher timber roof. The large dais window through the adjacent east wall also dates from this phase.

- At the opposite (north) end of the hall, in the NE tower beyond the 'screens passage', was the court kitchen, with three serving hatches through which food was passed to the hall. Part of a splendid minstrels' gallery survives above the screens passage.

South Range

- The phase 1 royal lodging at the SE corner was comprehensively remodelled and extended in phase 2 and remodelled again in phase 3. A new entranceway at ground level was forced through in phase 4.
- The phase 2 SW tower has a single chamber on each of its five floors and rises higher than the rest of the range.
- The original east half of the range probably had royal lodgings at first-floor level, but was largely converted to a chapel in phase 3, lit from the south by five tall, cusped lancet windows, similar to those in **Melrose Abbey's** north transept and Aberdeen Cathedral's west front. Internally, between the windows are corbels wonderfully carved with angels playing musical instruments. The difficulties of circulation created by forming the chapel were cleverly managed by adding a corridor to all three floors on the courtyard side, thereby creating the grid-like fenestration overlooking the courtyard, reminiscent of English Perpendicular architecture.
- The creation of the phase 4 south entrance, with its small, twin-towered gatehouse fitted with wide-mouthed gunholes, was accompanied by a realignment of the outside (south) wall to create a straight face, 'possibly the earliest (example) in Scotland, of the superimposition of symmetry or near-symmetry on irregular older work' (Macwilliam). The gun-holed gatehouse and its 'twin', the outer gate (see below), were probably designed by Sir James Hamilton of Finnart, who was also responsible for the fortified south front of the royal castle of **Blackness** and his own residence, **Craignethan Castle**.

West Range

- This dates mostly from phase 3, and comprised on the first floor a three-roomed lodging reserved for the sovereign. It was situated to make full use of views over, and access to, the gardens and loch to the west and north.
- The lodging was reached via the SW turnpike stair, and access led in turn (south to north) through the hall and outer chamber (the presence chamber) to the bedchamber and closets. The best details include: the fireplace and 'ladder' window in the outer chamber; the strongroom beneath the floor of the bedchamber; and the two remarkable oratories off the bedchamber with their oriel windows, the latter remarkably similar to those that once graced the east elevation of the palace in **Edinburgh Castle**, and still retaining exquisitely carved ceiling bosses bearing unicorns and little sayings (eg., *belle a vous seul*, 'beautiful to you alone').

North Range

- The present north range comprises a phase 5 double-pile block ingeniously designed for James VI by James Murray of Kilbaberton and William Wallace to provide comfortable accommodation for a royal court that was expected to visit only briefly and rarely. Its most remarkable asset is the courtyard façade, with its rich dynastic sculptural decoration, centrally placed stair turret and elaborated skyline. It was here that the devastating fire of 1746 started, and the charred stumps of floor joists and fire-cracked stones are still apparent.
- The north range may conceivably have been the site of the queen's lodging, a mirror image of the king's lodging in the west range. (The other candidate, the floor above the king's lodging, seems altogether too ill-lit from outside to serve the purpose.) The fragment of a pre-phase 5 elaborate door jamb and flat arch at ground level in the SE corner, adjacent to the NE turnpike, points to a function of undoubted importance. The presence of the two oratories side by side at the NW corner further suggest that the king's and queen's lodgings were at the same level (as was the arrangement in the palace at **Stirling Castle**), and not superimposed one above the other.

Fountain

- The phase 4 octagonal fountain at the centre of the courtyard is undoubtedly the finest addition to the palace still extant. Arranged like a wedding-cake, its three diminishing tiers of basins connected by cusped and crocketed diminutive flying buttresses, are liberally decorated with sculptures. The whole composition is gloriously capped by a miniature imperial crown. The structure marks a pivotal point in the adoption of Renaissance Classicism in Scotland, and declared the king's power and superiority.

Outer Gate

- The outer gate, all that remains of the outer precinct wall, dates from the phase 4 realignment of the approach from the east to the south. The small, crenellated gatehouse with twin octagonal towers has a well-carved string-course, above which on its outer face are four panels decorated with the carved arms of the four chivalric orders of which James V was a member: (from left to right) Garter (England), Thistle (Scotland), Golden Fleece (Burgundy) and St. Michael (France).

Social Overview:

- Linlithgow is nationally important chiefly because of its association with Mary, Queen of Scots. The palace in particular forms part of a 'trail' of places intimately linked with her, a trail that includes also **Edinburgh** and **Stirling** castles, the **Palace of Holyroodhouse**, **Inchmahome Priory** and **Lochleven Castle**. Linlithgow is close to Edinburgh, Stirling and Glasgow, and readily accessible by motorway and train.
- The palace, peel and loch are locally important, a focus of pride both for townspeople and the wider region; in fact, Linlithgow Palace is known as the jewel in the crown of West Lothian.
- The town's schools are particularly associated with the palace, chiefly through the long-standing and hugely popular 'junior guides', who give tours of the palace to visitors; so successful have they become that other education

authorities are mirroring their lead (eg., at the castles of **Craigmillar** and **Doune**).

- The townspeople in general use the peel as their chief public park, and the loch is popular with anglers and boating/sailing groups. The many events held annually include medieval re-enactments, galas, ghost walks at Hallowe'en, dramatic and art events (including by the Linlithgow Players), and the famous 'Scotch Hop', a dance event open to all and held in the palace courtyard throughout each July and August.
- Historic Environment Scotland's Rangers interact with schools and the general public throughout the year, providing a diverse range of programmes, including 'bat nights' in the palace.

Spiritual Overview:

- When in use as a royal residence, Linlithgow incorporated both a spacious chapel for the larger royal household as well as private oratories for the king and queen's personal use. The adjacent St. Michael's Church would also have been extensively used by the royal household.
- Today, the palace has little spiritual associations or meanings, other than its occasional use for wedding ceremonies and baptisms. In this regard, St. Michael's now provides the principal focus for spiritual life in the palace complex.

Aesthetic Overview

- Linlithgow Palace is surprisingly large, with many spacious interior spaces juxtaposed with numerous dark and claustrophobic cellars and corridors. Its ruinous condition means that the sense of enclosure changes numerous times during a visit, making surprise and confinement and openness all dominant aesthetic elements of the ruin. The structure is also very unified, being mainly built in buff yellow sandstone.
- The courtyard is surprisingly quiet in contrast to the outside, but borrowed aural influence can be heard in the outer rooms of the ranges, especially the north range outer rooms. Interior noise cascades around the palace, probably due to the high number of vaulted interior spaces and openings into the courtyard. It is enchanting and annoying in equal measure, as the feeling of discovery and privacy is suddenly disturbed.
- When the fountain runs with water, as it does presently during Sundays in July and August, the courtyard and buildings take on an altogether different aural aesthetic.
- The views out from the palace are majestic, particularly from Queen Margaret's Bower atop the NW tower. They provide panoramas in all directions but the best views are those to the west and north across the peel and loch.
- St. Michael's Kirk, standing immediately to the south of the palace, provides an interesting contrast, both through its richer ecclesiastical ornamentation and roofed completeness.
- The peel is hidden from the main urban centre by a screen formed of buildings and trees. The grassy park and loch add a pastoral aesthetic to the palace, creating a classic 'ruin in the landscape', particularly when viewed from the east, north and west.

- Despite its extensive use as a public park, the peel is remarkably peaceful and secluded. Its height also gives splendid views over the loch to its north and west. The one downside is the noise pollution emanating from traffic on the adjacent M9 Motorway.
- Overall, the sense of place is one of restfulness, enabling the grand royal palace to sit majestically at the heart of a parkland that itself is vibrant, quiet and charming in equal measure.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- What in the way of structures stood on the peel prior to the 12th century? A full archaeological research project would pay dividends, given what has been gleaned from recent 'keyhole' surveys and investigations.
- What form did the 12th-century royal castle take?
- What survives of Edward I's great pele built in 1303? Having been designed by the Savoyard, Master James of St. George, responsible also for the likes of mighty Conwy and Harlech, in North Wales, it must have been a place of some strength and sophistication.
- Just what remains to be discovered about the date and nature of the palace through detailed standing building analysis?
- What accompanied the present palace in the way of external buildings, structures, gardens and yards? We know from records that the palace had an outer courtyard closed by the south gate, a 'catchpule' (tennis court), formal and kitchen gardens, orchards, stables and archery butts, etc. Here again, recent 'keyhole' surveys and investigations suggest a great deal of promise.
- What stood along the north range prior to 1607? It is just possible that further intensive standing building survey work, coupled with archaeological excavation, may help to unravel the mystery of where the queen's lodging was located – thus answering the age-old riddle as to where Mary Queen of Scots was born.
- What remains to be discovered of Cromwell's use of the palace and peel as a strongly fortified military base?
- Can we chart the history of the palace and Peel more certainly through the 18th – 20th centuries.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key Points

- Linlithgow Palace, by any reckoning, remains one of the most important later medieval buildings in Scotland.
- As a place of residence and display, the palace, peel and loch together form one of the most impressive royal medieval palaces, playing a key role in the functioning and presentation of late medieval kingship. The architecture and

sculpture in the palace in particular offer numerous tangible reminders of the power and majesty of the later Stewart monarchs.

- The palace, peel and loch represent an enormously important archaeological resource, encapsulating over 2000 years of human history.
- The palace, peel and loch together form one of the most remarkably picturesque panoramas in Scotland.

Associated Properties:

(*other major Scottish royal palaces*): **Dunfermline Palace; Edinburgh Castle; Falkland Palace; Holyrood Palace; Stirling Castle.**

(*other minor Scottish royal residences*): **Doune Castle; Dumbarton Castle; Dundonald Castle; Ravenscraig Castle; Rothesay Castle.**

(*local places associated with Linlithgow Palace*): **Blackness Castle; St. Michael's Church, Linlithgow**

Keywords:

peel (pele); castle; gateway; courtyard; great hall; chapel; oratory; fountain; crannog; Stewart (Stuart); Mary Queen of Scots; Edward I; Cromwell

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