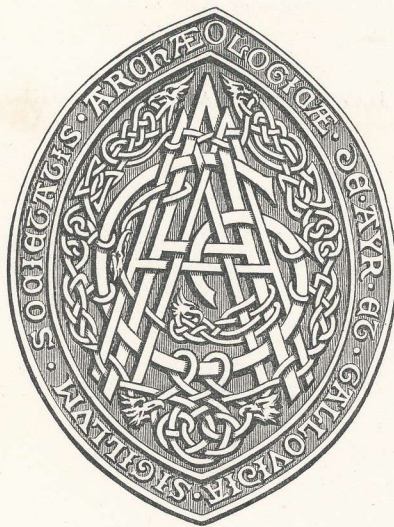


MUNIMENTS
OF THE
Royal Burgh of Irvine

VOL. I.



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ARCHÆOLOGICAL
AND HISTORICAL COLLECTIONS
RELATING TO
AYRSHIRE AND GALLOWAY

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THE SEAGATE CASTLE.

THE SEAGATE CASTLE takes its name from the ancient *Via Marina*, or Sea-Gait, on the north side of which it is situated. Although now no longer of its former importance, the Seagate ranks as one of the oldest thoroughfares in Irvine, and down to the sixteenth or seventeenth century formed the principal means of communication between the town and its harbour, which lay at the foot of this street, the state of the river being such as to admit of vessels coming up to within a short distance of the bridge. The gradual accumulation of blowing sandbanks, bars, and dunes, completely altered these ancient and more primitive arrangements, and in 1570 a new harbour was commenced farther down the river. Timothy Pont however mentions that the old harbour was still in existence, but in a decayed and useless state, in 1606.

Although in so far conforming to the exigencies of street architecture as to present to the Seagate an unbroken line of frontage, the Castle is an extremely picturesque mass of building, and yet towers above its humbler neighbours, ruined and dismantled though it be, with no small measure of rugged strength and feudal dignity. In point of date it is a composite building. By much the greater part of it was erected in the latter part of the sixteenth century, by Hugh third Earl of Eglinton, as the initials and armorial bearings of the Earl and his second Countess Lady Agnes Drummond, carved on bosses in the vaulted entrance, clearly testify. Incorporated with this later building are the remains of a much older structure, and especially of a tower at the north-west angle, to be afterwards more particularly described. In accordance with a custom extensively prevalent amongst the Scottish nobles, it was occupied after its enlargement as a town residence by the Earls or members of the Eglinton family. This imposing pile latterly fell into a state of dilapidation and decay, it being

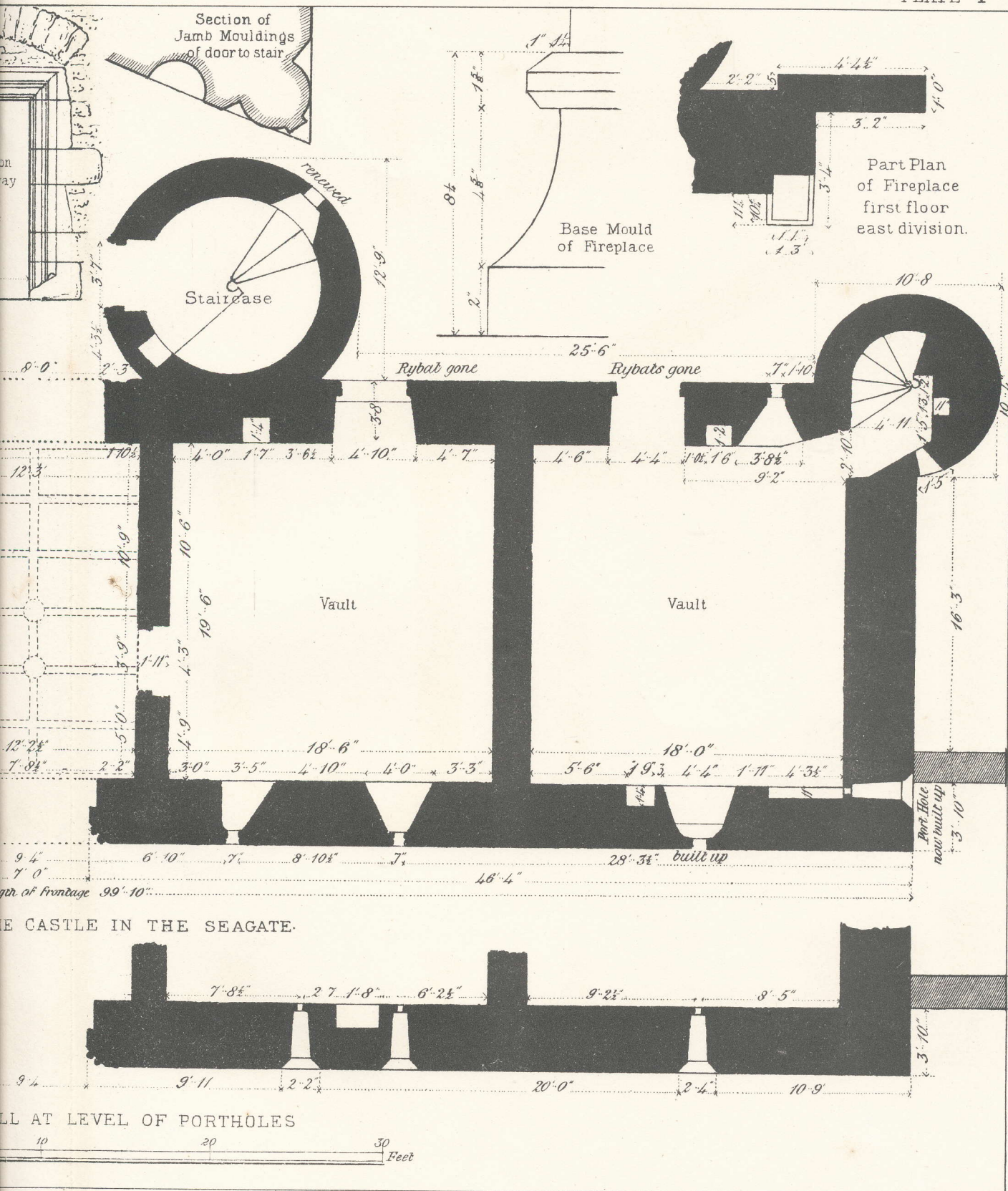
only a reminiscence, handed down by some of the old residents, that part of the roof remained until the close of last century. After it ceased to be inhabited the Castle acquired a very evil repute as the haunt of smugglers and thieves. It was shunned after nightfall, and if any property went amissing it was the first place to be searched; and there are parties still living who remember seeing the smugglers' "wee still" sitting in the kitchen fireplace. In a less clandestine way the town's people made free with the old building, without stint using it as a quarry, until reduced to the state in which we now see it—a mere wreck of former greatness, with its eastern wing swept entirely away to the vaulting, the beautiful cornice of the main building, the large heraldic panellings, the lintels and jambs of fireplaces, doors, and windows, with all the serviceable stone conveniently to be got at, ruthlessly despoiled.

As a check to this state of matters, Earl Hugh (the 12th Earl) made extensive repairs on the building about 1810, blocking up the windows, doors, etc. This would no doubt check the nefarious practices first mentioned, but being easily accessible from the rear the spoliation of the building still went on.

In 1839 there was a great storm of wind, in consequence of which a considerable downfall of stones into the courtyard took place.

When I first went to examine the Castle in 1883, entry had to be got by forcing the massive gate, which had not been opened for many years. Although well secured in front, the dilapidated walls admitted of easy entry at the back, and the vaults, kitchen, and other apartments, were found gorged with stones, soil, and rubbish of all kinds, the refuse chiefly of the adjoining gardens. By orders from the Earl of Eglinton this was all removed, and it took about a month's driving to clear away the debris.

It may be mentioned that on each recurring Marymas Fair day the carters, returning from their parade on the racecourse, when passing up the Seagate, range themselves before the old Castle, and play "Auld Lang Syne."



DESCRIPTION OF THE PLATES.

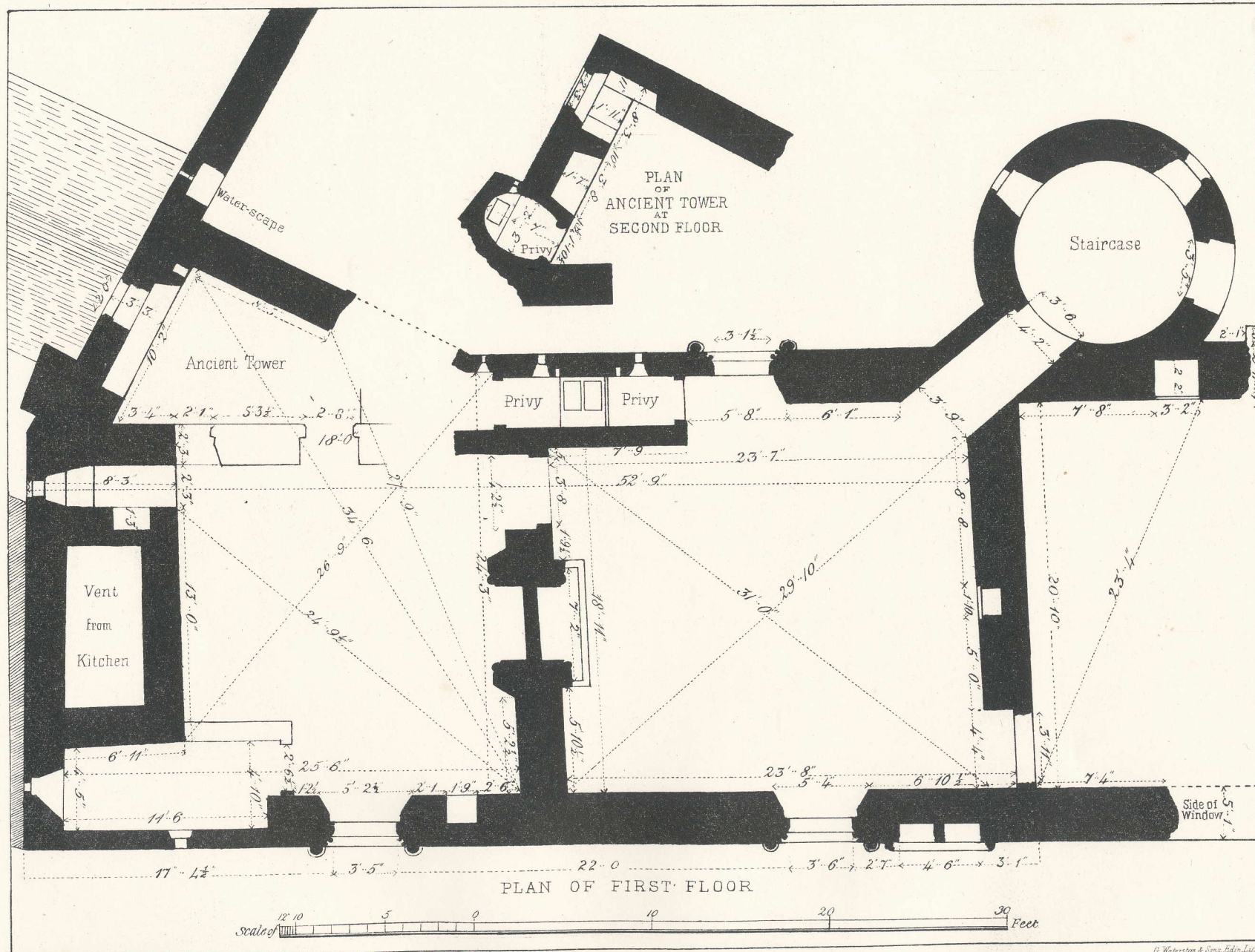
PLATE I.—GROUND-PLAN.

THE general arrangement is very simple. A long range of building about 28 feet in breadth, and having the first story vaulted throughout, follows without a break the line of the street. At the west end a much narrower range of building runs northward at an acute angle, and in the gusset formed by the two ranges rises the ancient tower. About 56 feet in length of the front range has been carried up to the full height of three stories, the rest has not exceeded two stories. Nearly in the centre of the street range is the entrance gateway and vaulted passage, leading through another strong gate, opening directly into the courtyard to the rear. Immediately to the left, on entering the outer gate, is the door entering into a narrow apartment, in all probability forming the guard chamber. It is lit from the front by a small window 2 feet high by $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches wide, and beneath it a widely splayed shothole. The door has been hung on the north side, but the crooks are gone, and for its better security when closed there are a couple of bolt holes, and a vertical groove 1 foot 6 inches long and 2 inches square. On the south side there are two 3-inch deep bolt holes near the top, another of the same depth well down, and above it another a foot deep by $1\frac{3}{4}$ inch square. Opposite to this door, in the entrance passage, is the door to the vault in the east wing. The original lintel had been torn away, and with it apparently had come down the third vaulting rib on the east side, the present lintel and rib having been renewed by Earl Hugh when the Castle was repaired in 1810.

On the ground floor this east wing is divided into two large vaults, with small windows to the front, and archways, now sadly despoiled, opening to the courtyard. At the north-east angle, the lower part of a large projecting turnpike stair still remains, giving access from the vault to the floor above. A still larger turnpike stair, about 10 feet in diameter internally, and 15 feet over all, projecting into the courtyard, immediately to the right of the main entrance, formed the principal access to the first floor, entry being obtained by a good-sized doorway decorated with bolection mouldings of the usual type.

The western part of the front range is entirely occupied by the kitchen and its

connected conveniences. On the side next the west gable is the large fireplace, about 11 feet in width between the jambs, nearly 4 feet 6 inches from floor to spring and 1 foot 11 inches rise of arch; from top of arch to vault is 5 feet 6 inches, giving a total height of 12 feet, which forms the general height of the vaulting throughout. From this fireplace an enormous vent goes right up through the various floors, diminishing as it ascends, with a small window high up on the west gable. Within this vent on the north side of the fireplace, and 7 feet 6 inches above the spring of the arch, an oaken beam had been laid across for some purpose or other. When I saw it only a few inches protruded from the wall, and on having it taken out it proved to be about 5 or 6 inches square, the inserted extremity completely decayed, and the projecting end had evidently been sawn across. This fireplace not occupying the full width of the kitchen, a blank space necessarily occurs at its south side. If the reader will look at the south elevation, Plate III., it will be found that there is a small window near the west end of the building. There being no traceable access to the space presumably lighted by it, a sense of keen interest was awakened in those minutely acquainted with the various outs and ins of the castle. To solve the mystery an opening large enough to creep through was broken out in the corner of the fireplace. The space was found half-filled with small-sized stones flung in by boys through the window which had not been blocked up like the others. The labour was not in vain however, all the lower part of the walls on the south and west being clearly distinguishable, from the differing masonry, as being part of the older structure, on which the sixteenth century work had been superimposed. Whether in inserting the window the builders had forgotten the fireplace we do not know. One thing is clear—it being inconvenient to have the fireplace the full width of the vault, the superfluous space was built up, and with its neatly-formed window left as an enigma to a future generation. The kitchen window, which has been sadly despoiled, must evidently have been divided by a central mullion into two lights, and is protected by a shothole against possible aggression. On the opposite side, close to the fireplace, is an aumbry, gible-checked all round, 1 foot 10 inches wide, 2 feet high, and 1 foot 5 inches deep. Immediately to the east of the kitchen there is a trance or passage the full width of the vault, with a service opening into the kitchen, very carefully formed and moulded, 1 foot 11 inches wide by 1 foot 9 inches high. There also runs diagonally across the kitchen from the south side of the fireplace to the door, the track of a drain, which seems to have been regularly built at one time but is now very much dilapidated. Exterior to the kitchen, on the north, is a triangular-shaped cellar, which is really the underpart of the ancient tower. Of the range of buildings beyond this nothing remains, save the back wall, running northward about 60 feet. Just outside the archway leading to the kitchen there was accidentally discovered a regularly built midden or dung-pit, sunk into the ground, and into which a drain, built vertically in the wall, was led from the conveniences above.



W. Galloway, Mens et del.

G. Waterston & Sons, Edin. Lith.

PLATE II.—PLAN OF FIRST FLOOR.

The plan here is limited to the western part of the building, as the east wing levelled to the vaults shows nothing save an expanse of green turf. Formerly accessible by a short passage from the large turnpike, owing to the partial destruction of the stair the first floor is now only to be reached by a ladder, or by clambering over the ruins at the old tower. It is divided into two large apartments opening *en suite*, of which the largest measures about 23 feet 8 inches by 22 feet. It is lit by two large and highly decorated windows, the one looking out on the Seagate and the other on the courtyard. A fireplace with stone fender appears on the west side, but it is sadly dilapidated, and with the lintel gone is now built up. On the opposite side is a small aumbry, and, in the corner near it, a door of communication with the east wing, of which all that remains on this floor is another aumbry and lower part of a fireplace in the fragment of the north wall.

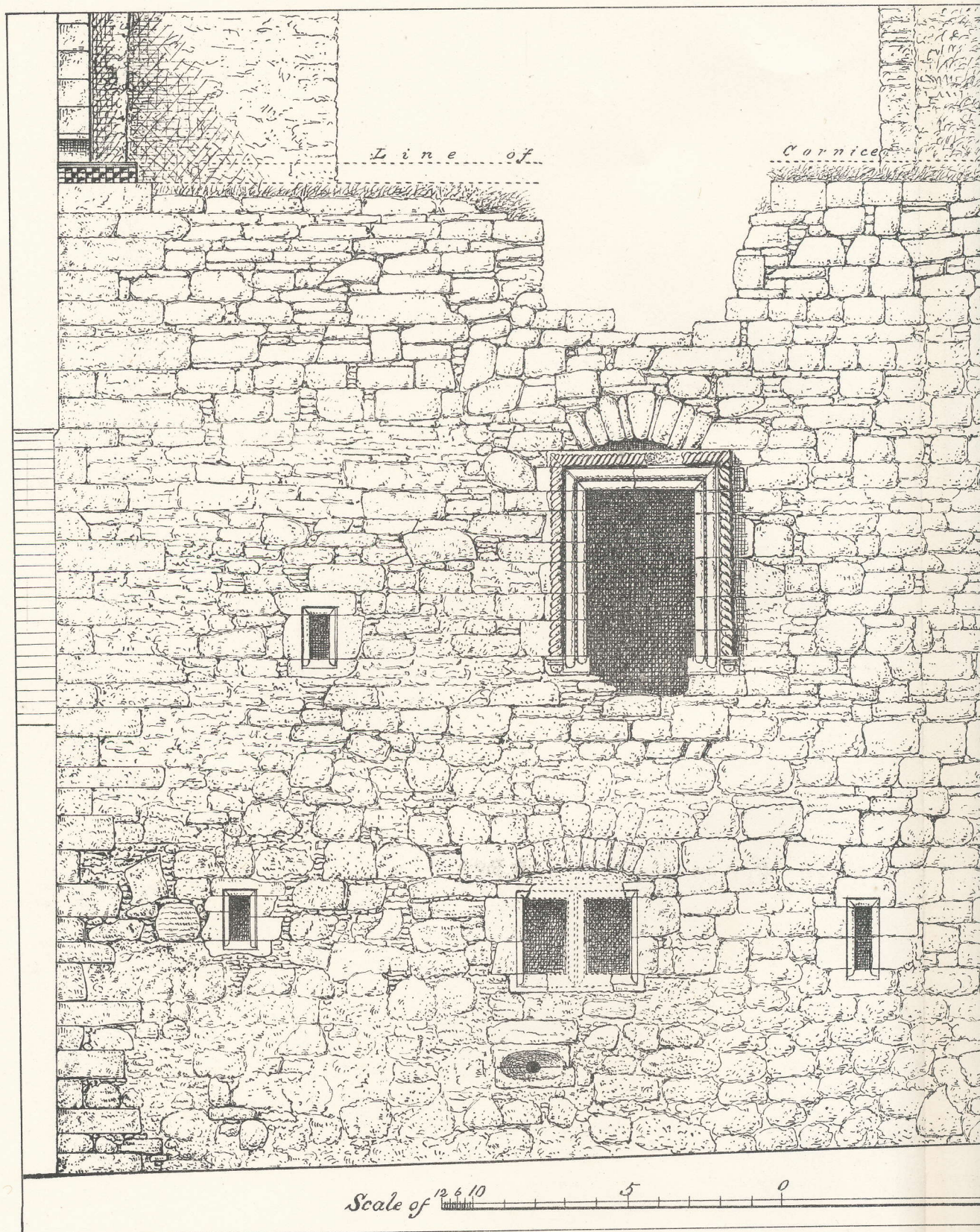
Owing to the encroachment of the ancient tower and vent from kitchen, the western apartment has been only about 18 feet 6 inches square, with a closet or a small apartment taken off it at the south-west corner. It has been lit by one large window opening on the Seagate, and has a fireplace, dilapidated and built up like the other, and *dos-a-dos* with it. An interesting and pretty complete example of the sanitary arrangements of the period will be noticed in the conveniences to the rear of these apartments, placed back to back, and communicating with the vertical drain or shaft already mentioned. The fittings are formed chiefly of thin slabs of stone.

Another curious contrivance, deserving of notice, occurs in the large turnpike, close to where it joins the east wing. At this point a doorway will be observed, opening outwards and off the stair, but leading apparently to nothing. It cannot have been for communication with the east wing, for at this point the wall there is corbelled out for a fireplace and vent, and there are no indications in the doorway itself of any connection, either in stone or timber. There is only one purpose, it appears to me, which a large doorway in such an unwonted position can have served, viz. for the conveyance, by means of a hoist, of bulky articles from below to the first floor of the main building. An ingenious way of evading the tortuosity of a turnpike, and it will be noticed that the access from the doorway to the passage is very direct.

The timbers being entirely gone, the second floor is accessible only by ladder. The general arrangement has been however the same as the first, but the fireplaces which are in a much more perfect state than those below have been placed in the outside gables, a place for that on the west being found against the kitchen vent.

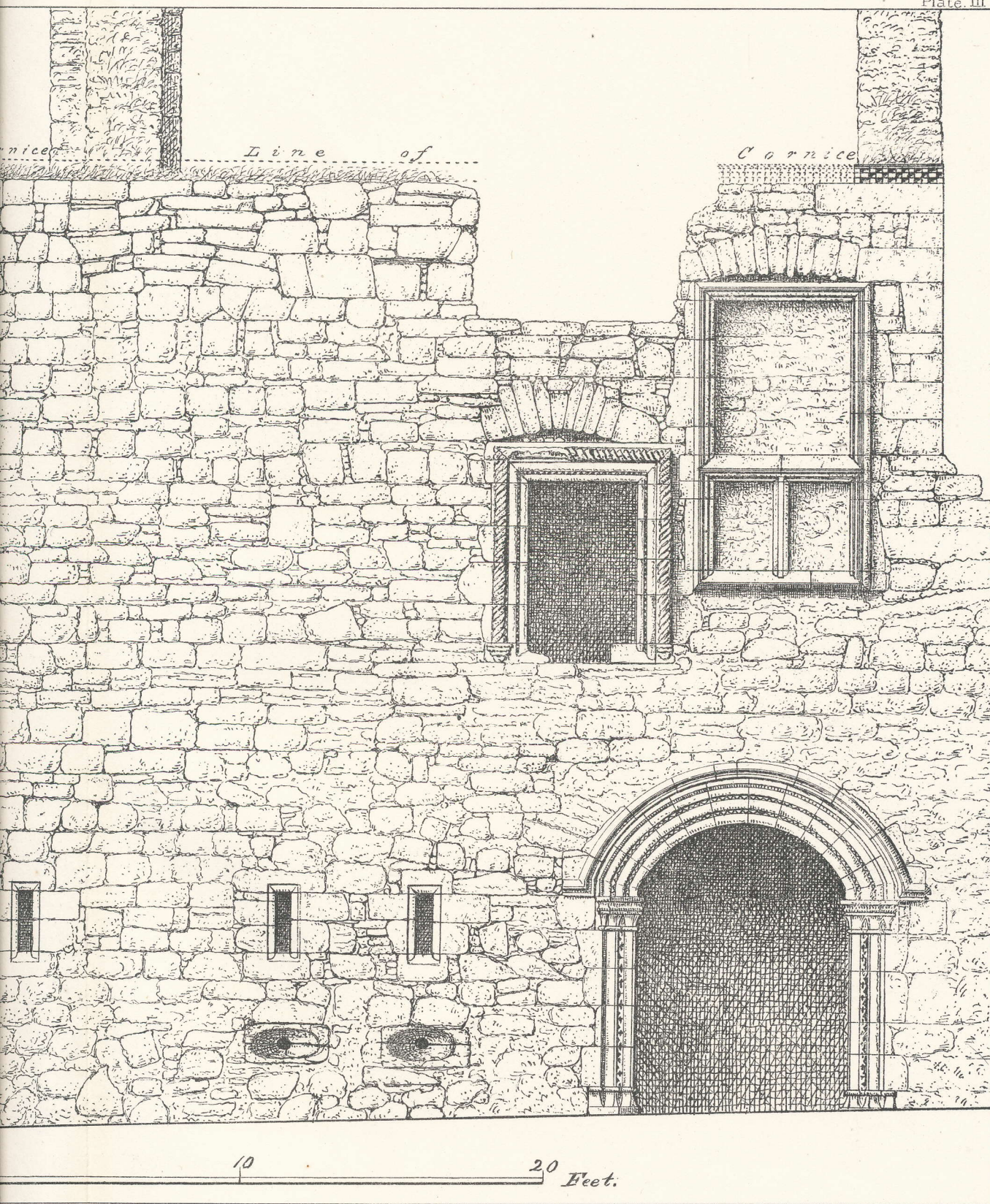
PLATE III.—THE SOUTH ELEVATION.

This plate shows the entire frontage to the Seagate, with exception of the partially demolished east wing, of which only the vaulted portion remains. The plate thus comprises all the three-story part of the building, measuring about 56 feet in length and 33 feet in total height, from the ground at the west end to the top of the cornice. Of this cornice only a few feet remain at either end, the rest having been ruthlessly despoiled, together with the two, no doubt, very handsome dormer windows, of which nothing now remains save unseemly gaps. Happily there still exists, as the principal feature of this front, the large entrance gateway, more minutely illustrated in Plate VI.; also the two very handsome windows with cable-mould ornament and quaint little corbels below, with the moulded panelling, once filled with armorial bearings, illustrated in Plate IV. In curious contrast with the care bestowed on the ornamental work will be noticed the very irregular character of the masonry, picturesque enough in one sense, yet presenting a jumble of all sorts and sizes of stones, as they came from the quarry. The same feature runs through all the sixteenth century work, externally and internally presenting a marked distinction from the older work where it does occur.



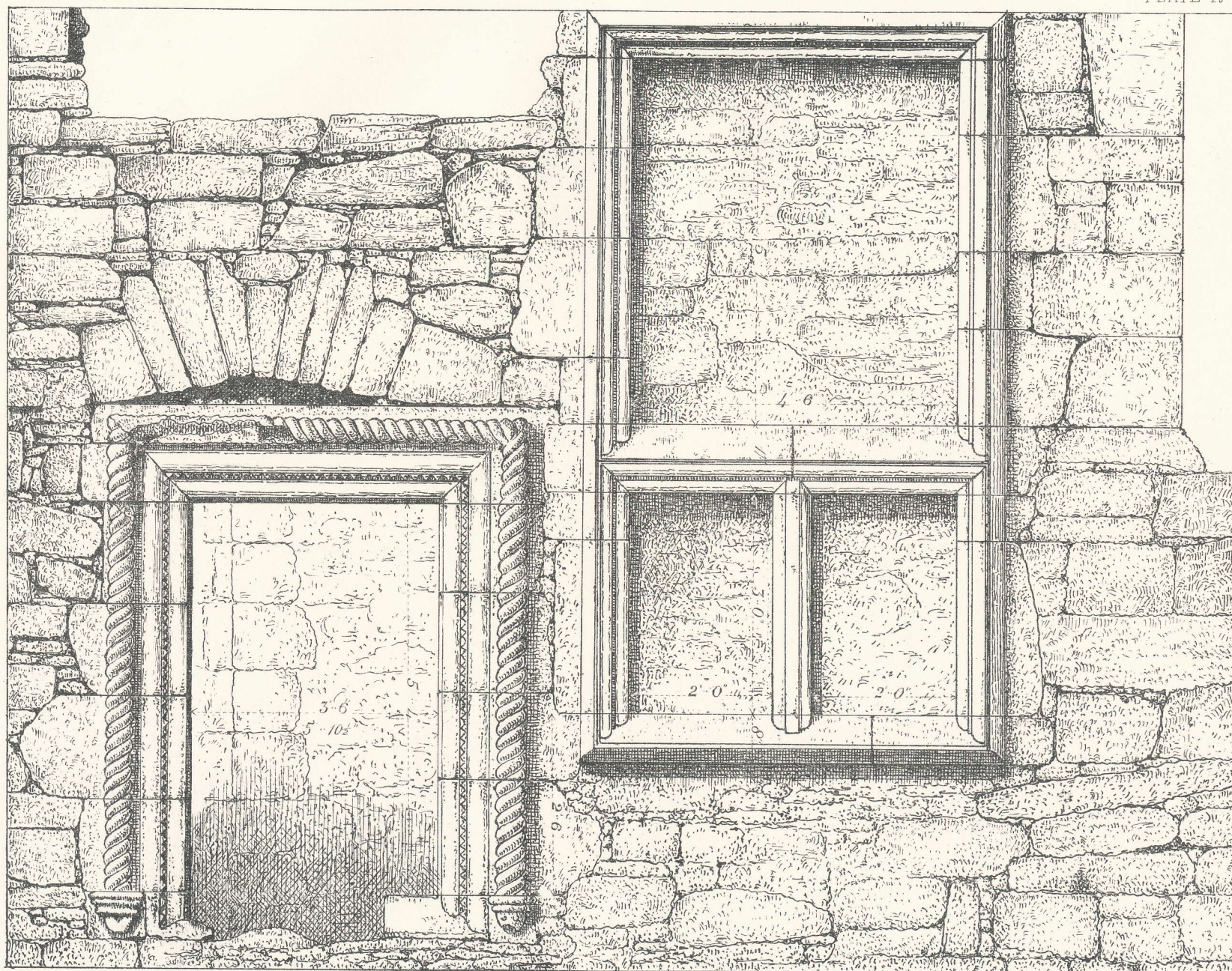
W. Galloway, Mens et del.

SOUTH ELEVATION



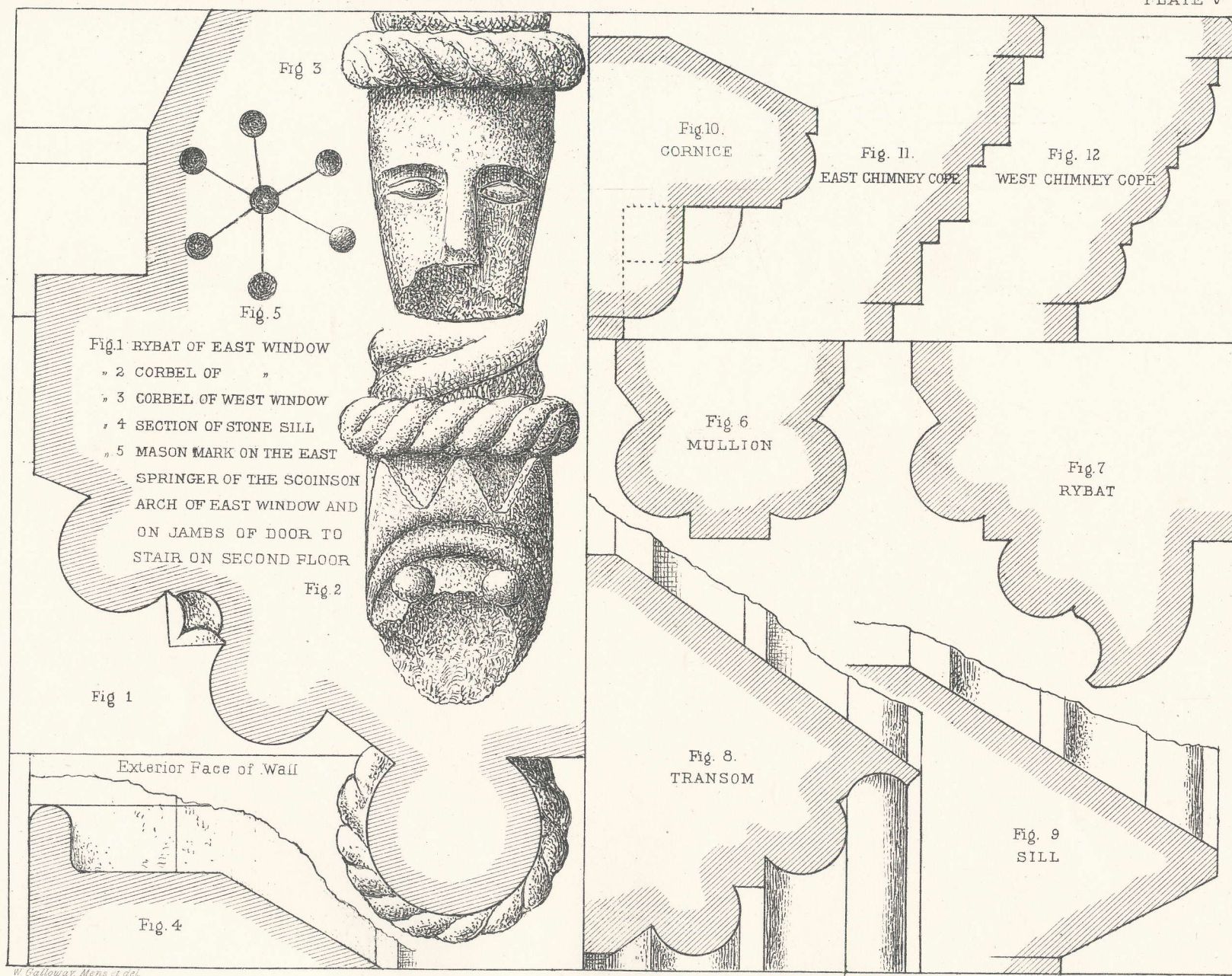
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SOUTH ELEVATION



ELEVATION OF LARGE WINDOW AND PANNELLING OVER ENTRANCE GATEWAY

Scale - half inch to the foot



Fig^s 1 to 5 DETAILS OF LARGE WINDOWS, FIRST FLOOR. Fig^s 6 to 9, DETAILS OF PANNELLING.
Fig^s 10 to 12 CORNICE AND CHIMNEY COPEs.
one fourth scale. Fig. 5 one half scale.

PLATES IV. AND V.—FIRST-FLOOR WINDOWS AND PANELLING
OVER ENTRANCE GATEWAY, WITH DETAILS.

Of the large and ornate windows represented, only three remain, viz. two looking out on the Seagate, and one on the Courtyard in the rear. Those in the east wing, with the dormers, may have been similarly decorated, but unfortunately no trace remains. The front windows are 5 feet 4 inches high, by about 3 feet 6 inches wide; that in the rear being 3 feet 1½ inch. The principal decoration has been a large cable-moulding, terminating in grotesque little corbels, of which the two represented are the most perfect; within this decoration, two large roll mouldings, with a small neatly carved variety of the tooth-ornament, completes the rybat. Round the upper part of these windows a groove or raglin is run for a fixed frame, and at the height of about 2 feet 3 inches above the sill there is a check for the transom bar, about 3½ or 4 inches deep. The space below this bar would doubtless be fitted in with opening lights for air, this framework being protected on the exterior by eight upright stanchions. A curious mason mark, represented on Plate V., appears in the scoinson arch of east window and the door to stair on second floor. It consists of six neatly formed pits, symmetrically arranged round a central one, and connected with it by thin lines.

It may pretty safely be assumed that the large panelling over the Entrance Gateway was formerly filled in with armorial bearings, but in the entire absence of the originals, how these were disposed can only now be guessed at. The large panel, measuring about 5 feet by 4 feet 6 inches, would in all probability contain the combined Eglinton and Montgomerie arms, with supporters, etc., and notwithstanding the dissolution of the Earl's marriage with Lady Jean Hamilton in 1562, owing to consanguinity, it is quite possible that the lower panels, measuring 3 feet high by 2 feet in breadth, contained the family bearings of the two Countesses.

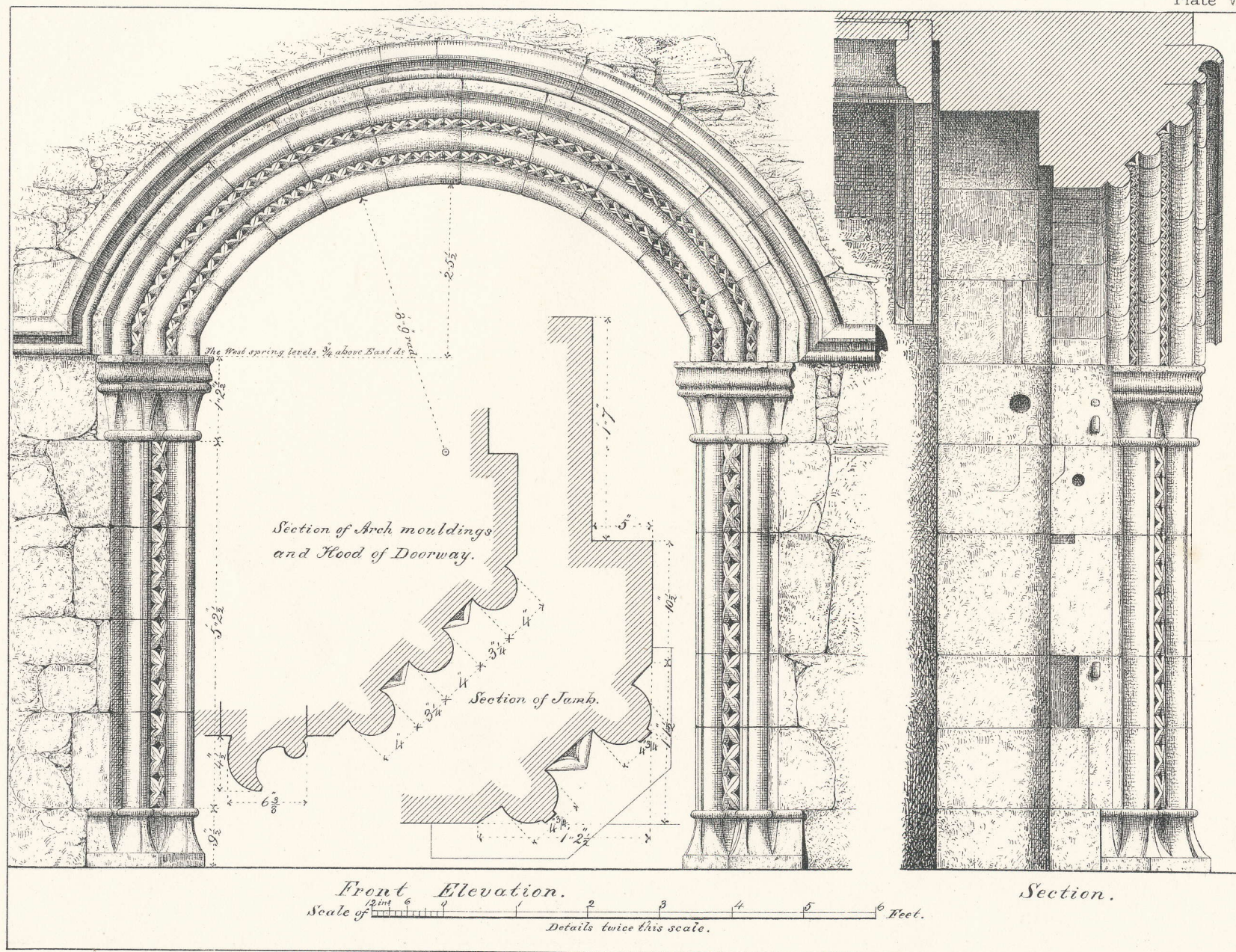
PLATE VI.—THE ENTRANCE GATEWAY.

This very handsome doorway in its style partakes of an ecclesiastical rather than a baronial character. This is due partly to its mouldings, but still more to the elaborate use made of the *quatre-feuille* or dog-tooth ornament. Extraordinary ideas have been entertained regarding this gateway by earlier writers. Robertson tells us that "In this old castle there remains still, quite entire, one of the most perfect specimens of the Saxon or Norman round arch that is perhaps now to be met with in Britain. It is erected over the principal gateway into the house."¹

The error arises from the mistaken notion that the "round arch," whether dubbed "Saxon" or "Norman," was limited to early times, until it came to be superseded by the pointed or Gothic arch. This is true with regard to the mediæval styles as practised in England, the circular or one-centred arch being finally discarded in the twelfth century. In Scotland the case was very different. Down to the time of the Wars of Independence architectural practice in Scotland adhered very closely to that of England. The complete interruption of friendly relationships, and the fierce animosities engendered during that eventful period, produced a marked change on the entire after-history of Scottish architecture. One of its most characteristic features was the retention or frequent employment of the round arch, even in ecclesiastical buildings, so long as the Gothic style remained in use. To find it employed then, in the latter half of the sixteenth century, in a building like the Seagate Castle, excites no surprise. Very far, however, from being a "round," *i.e.* a semicircular arch, such as was used in Norman times, the arch now under consideration is a comparatively flat, segmental arch slightly stilted at the spring. It is just such an arch as in England, under similar circumstances, would have been a depressed, four-centred, or Tudor arch. Being in Scotland, with a wide opening and restricted rise, it forms a curious compromise between the round and the depressed arch.

In its style this doorway is a very creditable example of sixteenth century Gothic as practised in Scotland. It shows the decadence of the style of course, and the mouldings are heavy and devoid of grace and delicacy, but the elaborate use of the *quatre-feuille* recalls the better phases of an expiring art. On either side are two columns, with filleted shafts, a large tooth-ornament being introduced between them. The arch mouldings are in three orders, each composed of a large plain roll, with small-sized tooth-ornaments intervening, and the entire arch is enclosed with a large hood-moulding.

¹ *Topo. Descripn. of Cunninghame, etc.*, Irvine, 1820, p. 422.



W. Galloway, Mens et del.

G. Waterston & Sons, Photo-Lith.

THE ENTRANCE GATEWAY.

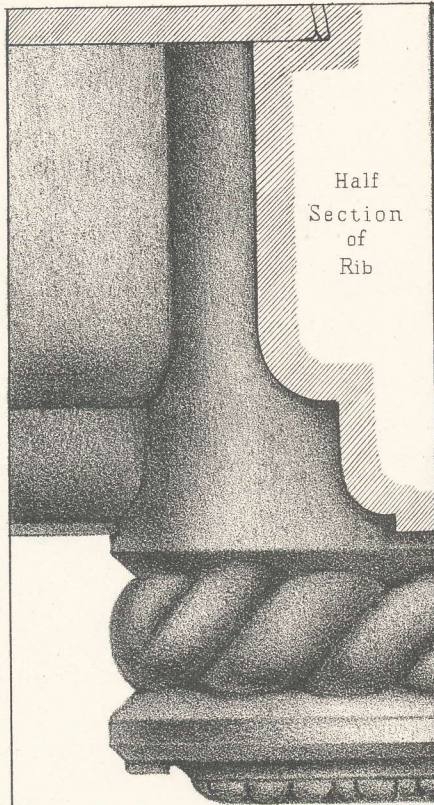


Fig. 3, Half Profile of Fig. 1

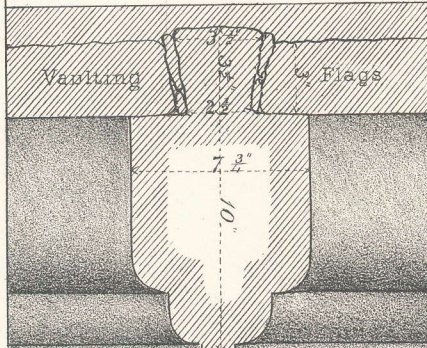


Fig. 4, Section of Rib &c. showing construction

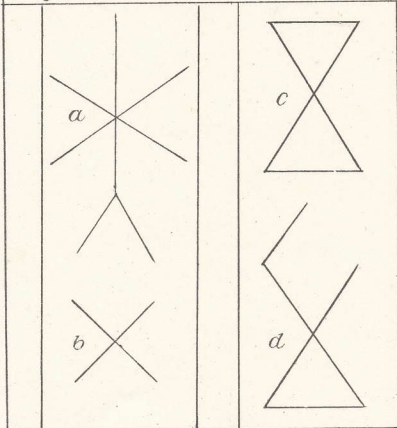


Fig. 5, Mason Marks on Ribs $\frac{1}{2}$ Sc.

W. Galloway, Mens et del.

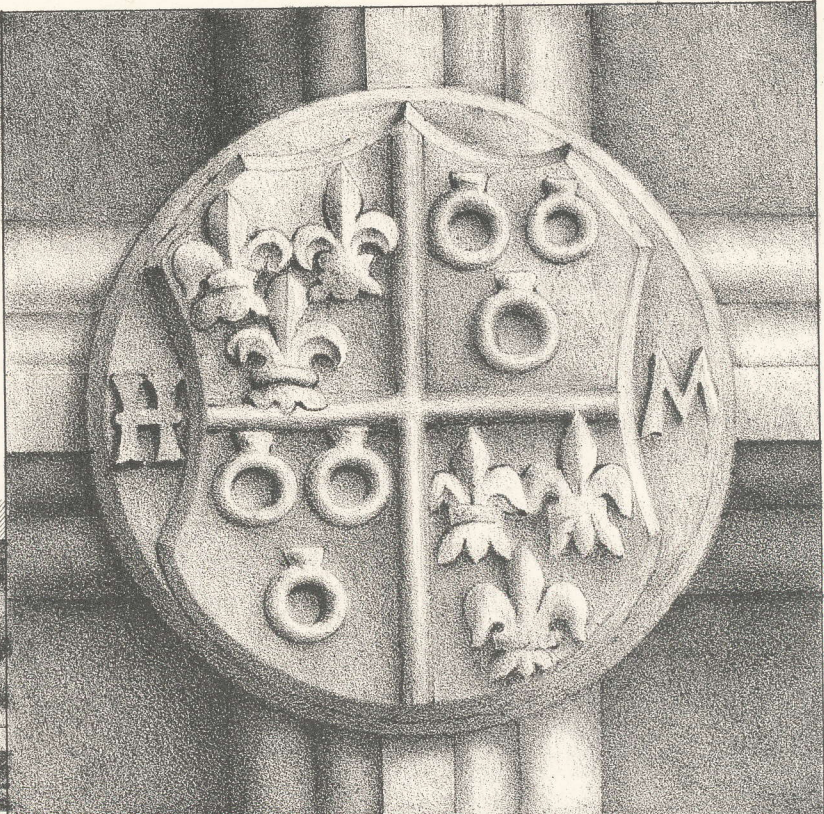


Fig. 1, Arms of Hugh, 3rd Earl of Eglinton



Fig. 2, Arms of Lady Agnes Drummond, Countess of Eglinton

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ARMORIAL BEARINGS ON KEYSTONES OF VAULTING OVER ENTRANCE-WAY OF

one fourth - scale

PLATE VII.—DETAILS OF VAULTING OVER ENTRANCE-WAY.

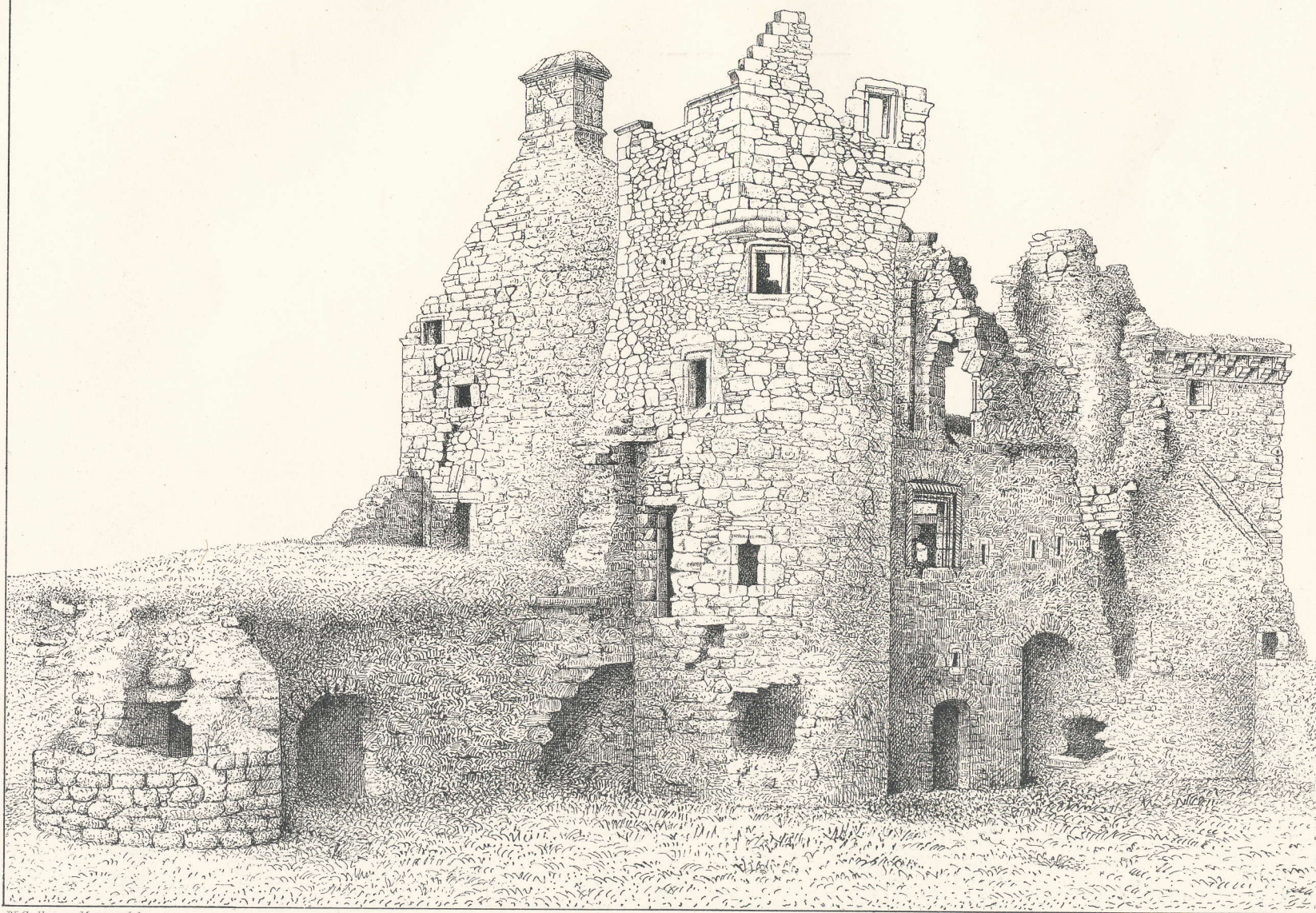
The entrance-way shows a very good example of rib-vaulting. At two of the principal intersections there are bosses decorated with the rope-moulding, and carrying shields, one bearing the coats of Eglinton and Montgomery quarterly, with the initials H. M., for Hugh Montgomery, who while yet a minor succeeded his father in 1546, and died June 1585. The second shield bears the three bars wavy and crest of the Drummonds, with the initials A. D., for Agnes Drummond, daughter of Sir John Drummond of Inverpeffry, and second Countess of Earl Hugh. Four different mason-marks appear on the vaulting, and, with exception of that occurring on the Countess's shield, such marks appear to have been incised only on the central fillet of the transverse ribs. Of the four varieties the most numerous repeated is that represented in Fig. *c*, occurring as it does, inclusive of the Drummond shield, fifteen times.

It may also be mentioned that each alternate pair of ribs—viz. the second, fourth, and sixth—have in the lower part of the springers deep batt holes cut. The lead seems to have been dug out; and they have this peculiarity, that, instead of being directly opposite to each other, they invariably occur on the reverse side of the opposed springers.

PLATE VIII.—VIEW FROM THE COURTYARD, OR NORTH-EAST.

When it existed in any degree of perfection the view of the Seagate Castle from the rear must have been much more picturesque than the street frontage. The massive turnpikes rising to the full height of the main buildings, finished with saddle-back roofs and crow-stepped gables, the greater variety of detail, the combination of old and new works, with its may be parterres and gardens, must have lent a charm to the back the front of the Castle could not possess.

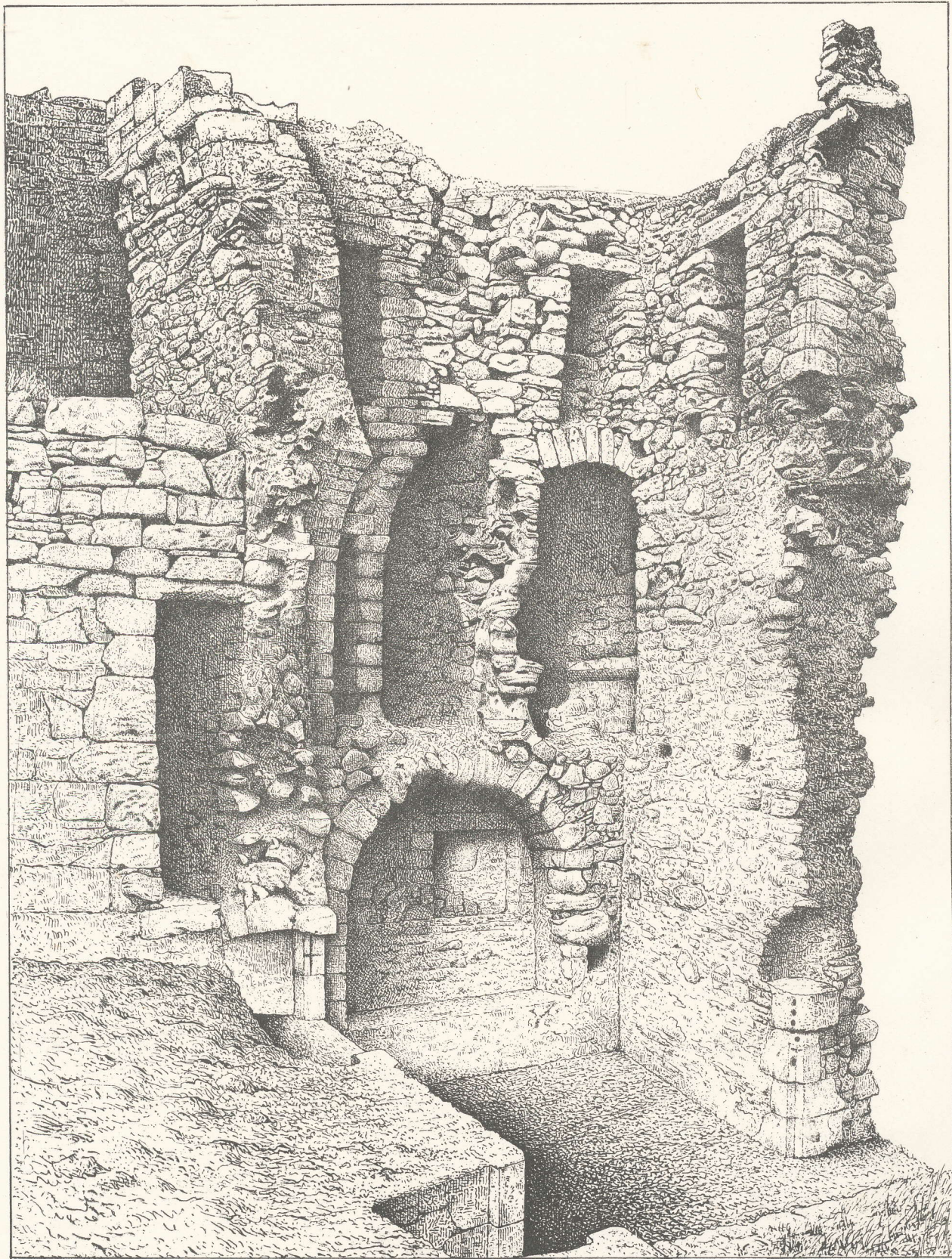
From the description given in the previous Plates the reader will be able to single out the various features of interest. In the foreground there is unfortunately the wrecked and despoiled remnant of the east wing, with only the base of the staircase remaining, and unseemly gaps where the vault doors were. In the large circular staircase will be noticed the door opening outwards from the stair, previously mentioned, and it is from the upper part of this staircase that the falls of stone also referred to have chiefly taken place. Beyond this appears the large ornate window on first floor, from the archway beneath which enters the door to vaults in old tower and the kitchen. Terminating the building on the right is this tower itself, with the corbelling on the north side comparatively fresh, and on the face of wall beneath, the raglin for roof of the sixteenth century north wing, which had apparently been only in two stories. The arrangements of the old wing must have been very different, but the materials are too scanty to arrive at any definite conclusions as to what these were.



W. Galloway, Mens et del.

G. Waterston & Sons. Photo-Lith.

VIEW FROM NORTH EAST.



W. Galloway, Mens et del.

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INTERIOR VIEW OF THE ANCIENT TOWER

PLATES IX. AND X.—INTERIOR VIEW OF THE ANCIENT TOWER;
AND DETAILS.

As already mentioned, the ancient tower just occupies the triangular gusset formed by the two ranges of building running at an acute angle to each other. This being an arrangement evidently dictated by necessity rather than by choice, and going back to the earliest date at which the building was erected, it is clear that even then some conterminous restrictions must have existed, rendering it necessary to adopt this very inconvenient plan. The fact of there being no windows or other openings in the lower stories of the building points to the same conclusion. As will be seen in the various plans given from cellar to battlements, the space thus enclosed within the gusset is very small, and although there can be no doubt the original Castle would be well defended, this tower can have contributed but little to its defence. It is situated at the rear of the main range, and has no shotholes or other means of assailing a foe. There is a bartizan round the top, but the projection is slight, and there are no machicolations. It has evidently been raised at this convenient spot as a watch-tower or look-out, and, commanding as it would all the approaches to the harbour and offing, for such a purpose it would be eminently fitted. This might favour the idea that in its first erection the Castle was intended to enforce the royal authority, to watch over the shipping, and collect the customs. Be that as it may, the building of which this tower is only a small remaining fragment, must have preceded by two or three centuries the work of Earl Hugh. There, the hewn work is comparatively fresh; in the battlements and corbelling of the tower it is wasted, often to complete obliteration. The whole character of this tower bespeaks a very different age. It is simple and severe in style, with the walls built for the most part not of quarried, but land stones, chiefly composed of the igneous rocks, in the form of small boulders, greenstone, porphyry, granite, etc. The heights of the different floors have been much lower than those of the later structure, and the levels must have been rather awkward to harmonise. The ground floor only has been vaulted, and is entered from beneath an open archway, giving access also to the kitchen. On the hewn work of the first floor occur the only two mason marks, shown on Plate X, traceable in the tower. They are both incised in a much bolder style than those represented in Plates V. and VII., and the most characteristic of the two shows the reverted arms of the fylefote or suastika in a very marked manner. It will be noticed, especially from the view, that at its existing termination the north wall shows traces of a circular staircase, and the lintels and sills of various doorways, communicating between the tower and the north wing.

As might be expected the battlements are in a very dismantled state. The parapet is entirely gone, save at the south-west angle, where it is still 2 feet 3 inches

above the string over corbels, and 1 foot 9 inches thick. Its projection beyond the face of the wall below is only 7 inches, and it has been carried on a double tier of corbels ranged alternately, with a moulded string above and below, 2 feet 7 inches in total height. On the south side this corbelling runs on for about 8 feet, with what farther extension cannot now be known. On the north side it terminates on the ragged masonry of the old north wing. Between the parapet and the roof ran the usual narrow footway, of which a good many of the over- and under-lap paving stones still remain, also three of the water-scapes on the west side. At the back of the south parapet, and hewn out of one stone over 5 feet in length, the discharge gutter, covering the full breadth of the wall, still remains in perfect preservation. From the level of the kitchen door to the top of the parapet of the tower is just 37 feet.

WILLIAM GALLOWAY.

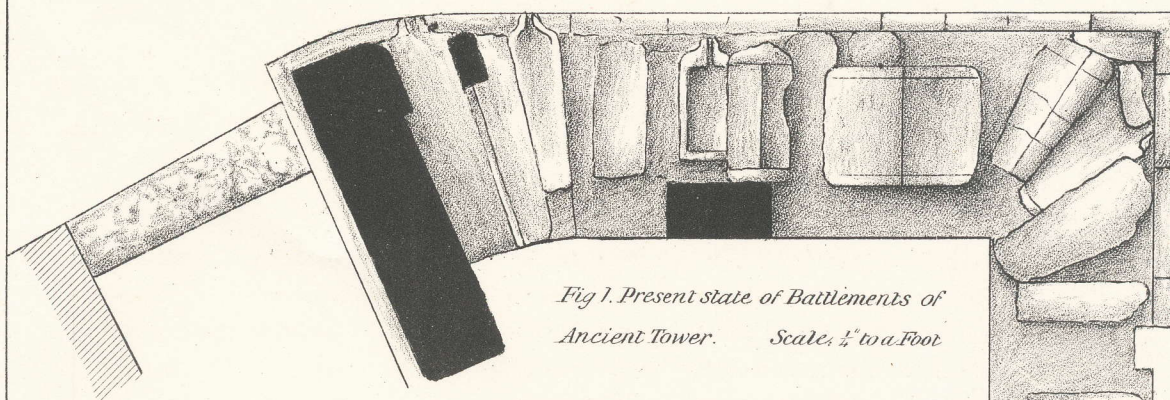


Fig. 1. Present state of Battlements of Ancient Tower. Scale: 1/4\"

Figs 2 & 3 Part of Corbelling under Battlements Scale 1 1/4\"

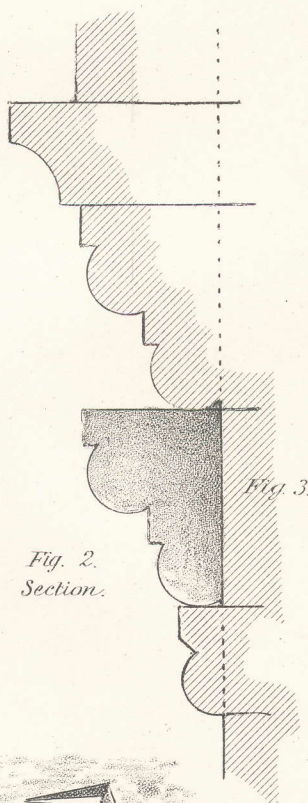
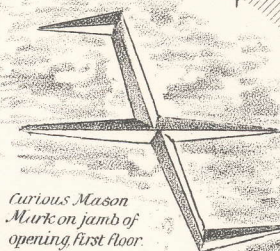


Fig. 2. Section.

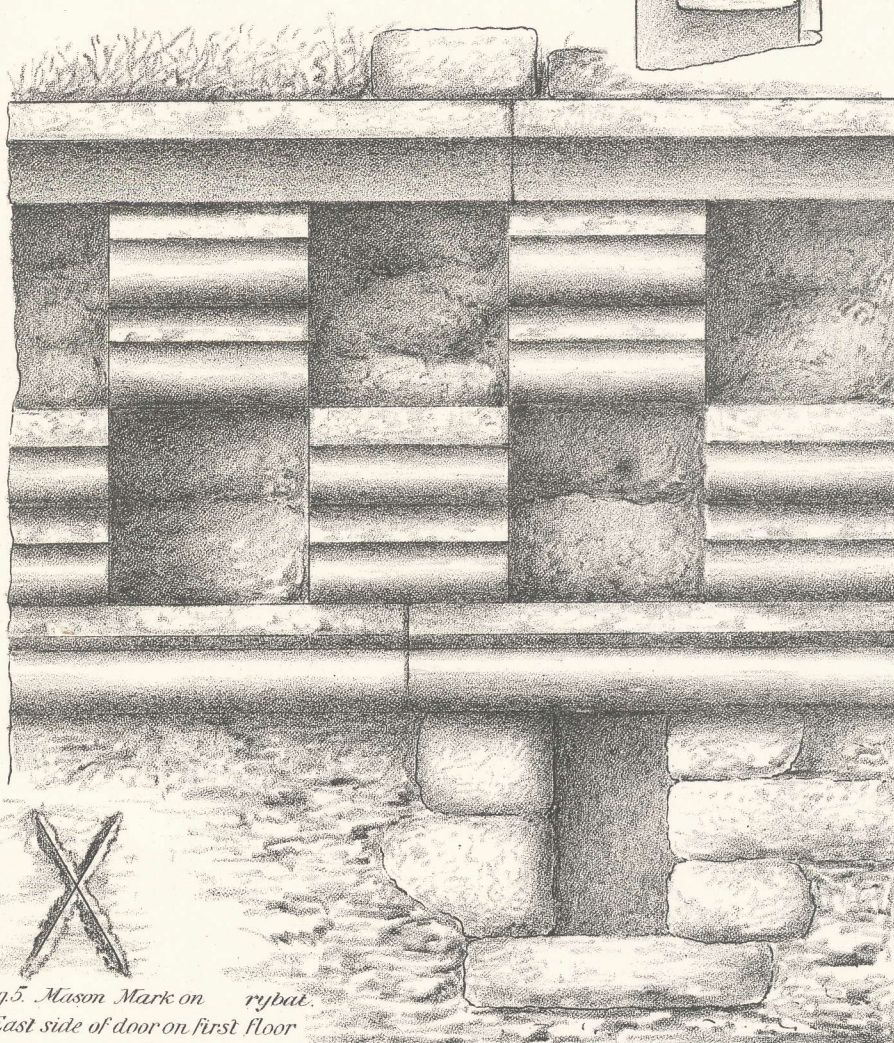
Fig. 3.



Curious Mason Mark on jamb of opening first floor.



Fig. 5. Mason Mark on rybat. East side of door on first floor



W. Galloway, Mens et del.

G. Waterston & Sons, Edin. Lith.

DETAILS OF ANCIENT TOWER.