

Broughty Castle

THE HISTORY OF THE OLD CASTLE AT BROUGHTY FERRY



A War office letter of 1855 refers to the *“decaying walls of what appears to have been a baronial stronghold of some importance, but of which the past history is singularly obscure”*

In the Middle ages, Broughty Ferry was known as Partancraig (Crab Rock) or Portincraig. From the 12th Century, a large area of Broughty known as East ferry, formed part of the parish of Monifieth. Called at different times Bruchtay, Bruchty, or Broughty (originating from “Borch”/ “Broch” meaning Security and Tay) giving us the “Fort or Castle on the Tay”– Yet this strong point of the Tay – had in fact played a notable part in the long and turbulent period of Scottish History.

And naturally so. For centuries, the fort of Inch Keith on the Forth and the castle of Broughty on the Tay were strongholds of great strategic importance. They stood *“at the entrance of twa of oor Sovereine’s maist special rivers”*. Each held the key to its Firth, and both had to be reconquered by any invader from the sea.

Probably the rock on which Broughty Castle stands has been fortified ever since there was anything further up the river worth defending, but the first contemporary reference comes in 1454. In that year George, fourth Earl of Angus, received permission from King James II, to erect a fortalice there.

Earl references are hard to come by, but the rock was certainly fortified in 1466, for in that year David, fifth Earl of Crawford was appointed Hereditary Sheriff of Angus, with possession of the stronghold of Broughty.

It is certain, too, that Archibald, fifth Earl of Angus (he was “Archibald, Bell the cat “ of the famous story) held it in 1486, for that year Thomas Fotheringham of Pourie petitioned the Privy Council, praying that the Earl be ordered to dispoine to him the Castle and fishings of Broughty in lieu of lands of Balmuir which he had wrongfully seized. Probably the Hereditary Sheriff being responsible to the King for law, order and defence, still had jurisdiction over Broughty, though the fortress might be owned by a private individual.

At any rate when James III. Met his death fleeing from the battlefield of Sauchieburn, the new King James IV deprived the Earl of Crawford of his office of Sheriff of Angus, and appointed Andrew, second Lord Gray as Sheriff. A year later, Lord Gray received from the King a charter of the rock of Bruchty, and was given power to build and raise up a Castle and fortress, with ramparts, iron bars, marchicoulis, drawbridge and other necessary defences.

It seems odd that a new castle should be built in 1490, if its predecessor was only built after 1454. Probably all the Earl did with this royal permission was to repair the old Castle.

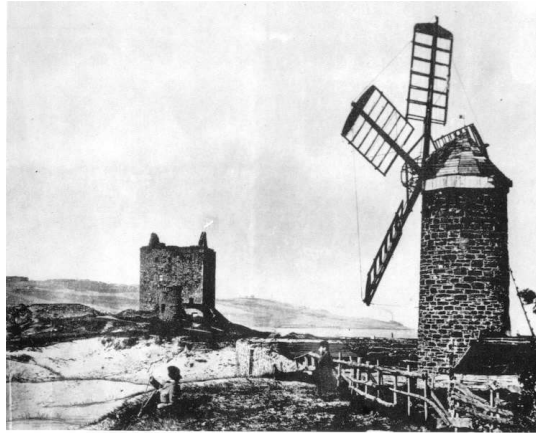
WAR WITH ENGLAND

But the need for a stronger fortress obviously arose from the naval war which was then being waged (in spite of a truce) between Scotland and England. Things came to a head in 1489, when five English ships, heavily armed, were defeated and captured by Sir Andrew Wood of Largo, though he had only two ships to fight five. The following year this intrepid sailor chased another three ships out of the Forth, and, after a running fight, drove them aground on the sandbanks at the mouth of the Tay. There they were forced to surrender , and later to suffer humiliation of being towed into Dundee.

In such troublous times the strengthening of Broughty seemed an obvious measure, and Lord Gray completed the building of the new Castle by 1496. The date used to be visible on the North Side. Shortly after Patrick, fourth Lord Gray, inherited his title, a very complicated situation developed in Scotland. The defeat of the Scots at the rout of Solway Moss probably hastened the death of James V., and when his daughter Mary came to the throne on the 15th November, 1542, she was but a seven day old infant.

The Earl of Arran, as nearest heir, took over as Regent, and no doubt even in normal times he would have had difficulties . But the times were far from normal. Ideas of religious reform were spreading, both from England and from the Continent, and the nation was divided. The government was Roman Catholic, but a rising Protestant Party had grown equally strong , and feelings between the two were bitter. A religious war was imminent.

Both sides looked for help from abroad. The Roman Catholics, led by Cardinal Bethune, Archbishop of St. Andrews, naturally looked to France. The Protestants naturally looked to England, for England had become Protestant under Henry VIII. England and France being on bad terms with one another were ready to continue their quarrelling in Scotland. Each sent troops, and were ready to subsidise anyone who was willing to raise troops on their behalf. There was nothing to choose between them in methods. Each was using Scotland for their own religious and political ends. But historically they were poles apart. The English had for centuries threatened the independence of Scotland, while the French had supported the the Scots against the English. The French were “the auld allies,” the English “the auld enemies”.

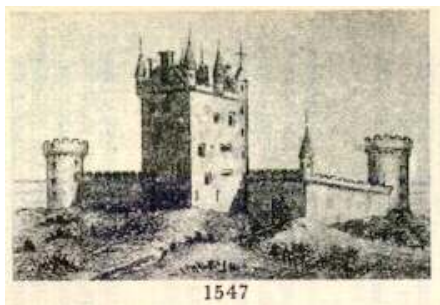


Poor Protestants! Either they had to yield to the Church of Rome, backed by French troops, or they had to swallow their pride, and side with the English, and accept their help in armed support and money. If they chose the second course they also had to keep an eye on Scotland’s independence.

Henry VIII’s proposal that the infant Queen Mary should become betrothed to his son Edward seemed at first to ease matters. The Scot’s parliament were quite favourable to the idea. They signed treaties of friendship and agreement. But before long they change their minds and repudiated these same treaties.

Meanwhile, Henry VIII. released many prisoners taken at Solway Moss, on their undertaking to further his plan for the Queen’s marriage to his son. These released prisoners (“assured Scots.” He called them) certainly supported his policy – but only as long as it did not interfere with Scottish Independence. Whenever it did they deserted him. When Henry decided on war to enforce his plan, they went over *en masse* to the Regents side!. This was the ‘Rough wooing of the Scots’.

“Put all to fire and sword! Burn Edinburgh!” These were the orders given by Henry to his brother-in-Law, the Earl of Hertford, as he embarked with his army to invade Scotland by Sea. They landed at Granton. They took Leith, and they did burn Edinburgh, though they could not surmount the defences of its castle. Then they marched homewards, burning and slaying – but being attacked in turn, as at Ancrum Moor in the early spring of 1545.



This retaliation infuriated Hertford, and he came north again that same year, destroying the abbeys of Melrose, Kelso and Dryburgh. The Scots and French could not hold him, though Cardinal Beaton found many of his Scottish opponents

coming over to his side in face of this English invader.

Then came a grave mistake on the part of Cardinal Beaton. He condoned the burning at the stake of the great preacher, George Wishart in St. Andrews, on the first of March, 1546. By this Act he undid all he had done to bring the Protestant Party over to his side, and threw them into the arms of the English. Soon after, he himself was murdered at St. Andrews, and the pro-English party centred there, holding the castle and being supplied from England.

This Garrison at Edinburgh Castle proved difficult to dislodge, and the Scottish Regent appealed once more to France for help. On 29th June 1547, a fleet of twenty-one French galleys with troops aboard appeared off St. Andrews, and very soon the garrison (which included John Knox) was captured, and the prisoners sent to France.

ENGLISH OCCUPATION OF BROUGHTY CASTLE

The English countered by making a third invasion. Eight thousand strong, and supported by a fleet, they crossed the Tweed and moved up the coast. On 10th September, 1547, “Black Sattirday” they overwhelmed the Scots at Pinkie, burning Leith and the Abbey of Holyrood, but again failing to take the castle.

Then, as the English Army returned south, Lord Clinton (in command of the Fleet) and Admiral Dudley came north to the Tay to capture Broughty Castle. Apparently they had a promise from Lord Gray that this would not be difficult.

They arrived before Broughty Castle on 21st September, and after a shot or two the castle surrendered – as arranged. Its commander at that time was Henry Durham, probably of the Durham family of Grange, Monifieth. The castle was then occupied ostensibly by the English, although the garrison consisted of Scots, Frenchmen and Spaniards as well as Englishmen. A motley crew they must have been, and Sir Andrew Dudley, left in command, found the Scots contingent ready to mutiny when he “would not suffer their harlots to stay in the castle”.

He had other problems. When the fleet sailed away they had left only two small ships, and when he had examined the castle itself he found it far from impregnable. Certainly it was nearly surrounded by water, but its walls, though four feet thick and strengthened at intervals by fortified towers, were only fourteen feet high on the landward side and nine feet towards the sea. So the garrison were put to digging a ditch, which would heighten the landward walls – and, one can surmise, keep the soldiers busily employed and out of mischief.

Dudley also ordered a supply of bibles and Testaments from England, and requested that a good preacher be sent to him. These apparently were not intended for the garrison, but for the people of Angus and Fife, so we can presume that Dudley either considered his international crew quite beyond the pale or the local people even worse!

A surprising man! Soon after his biblical request, we have him sending his two ships to bombard Dundee, which surrendered after a brief show of resistance. The feeble resistance was of course, due to the fact that the people of Dundee had for long been

sympathetic towards the reformed religious doctrine. They could fight very differently when they chose, as Montrose and Monk were to find a hundred years later.

Dudley's move into Dundee annoyed the Regent Arran, and with three thousand men he not only re-captured Dundee, but he went on to Broughty Castle. He opened fire with his guns, knocked off half a tower, and made a determined attack. But the castle held out against him. He then returned to Perth and Stirling, and asked France to send further support- "alsweill of men as of money and munitions" – as soon as possible in the spring.

Meanwhile at Broughty, things were getting lively. Vice-Admiral Wyndham had arrived with a powerful fleet and he very soon moved upriver and took Dundee. In a proclamation he asked the people to support the marriage treaty. In return Lord Gray asked Lord Wyndham to garrison and fortify the town against the Earl of Argyll who had arrived at Perth "with a great power of Scots," and who was determined to smash the royal marriage plan once and for all. Wyndham agreed, but meantime he waged war up and down Tayside. On Christmas Day he burned the Abbey of Balmerino and a number of Fife villages, and soon after this he made another sally and burned Scotsraig.

But Argyll's approach had alarmed him as well as everyone else, and he was relieved when Lord Gray and "certain honest men of Dundee" went to Perth to interview this Highlander. Unfortunately, when the deputation arrived, Argyll "reputed them traitors," and told them to go back, and send Dudley to see him. Dundee was now in a stir, and hundreds left the town in great alarm. Dudley decided not to meet the Earl of Argyll himself, but to send Wyndham and one of his ship's captains.

Argyll met them (so Wyndham described) with an impressive escort of soldiers in battle dress – a hundred hagbutters and "fifty Frenchmen on horseback in complete harness with white baldricks and morions (open helmets) and hagbuts in the hands, bragging to and fro as if they were conquerors of the world".

Meanwhile, back in Dundee, Dudley and Lord Gray took the chance to transfer to the ships all the guns, bells, copper and brass that were in the church. Then they fired the steeple, and evacuated the townsfolk. When Argyll marched in, he found a town of bare walls and empty streets. He didn't waste time there, and went on to Broughty Castle. But even his most determined attacks failed to overcome its defences. Soon after we find him (rather surprisingly) making a truce with Dudley. It was rumoured he was bribed, though he denied this. And probably with truth, for shortly after he left Broughty he was fighting along side the French against the English garrison at Haddington.



More likely his departure from Tayside was due to the arrival of strong English reinforcements which included men, provisions "and all kinds of instruments of building a fort". At any rate, as soon as they saw the last of the feiry highlander the English started to build a fort on Balgillo Hill. Before long it was "ready to be chrystened," and we have Dudley reporting that it "looked somewhat peartly over them (the Scots) and landes a

shot now and then to them as approacheth ovre nyer”- as some horsemen did the other day to view it”.

From Broughty and Balgillo, the English now proceeded to harry the countryside round about it, attacking all who refused them support. Sir Robert Maule, for instance, was attacked and severely wounded at his house of Panmure, taken prisoner, and sent to London. They also burnt Powrie Castle.

However the military balance was again tilted by the arrival at Leith of 8000 French and 1000 German soldiers. In return the Scots agreed that Queen Mary (now six years old) should sail for France, and later marry the Dauphin of France.

Meanwhile, the French fleet sailed to the Tay, but owing to the currents they could not come within effective range of the Castle without exposing themselves broadside on, so they used discretion and returned to the Forth. It’s worth noting that John Knox may well have been on one of those French galleys, and it may well have been on this project that he was asked if he recognised the land they were passing and replied “Yes, I knaw it weil; for I sie the steeple of the place (St Andrews) quhair God first oppinit my mouth in public to his glorie”. And he predicted that he would one day return there.

In November, 1548, the English again attacked Dundee by land and sea, though they were vigorously counter attacked by townsmen led by James Doig who later became provost. They were however, soon driven out entirely by French and German forces.



Broughty Castle now came under continuous attack, so that the garrison there “durst not stir abroad.” And a big assault on both Balgillo and Broughty was begun in February, 1550. The fort of Balgillo was first battered by gunfire, then invaded

with complete slaughter of its garrison. Witnessing this disaster, the garrison at Broughty were thoroughly dismayed. They were only too willing to surrender, “blyth in hart that thai escapit with their lyffis”. Now “the haill country was clogged of the Inglishmen,” and this ended an occupation of two years and five months.

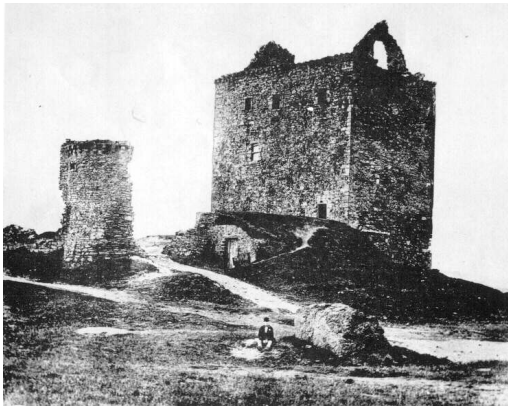
Soon after this, the Fort of Balgillo was “cassin down” as worthless, but it was decided to preserve the Fort of Inch Keith and the Castle of Broughty, these being “at the entrance of twa of oor Soveranes mast special rivers”. Broughty Castle was again taken in 1559 by the Lords of the Congregation in their rising against the new Regent, Mary of Guise. Seaton of Parbroath in Fife re-took it for the Regent. And after the Treaty of Edinburgh in 1560, which established peace between Scotland and England, the Castle was no longer recognised as a fortress.

However, we hear of it being captured again by General Monk in 1651, (when he was besieging Dundee) and he imprisoned old Alexander Leslie, Lord Leven, here, and other members of the Committee of the Estates whom he captured at Alyth. Later they were all sent to London.

DECAY AND RESTORATION

The Castle then makes a brief appearance in the “Fifteen rebellion (1715)” when it was handed over to Alexander Wedderburn, the town clerk, as governor, and was apparently in good repair. But by the end of the 18th Century it was a ruin. On 13th September, 1787, Robert Burns wrote in his diary – “Dundee, a low –lying but plesant town – old steeple – Tay firth – Broughty Castle, a finely situated ruin, jutting into the Tay”. In 1821 it was advertised for sale in the Dundee, Perth and Cupar Advertiser as likely to make a good Inn.

By 1841 the Castle had shed a good deal of its glamour, and was being used as a coastguard signal-station. The next year (1842) it was sold by the Fotheringham Trustees to the Edinburgh and Northern Railway Company for storage purposes, also for them to



construct the rail ferry harbour terminal in conjunction with the Arbroath Railway Company. The harbour was designed by engineers Thomas Bouch and Thomas Grainger and constructed for the railway companies. But its day was not yet over. In 1854, at the time of the Crimean War, it was bought by the Government (War Office), in case of a Russian invasion.

Reconstruction of the Castle started in Feb 1860 and completed in June 1861 and its humbled walls were proudly raised again,

and it was re-equipped as a fortress, complete with gun battery. It was now in fact, stronger than ever. With the crossfire of a second battery over at Port on Craig, on the opposite side of the Tay, it had supreme command of the shipping channel, and was all set to defend Dundee should the need arise. Restoration was believed to be authentic but nothing above the first floor is original. Broughty was all a-bustle then, and there was even a tented camp around the Castle in 1855, of troops waiting to be embarked for the Crimea.

The Castle became the HQ for the new 3rd (BF) Forfarshire Artillery Volunteers until 1870. Between 1888 and 1907 the Castle was occupied again as a garrison HQ by the Tay Division of Submarine miners Royal Engineers (Volunteers). The role of the volunteers was to protect the navigable channels of the Tay estuary by laying mines. A railway line was used to push mines along the pier in trolleys. At the end of the Pier a small crane lifted the mines into small launches. The mines were then located at various depths in the Tay estuary. The mines could be retrieved again using a hoist on the steam launch.

From 1859 to 1908 it was garrisoned by Coast Defence Volunteers, Artillery and Submarine Miners, and from 1908 onwards by units of the Territorial Army. The gun emplacements east of the Castle were erected prior to 1914, and in the First and Second

World Wars it was occupied by regular troops. In 1930 the garrisons left and the Castle was declared an ancient monument. With the outbreak of the Second World War, the war department garrisoned the Castle with the 503 Coast Regiment Royal Artillery. But during both Wars the Castle defences were never tested. In 1949 the Castle was leased to Dundee Corporation who used it briefly as a tea room.

In 1969 the Castle opened as a museum.

