

Archaeology & History Project

Introduction:

Border castles and tower houses exert quite a powerful hold on the imagination. They are symbols of our turbulent Scottish past when the Borders in particular was akin to a militarised zone pre the Union of the Crowns. The A&H group has chosen 6 examples of fortified buildings ranging from royal Roxburgh castle, which has been almost obliterated to Hermitage, still austere and unforgiving in its appearance to exemplify this. Smailholm tower is, of course, still extant and a brilliant example of a tower house with later strong Walter Scott connections.

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The Borders castles and tower houses in historical context

The facts of Scotland's geography have dictated the main themes of her history. In particular it is a country divided within itself into Highland and Lowland regions and the fact that it is a small country sharing an island with a much bigger and richer neighbour. The first rulers of most of Scotland were Celtic kings of the house of McAlpin but when Malcolm 111 married the Anglo- Saxon princess Margaret in 1070, Scotland began to conform to mainstream European nation state developments. Unlike in Wales which was conquered and subdued by the Normans, Scotland was never conquered but assimilated Norman development including feudalism under William 1 onwards. The great Border abbeys were all built in the 12th and 13th centuries.

The border between Scotland and England was fixed in theory after the battle of Carham in 1092 and existed from then on as it was then to the present time. However, this did not prevent Scottish kings invading England and claiming Northumberland, Cumberland and Westmorland as part of Scotland on occasions, whilst the death of Alexander 111 in 1296 and his heir the Maid of Norway allowed Edward 1 to intervene militarily in the Scottish succession. The Wars of Independence followed and the Borders or the frontier zone suffered from both armies taking land, goods and cattle. The English succeed in gaining control of south Scotland on a number of occasions and their garrisons took control of key castles at Berwick, Edinburgh, Roxburgh and even Stirling. Berwick changed hands 8 times and was eventually subsumed into England. Scotland was recognised as a sovereign nation after the 1314 battle of Bannockburn, the Declaration of Arbroath and ensuing key battles.

In the later medieval period, the House of Stuart ruled Scotland for 300 years until the Union of the crowns in 1603 united the two nations to a certain degree. This 300 period had periods of peace and prosperity but also continued fighting between Scotland and England when the Borders area again often bore the brunt of both sides marching and scouring the area for food and manpower. Major battles happened in this time such as Flodden in 1513 and Solway Moss in 1542. Scotland allied with France in the Auld alliance in 1295 as a way of controlling English invasions and it was renewed many times in the 15th century. An international dimension was added to the struggles between Scotland and England which was played out as Scotland sometimes acted for French interests in attacking England.

In the later medieval period the Border reivers fought across the Borders and between themselves - powerful families such as the Elliots, Armstrongs and Pringles brought a period of lawlessness to such an extent that the Wardens of the March were established across the border to try and keep raiding and thieving in check. March law was a body of law that operated alongside English and Scottish law to deal with cross border issues. Peebles was at the upper point of this jurisdiction.

The Borders were, in effect, a militarised zone for much of this period particularly the later medieval years. Militarisation influenced the architecture of the area with key castles or massive stone keeps at Roxburgh, Berwick, Cessford, Newark and Hermitage. However the standard fortified dwelling in the Borders from the 14th to the 17th century was the tower house. These consisted of rectangular towers 3 or 4 storeys high, thick walls, sometimes an L plan variation to provide space for a stairway and originally the only entrance was on the first floor. Only the largest of these were true castles able to sustain a prolonged attack. Barmkin walls enclosed the outside of the tower with defended barns, stables and outhouses. Smailholm is, of course, a great example of this. It is worth noting many of the Borders country houses have a tower house at their heart e.g. Traquair and Thirlestane. There were hundreds of tower houses in the Borders - an estimate 100 in Roxburghshire but many existed in the upper Tweed valley too - think of Neidpath, Barns, Horsburgh and many others.

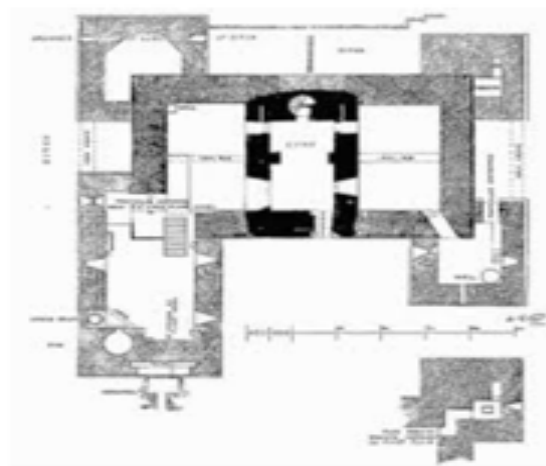
In addition to tower houses there were peels {or peles) and bastles. Peels were really just smaller tower houses for the less well off as were the bastle houses. All had living quarters on the first floor with basements for livestock. The fact that people lived in these highly fortified buildings is indicative of the type of society

they were living in. A bastle room is incorporated into the current County Hotel in Peebles so that even in towns there was a secure place to hide if attacked.

In the 17th century fortified tower houses, peels and bastels were transformed into undefended country houses after the Union of the Crowns and more peaceful times. James 1 and VIth finally brought the Borders area under control. The best example of a changing tower house is Traquair. It was built as a 3 storey tower house in 1492, a south wing was added in 1559, in 1642 an additional storey transformed it into more of a country house and in 1695 service wings, garden pavilions and terraces were added. In fact the Borders has the complete range of Scottish country house types from remodelled tower houses to opulent Edwardian baronial type halls. A whole different area of study would be development of the Scottish baronial style piloted at Abbotsford and large country houses like Bowhill and Mellerstain.

HERMITAGE CASTLE

Hermitage Castle is a forbidding and oppressive place. It stands just five miles from the border with England and guards Liddesdale, so for centuries had considerable strategic importance. Seen from the east or west the architecture seems utterly brutal: sheer walls relieved only by blind arches that from some angles can be very reminiscent of Edvard Munch's painting "The Scream". Radio Scotland once broadcast a feature in which Hermitage Castle was described as the embodiment of the phrase "*sod off*" in stone. It's a difficult description to better.



The castle's unusual architecture is partly responsible for its remarkable atmosphere, but the setting also does it no favours. Its riverside location high in the valley of the Hermitage Water ought to be enchanting, but the bleak and open moorland that surrounds it on three sides can seem oppressive.

The origins of Hermitage Castle date back to around 1240, when Nicholas de Soules, Butler to King David I, settled in the area and probably built a hunting lodge a few hundred yards west of the site of the present castle near the ruins of the Chapel of Hermitage. By 1320, the area was held by William de Soules, a man so widely disliked that there are two quite separate stories of his demise. In one of them he plotted against Robert the Bruce and was imprisoned in Dumbarton Castle, with Hermitage being forfeited to the crown, and in the other he was boiled alive in molten lead by locals after having inflicted a reign of terror on the neighbourhood.

The first castle at Hermitage was probably built in around 1330. Being so close to the border with England, Hermitage Castle changed hands a number of times over the years. The wooden castle probably comprised a strongly defended motte and a larger bailey. Nothing remains above ground of this first castle, but it is thought that some of its earthworks are still visible today, including ditches that were probably flooded, using water rerouted from streams flowing from the high ground to the north.

In 1338 the castle was captured by Sir William Douglas. He was an ambitious man who responded to the appointment by King David II of Alexander Ramsay as Sheriff of Teviotdale by imprisoning him in Hermitage Castle and starving him to death. In response David II took the line of least resistance and appointed Sir William to the newly vacant post.



The first stone castle was built at Hermitage in about 1360, for the Cumbrian nobleman Lord Dacre, who had inherited lands in the area by marriage. His castle

took the form of a fortified manor house, with two north-south aligned ranges separated by a narrow-cobbled courtyard. The courtyard area and the walls facing into it have survived within the structure you see today, and it is clear that Lord Dacre's castle was extremely well-built, though it may never have been completed.



By 1371 Hermitage Castle was in the possession of William, 1st Earl of Douglas. He rebuilt Dacre's castle as a single large keep, retaining parts of the structure, but raising the height considerably and building over the courtyard. It was William's illegitimate son, George, 1st Earl of Angus, who, from 1390, added four great stone towers to the corners of the castle, producing what you see today. The blind arches were added to allow wooden fighting platforms to run the length of the outside tops of the walls. The result was definitely a castle built for war rather than for show. With very few windows below the wall tops, and the gaps there obscured by the fighting platforms, the interior of the castle must have been an incredibly dark and gloomy place.

In 1492 James IV's doubts about the loyalty of the 5th Earl of Angus led him to instruct that Hermitage Castle be exchanged for the less sensitive Bothwell Castle, until then held by the 1st Earl of Bothwell.

The only hint of romance in Hermitage Castle's story came in October 1566, when it was held by James Hepburn, 4th Earl of Bothwell. He was injured in a fight with border reivers. When news of this came to the ears of Mary Queen of Scots, visiting Jedburgh, 25 miles away, she dropped everything and rode with a small retinue to be by his side.

Still married at the time to Lord Darnley she could not be seen to stay at Hermitage with Bothwell, so after two hours she returned the 25 miles to

Jedburgh. En route her horse stumbled into a marsh and Mary contracted a fever from which she nearly died.

Hermitage Castle fell into disuse in the early 1600s. Its fame as a gloomy and romantic ruin spread through the 1800s. Sir Walter Scott had himself painted with Hermitage in the background. This interest led the then owner, the 5th Duke of Buccleuch, to undertake extensive repairs which helped so much of the exterior wall to survive until the castle was placed in state care in 1930. It isn't clear how faithful the restoration actually was to the original, and the end result does have oddities, such as the gable end rising over the wallhead above the eastern blind arch. This seems to have been for decorative purposes only, as there could never have been a structure here requiring the gable end you see today.

Catch Hermitage Castle on a beautifully sunny day and it can seem relatively benign. But if you do find yourself alone here on a gloomy day, with the wind whistling through the few openings in the walls, it's easy to understand why so many visitors have reported unusual apparitions and happenings. You only have to look at this fascinating and intimidating castle to know it comes with real character that at times can seem a very long way from benign.



While you are visiting Hermitage Castle, make sure you don't overlook the Chapel of Hermitage, whose ruins can be found a couple of hundred yards west of the end of the bridge from the roadside parking area.

Text : Undiscovered Scotland

DRYHOPE TOWER

The ruined Tower House ,which was built of local stone, originally belonged to the Scotts of Dryburgh, a local reiving family. It is located in the Yarrow valley, between Selkirk and Melrose. It was built to defend the northeast end of St Mary's Loch, at the foot of Dryhope Rig.

Originally the tower would have been three or four storeys high with the 16th century tower and outbuildings. Possibly surrounded by a barmkin wall. The location of the barmkin has been disputed by some authorities, though in 1535 James V issued a decree that a barmkin wall must be built by each man who owned one hundred pound of land.

Guarded by the steep slopes of the Dryhope Burn in the east, and a steep gully on the west the tower is well protected from these sides. In the western gully the stream forms a pond , to the south of the tower. The pond may have been manmade since it was extended to form a water defence on this side.

The plan of the tower is oblong with four to five stout walls. Originally the local stone had been harl pointed. A panel of freestone has been found dated 1613. The initials P. S. and M. S. appear. These initials would have been of Phillip and Mary Scott, the parents of "The Flower or Rose of Yarrow"

The date of 1613 may have been to signify the rebuilding of the tower, since in 1592 the building was ordered to be destroyed by James VI. The king, having been slighted by the Dryhope Scotts, who had sided with the Earl of Bothwell against the king.

The tower had three or four storeys, with gunloops in the walls. In one corner there was a turnpike stair leading up to the hall on the first floor. The private family rooms would have been on the upper floor, or floors. The basement and the hall, on the first floor, both had vaulted ceilings.

On the roof of the tower are the remains of a watchman's shelter, with a shelf for his lamp.

By the end of the seventeenth century the tower was abandoned and in decay. It then passed to the senior branch of the Scotts of Buccleuch. The remains are now owned by the Philliphugh Estate. Stabilisation work is being carried out on the ruins, and a metal staircase has been installed to allow access to the roof of the tower, and the view of the surrounding countryside.

The original builders and owners of the tower, the Scotts of Dryhope, were a Border reiving family. Their names have appeared in legal proceedings on at least three known occasions after Mary, or Marion "The flower of Yarrow" was married to Walter Scott of Harden (Auld Wat).

These proceedings were: 1581 against the Eliots; 1586 against the Musgraves; 1587 against Rutledge of the Nook.

One of the most famous occupants of the Tower was "The Flower, or Rose, of Yarrow", Mary, or Marion, Scott, daughter of Phillip and Mary Scott. She was born in 1548 and died in 1598. She was renowned throughout the Borders as one of the most beautiful women of her time.

One of the famous Border Ballads, compiled by Sir Walter Scott of Abbotsford, tells the tale of the young Mary's love of a servant boy who was later killed.

In 1576 she was married to Walter Scott of Harden, near Hawick, also known as Auld Wat, a notorious border reiver.

Mary's father was Phillip Scott, the son of the first laird of Dryhope, Simon Scott. Her mother was Lady Elizabeth Hays, a slight confusion here as the plaque of 1613 gives the initials as M.S. Could Lady Elizabeth have been Sir Phillip's first wife?

On Mary Scott's and Walter Scott's of Harden's, marriage contract appears an unusual sentence. Sir Phillip, the father of the bride, was to supply her husband with horse meat and man's meat for a year and a day at Dryhope Tower. However five barons pledged that at the end of that period Sir Walter should remove without attempting to continue in possession by force. A sign, perhaps, of the unsettled times. The contract was signed by a notary-public as none of the participating parties could sign their names.

Mary and her husband had six or seven children, six of whom were boys. Other sources give them as having four daughters as well.

When times were hard, and there was not much food to be had Mary was known to present Auld Wat with a plate on which she had placed his spurs, instead of food. A broad hint that it was time to resume reiving.

After one raid by her husband Mary found a baby amongst the booty lying around the hall. She subsequently brought the boy up as her foster son.

Dryhope Tower in its' heyday was inhabited by just one of the many reiving families that lived in the borders. It was a wild lawless time and its stout walls were much needed for security. After the family were joined to the Scotts of Harden they were united to one of the most lawless families in the Borders.

FAST CASTLE

Fast Castle sits precariously on a rocky crag sticking out into the North Sea some 40 miles due east of Edinburgh roughly halfway between Dunbar and Berwick, 5 miles or so west of St Abbs. The Edinburgh Archaeological Field Society excavated

there between 1971 and 1986 and, apart from the normal archaeological reports, two of its members produced histories of Fast Castle - *Fast Castle, the early years* by Mary Kennaway and *Fast Castle, a history from 1602* by Keith Mitchell. These plus W Douglas's *Fast Castle and its owners, some notes on their history* in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland vol. 55, 1920, pages 56-83, not forgetting Google and Wikipedia have provided more than enough information on Fast Castle.

It would appear quite a simple but time-consuming job to produce a short history of the castle, however there is one little known fact that complicates things. Many reports, comments etc on the castle (excluding those mentioned above) start out with a sentence approximating to 'The first mention of Fast Castle was in 1333' - perhaps so, but let us not forget that **there are two Fast Castles in the Scottish Borders!**

So, what happened in 1333 - the battle of Halidon Hill just north of Berwick, a comprehensive victory for Edward III's army. The south of Scotland was ravaged by Edward's soldiers (both English and Scottish) possibly as far north as Edinburgh (passing Fast Castle on the way) and also well into the Scottish borders, probably as far as Hawick (passing the other Fast Castle on the way).

Even those of you who know the Borders may not have heard of the small village of Bedrule on a minor road between Hawick and Jedburgh. It has the remains of a castle believed to be late 13th century. A third of a mile northwest of the castle is Castle Knowe, also known as Fast Castle. This is thought to be a late 12th century motte with a small (35 by 25 metres approximately) enclosure on its summit. In the late 13th century Bedrule belonged to the Comyn family and was visited by Edward I in 1298. It was granted to Sir James Douglas by Robert the Bruce in 1315 and the Turnbull family were, initially at least, tenants of Sir James. The Turnbull's are on record as still being at Bedrule in 1628. There is little to see of Bedrule Castle but the motte beside Rule Water is quite impressive.

An 1836 history of Coldingham Priory by A A Carr refers to Fast Castle being taken by an English knight, Sir Robert Benhale, after Halidon Hill but searches have failed to find out where he got this information from. However various sources do say that this knight killed a William Turnbull in single combat the day before the battle and, as we have seen, the Turnbull family came from Bedrule.

2

Back to Fast Castle on the coast. 'Fast' may derive from Old Scots 'fause' meaning false, deceitful, treacherous. The suggestion is that lights were hung from the walls to lure unsuspecting ships onto the rocks below the castle and it is on record that William the Lion, in 1138, accused one Edward de Aldecambus, a tenant of the nearby monks of Coldingham, of wrecking - the village of Auldcambus is 3 miles

from Fast Castle. Obviously the Fast of Fast Castle at Bedrule must have a different derivation.

The promontory on which the castle is built is about 260ft long and 58 ft at its widest. At the landward end it is about 10ft wide with a possible gatehouse and, originally it is thought, a wooden walkover (now concrete), and perhaps a drawbridge. The interior, starting at the landward end, consists of a hall with an entrance hall, a kitchen and a brew house. Opposite these buildings is the upper courtyard at the seaward end of which is a row of five rooms, a couple of which are windowless, suggesting storage. There is then the lower courtyard. A curtain wall goes round the edge of the promontory.

Whether or not there was a second storey is not known. Some old drawings suggest there was and there is the remains of a staircase in the main hall which may have led to a second storey or an attic and a parapet wall. What is missing is the private quarters and the prison (one source suggest that the castle was better suited as a prison rather than a residence although the castle did have some important visitors as we shall see). It is not known when the castle was originally built. There is little left to see of the castle but it is worth a visit if only for the views.

The archaeological dig found some Iron Age artifacts but no evidence of actual occupation prior to the castle. The excavations for foundations and the building of the castle would have most likely destroyed any evidence of previous buildings, round houses etc.

Turning now to the history of the castle. I've tried to be brief (difficult) and to stick to events for which there is documentary evidence as much as possible.

A A Carr (already mentioned above) has the castle being taken by Patrick Dunbar, Earl of March (on the side of the English) in 1402 when there is evidence that William Clifford was governor of it. In 1404 Clifford is instructed to hand the castle over to John of Lancaster, third son of Henry IV - this is properly documented and suggests that the castle was strategically important. In 1410, Patrick Dunbar (on the Scottish side now) takes the castle back.

In 1429 2000 merks being taken south to the English king are stolen in an armed robbery close to the castle and the money is taken there, starting the idea of hidden treasure in the castle or in the sea caves below the promontory. (A nice story but this is A A Carr again and, although the robbery is corroborated, there is no proof of the castle connection).

The Lumsden family are known to have owned a lot of land inland from the castle and they are often mentioned as 'of Fast Castle' in the 1430's. Nothing more is known about the castle for the next half century.

In 1487 the castle is occupied by Sir Patrick Home, fourth son of the first Lord Home. Sir Patrick joins the rebellion against James III and fights against the king who dies at the battle of Sauchieburn in 1488 being succeeded by his son, James IV.

The Warden of the Middle Marches, Sir Robert Ker (of Cessford) is murdered in 1500 and one of his murderers is imprisoned in Fast Castle until he dies. One of the murderers goes to York where, so the story goes, he is found by two members of the Tait family who behead him and bring the head back to Sir Robert's son, Andrew.

1503 is one of the highlights in the history of Fast Castle. Margaret Tudor, the fourteen year old daughter of Henry VII stays there for one night on her way to marry James IV. One hopes that comments that the castle was more suited to be a prison rather than a residence were unfounded - although, as we know, it was used as a prison in 1500.

Sir Patrick Home dies in 1509 and is succeeded by his son, Cuthbert, who is killed at Flodden in 1513 when the castle passes to his uncle, Alexander, third Lord Home. He is the Lord Home who leads his troops away from Flodden Field when he sees that all is not going in the Scots favour. He then falls out with Regent Albany and is beheaded. Albany garrisons the castle but the Homes retake it and may have levelled its walls.

In 1521, George, the fourth Lord Home, rebuilds or refurbishes the castle and in 1522 Elizabeth, Cuthbert's granddaughter, marries Sir Robert Logan of Restalrig. He dies in 1543 and is succeeded by his nine year old son, another Robert. The Logan family own the castle until 1606.

1543 sees the Rough Wooing after the marriage treaty between Mary, Queen of Scots and Edward, the six year old son of Henry VIII is cancelled by the Scots.

4

The Scots lose the Battle of Pinkie in 1547 and Fast Castle falls to the English but is retaken by the Scots in 1549.

1570 sees the English taking the castle but they hand it back again in 1573.

In 1576, Robert Logan (the first born male Logans were all called Robert!) comes of age and, as part of his inheritance, gets Fast Castle. He has a busy life falling out

with everyone, the king, the Homes, the law, his neighbours He is best known for his possible, unproven, involvement in the Gowrie Conspiracy. In 1600 John Ruthven, 3rd Earl of Gowrie, his brother and others planned to assassinate or to kidnap James VI and to hold him prisoner, allegedly, in Fast Castle. The king manages to call for help and is rescued, the two Gowrie brothers being killed. (It is thought that revenge was the reason for the Conspiracy. The Gowrie brother's father had held the sixteen year old James VI captive for over 10 months in 1582/83 and a few years later had been executed by the Earl of Arran). Robert Logan's part in the conspiracy has never been proved. By the time he dies in 1606 he has sold most of his properties including Fast Castle. In 1609 his bones are exhumed and Parliament declares that his memory and dignities be extinct and abolished, an action which suggests they thought him guilty of involvement in the Conspiracy.

George Home, Earl of Dunbar and third son of Alexander Home of Manderston, buys Fast Castle in 1606 and is the first in a long line of owners, although the Home family seem to have had a liking for it as they keep on appearing in the list of owners which includes Ramsays, Halls, Hepburns and even a Tait, an Usher and a Dykes. It does appear however that the castle was no longer inhabited other than for short periods and gradually became more and more ruinous. It may be that the improved range and power of artillery made the castle vulnerable and it lost its strategic value. The only remaining events of note are the occupation of the castle in 1651 by Oliver Cromwell's troops who held it for seven years, a bolt of lightning hitting it and it becoming a Scheduled Monument in 1981.

The Castle has an interesting history until 1606 but after that date it is the history of its owners which is interesting with little on record about the castle itself. On a calm, windless day it is worth a visit and you can sit and let your imagination run riot

Roxburgh Castle

The ruins of Roxburgh Castle lie on a mound 70 feet high, 800 feet long and 300 feet wide - a formidable defensive location, one mile west of Kelso between the Tweed and the Teviot. Access is by a riverside walk on the Teviot on the south side of the castle. The distance is approximately half a mile from a parking area on the A699 shortly before entering Kelso. There is no custodian.

A Roman Cavalry Fort was originally built on the site when the route of the Tweed on the north side of the castle was a lot closer. This meant that the Tweed and the Teviot almost converged on the east side of the castle. A dam at this point

between the two rivers effectively made the site a peninsula and an ideal location to defend.

Early in the 12th Century David I of Scotland built a medieval castle on the site. This coincided with a nearby prosperous market town being declared a Burgh. This town was to take the name of Roxburgh as did the castle. The town lay on the west side of Kelso Abbey between the Abbey and the castle. Due to a lucrative trade in wool and hides supplied by the monks of the Abbey, the town developed as a great commercial entity, trading through the Port of Berwick into European Markets. As well as a strong association with Kelso Abbey the town had a Friary and the Church of St James within its walls. Although the ruins of the castle are today largely overgrown, the gateway is still clearly visible and from this gateway a road led into the main street of Roxburgh and on to the Church of St James. Among the ruins can also be seen the location of the Keep, the Great Hall and the bakehouse. There was a curtain wall stretching the length of the mound. At the far end was the bakehouse well away from the Great Hall. This was a common arrangement in medieval castles as a fire precaution.

Roxburgh Castle was the most formidable castle in the Borders. It featured greatly in the Wars of Independence and in the Border Wars that followed in the centuries thereafter. Such was its significance that it was besieged, captured and re-captured many times by the armies of England and Scotland. In 1460, James II of Scotland lay siege to the castle and successfully re-captured it. To prevent it ever falling into English hands again he ordered its destruction by cannon fire. During the bombardment the king was killed when a cannon exploded nearby to where he stood. Along with the castle being destroyed the town of Roxburgh fell into deep decline being perpetually laid to waste as a victim of Border Warfare. Today there is nothing left to see above ground although a nearby cottage is named Friars Cottage. Historical reference and details of the town are recorded in documents pertaining to Kelso Abbey. The castle was partially rebuilt in 1545 by Henry VIII of England but demolished again in 1551 as part of a Peace Treaty between Scotland and England.

Today although its ruins are largely overgrown by vegetation and trees, an archaeological excavation could reveal much from the remains of one of

Scotland`s most historic castles.



Smailhom Tower

This old keep, described as “ probably the best preserved and least spoiled of all the Border towers” must surely be one of the favourite places for visitors, attractive for its antiquity, its isolation and its Borderland views.

Built in the 16th century, on the rocky outcrop of Lady Hill near the hamlet of Sandyknowe, standing over 600 feet above sea level, it must have been the perfect place for a peel tower, one of those strategically placed across the Borders. We can imagine as we stand there its beacons blazing to warn of trouble ahead. Also with its wall seven feet thick, its barrel chested roof (an unusual feature in a peel tower) and a more commonly a vaulted roof on the ground floor, it would have given protection also from nearby raiding neighbours - when they were not raiding themselves.

The isolated position of the tower has inspired many photographers, choosing black and white to evoke the drama of its setting, stark against a vast black space to suggest the sea far beneath. It has also inspired both art and literature, giving a permanent home to the exhibition based on Scott’s Minstrelsy of the Scottish Borders, with exquisite woven puppets for the characters and abstract paintings to show the mood of the ballads.

By modern times the tower had mainly fallen into decay until it was skilfully restored by the department of Ancient Monuments who replaced the first floor and renovated the winding staircase. It is now in the care of the state.

Its personal links with Sir Walter Scott are known to everyone; sent from Edinburgh at 18 months to recover from polio at his grandfather’s farm, to explore on his little pony and grow strong and active. At school in Kelso for awhile, he discovered the ballads which he

had heard sung around and now read voraciously. This led to his key influence on European Romanticism and on the Scottish Enlightenment.

To end with Sir Walter who brought fame to the Borders and much loved there, I will copy a verse from "Border Country", the book of words and photos by David and Judy Steele.

"We have carved him statues in town and square

We have carved him a temple , rich and rare

But the grandest stone to his memory still

Is a grey walled tower on the windy hill."

Neidpath Castle

Neidpath Castle stands in a commanding position overlooking the River Tweed just outside Peebles. The oldest part of the castle is a tower house erected in the late 14th century. Due to the shape of the crag on which it stands the tower is not rectangular in shape but described as a parallelogram. The tower remained remarkably unaltered until the late 16th or early 17th century when the upper two storeys were re-modelled to create a more comfortable residence. Further rebuilding took place from 1653 to 1686.

The origins of Neidpath follow the fortunes of two families the Farsers and the Hays. Sir Gilbert Fraser probably established a castle here around 1190. His grandson, Sir Simon Fraser the second was executed with William Wallace in 1307 and shown in the film Braveheart.

Shortly after Neidpath was passed by marriage to the Hay family and it stayed in Hay hands until 1686. It was probably Sir William Hay who died in 1390, who built the tower house which is the oldest part of the current castle.

Sir William's grandson married into Gifford family. He moved the family seat to Yester but Neidpath continued to be used as well. Mary Queen of Scots visited Neidpath in 1563 and her son James VI visited in 1587. In 1645 the Marquis of Montrose is said to have stayed at Neidpath after his defeat at Philiphaugh. He initially tried to seek help in Traquair House but was refused entry. Drama ensued in 1658 when Oliver Cromwell sent a force under General Lambert to hold out against the Scots.

Lord Hay was created Earl of Tweeddale by Charles II. He made improvements but fell on hard times and had to sell the castle to the Duke of Queensberry. William Douglas second son of the Duke married Lady Jean Hay of Neidpath.

