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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

BURLEIGH CASTLE



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BURLEIGH CASTLE

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Burleigh Castle consists of a late medieval tower-house to which has been added a late 16th-century entrance front and a subsidiary tower. While the remaining structures are fairly complete (the subsidiary tower is still roofed) all other ancillary structures have been completely removed. The site is adjacent to the public road and is surrounded by open fields.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview

- The lands of Burleigh were granted to Sir John Balfour as a free barony c.1445.
- It is possible that the main tower-house was constructed immediately after the grant of the barony, but, stylistically, it would appear to have been constructed in the late 15th or early 16th Century.
- A range extending south from the main tower, and incorporating a formal entrance front, and the S tower were constructed in 1582 by Sir James Balfour of Pittendreich and Margaret Balfour, heiress of Burleigh. A skewput is dated and bears their initials, IB and MB.
- A ditch, which is still identifiable as a depression to the W of the buildings, may have been constructed at this date to set off the new entrance front. However, no dating information exists and it is possible that the ditch predates the surviving buildings.
- In the 17th and 18th centuries Burleigh was renowned for its fine timber plantations which appear on Roy's Map.
- In 1715, the estate was forfeit after Robert, 5th Earl of Burleigh's involvement in the 1715 rebellion. Thereafter the lands around the castle passed into agricultural use and the buildings fell into ruin.
- Robert had previously escaped from prison where he was awaiting execution for the murder of a local schoolmaster. He is said to have hidden in the hollow of an ancient ash tree subsequently known as "Burleigh's Hole".
- By the 1760s the castle and its lands were owned by a General Irvin, who sold it to the Grahams of Kinross.
- The First Statistical Account records that the castle was 'a square, surrounded by a wall 10 feet in height, with a deep ditch and a redoubt'. There were also a great many ancient trees surrounding the site, many hollow with decay.
- In 1816 Sir James Montgomery (1766-1839) married Helen Graham, the younger daughter of Thomas Graham of Kinross and Burleigh and the estates passed to the Montgomery family.
- The Burleigh peerage was pursued by the descendants of the daughter of the Fourth Earl and Alexander Bruce. The title of Lord Burleigh was regained in 1869 and bestowed upon Alexander Hugh Bruce.

Archaeological Overview

- The site is located on a small plateau rising out of what was marshy ground until it was drained as part of agricultural improvement. The fill of the ditch is therefore likely to remain waterlogged.

- In the absence of any dating information for the ditch, there is the possibility that it predates the tower and the site may have originated as a moated site.
- The surviving buildings at Burleigh represent only one side of the courtyard enclosure. A range ran W from the S tower and an additional range was added to the N of the N tower.

Artistic/Architectural Overview

- The main tower-house at Burleigh is a good example of the fairly modest tower of this period. Three storeys with an attic it is enlivened by the corbelled wall walk with round on the NW, SW and SE corners.
- The 1582 additions are a fashionable addition to the building. The formal entrance front is a feature found on several more ambitious buildings of this date (Edzell, Tolquhon). The south tower, with its organic planning and playful informality is clearly ornamental and, although containing accommodation, can be compared with contemporary garden pavilions.

Social Overview

- No formal assessment of this has been carried out.

Spiritual Overview

- The building appears to have no identified spiritual characteristics.

Aesthetic Overview

- Burleigh's appearance amidst the flat fields of Kinross-shire is mildly surprising. The approach from the W, derived from the original drive through the policies, brings the public road very close to the building.
- The contrast between the formality of the main tower and the intricacies of the S tower is a defining characteristic of the site.
- The loss of most of the ancillary structures creates a flattening of the property; it has a grand entrance front with nothing behind.

What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?

- We do not know the form of the other buildings which made up the complex.
- We do not know the pre-1572 form of the buildings.
- We do not know the date of the ditch.

ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Key points

- Burleigh is a good example of the country residence of a 16th-century lord.
- The buildings at Burleigh exhibit the complex developments in Scottish architecture of the period towards a greater formality tempered by a delight in asymmetry.
- The site is likely to contain evidence, not just of the building associated with the surviving towers but, possibly, also of early occupation of the site.

Associated Properties

Edzell Castle, Tolquhon Castle, Queen Mary's Bath House, Holyrood

Keywords Balfour, tower-house, entrance gate, moat, asymmetry,