

CASTELLATED AND DOMESTIC
ARCHITECTURE
OF SCOTLAND

FROM THE TWELFTH TO THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

BY

DAVID MACGIBBON AND THOMAS ROSS
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CARDONESS CASTLE, KIRKCUDBRIGHTSHIRE.

Cardoness Castle is situated on the Fleet, a small stream which empties into Wigtown Bay about one mile farther down. The castle (Fig. 200) occupies the summit of a thickly wooded ridge rising up from the right bank of the Fleet. The ground slopes rapidly all round, there being only a narrow level strip adjoining the walls. Although it is a building of small size, it has a most imposing appearance as seen by the traveller approaching from the bay, and a closer inspection shows it to be a very fine keep, only wanting a roof to render it practically entire. It would be well worthy of the small expense of roofing, as it is a very interesting building of its class, of excellent masonry and workmanship, and ingeniously planned

arrangements. In the latter respect it recalls the plans of Elphinstone and Comlongan Towers. The castle is oblong in plan, measuring over the walls 42 feet 11 inches by 31 feet 11 inches (Fig. 201). It is 53 feet high to the top of the walls, and 71 feet to the top of the gables. The basement has a vault 15 feet 3 inches high, containing an intermediate floor. The upper floors, which were of wood, are all gone (see Section).

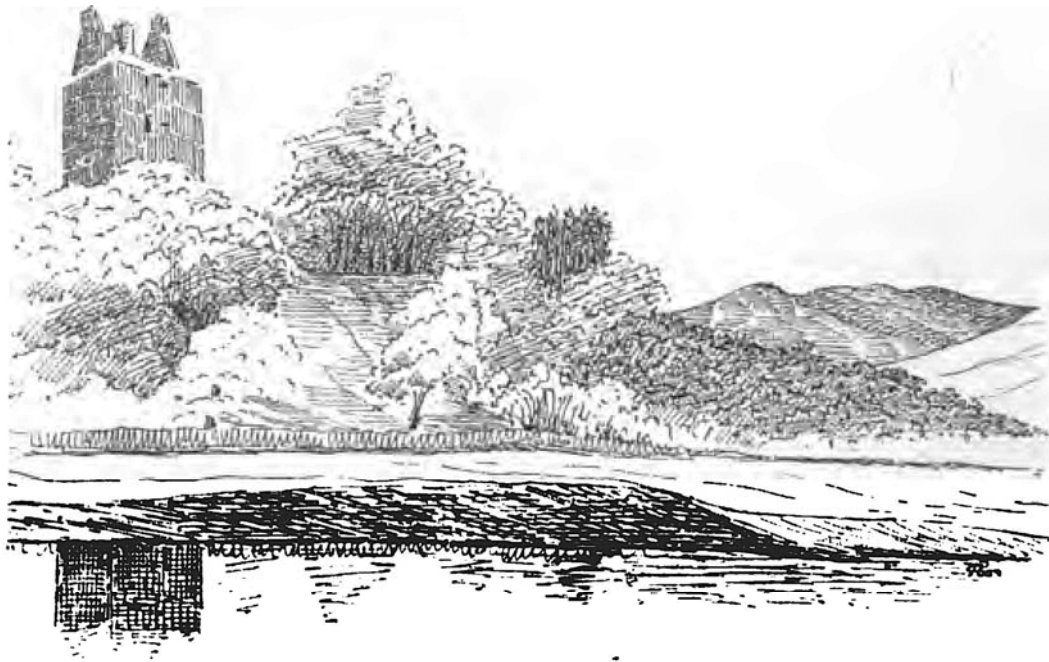


FIG. 200.—Cardoneess Castle. General View.

The entrance door is in the side wall (see Plan of Ground Floor), with a slot-hole for the bar behind the door, and leads into a passage in the thickness of the wall, entering from which on the left hand is a small mural guard-room, and on the right hand is the wheel stair, which goes to the top and the intermediate floors. In front are two doors leading to the two chambers into which the under vault was divided. The larger of these, lighted by two narrow slits, contains two singular round recesses at the angles of the main walls, with massive diagonal sills about 3 feet 6 inches above the floor.

This peculiar shape makes their purpose somewhat obscure. Probably these circular recesses were formed as a kind of inner turret, to enable the loopholes to be used for defensive purposes. Entering off the stair, at about the level of the upper room or entresol in the vault, are two mural chambers (see Plan of Entresol). One of these extends over the entrance lobby, and has a trap down to it, useful both for defence and for hauling up goods; the other, in the end wall, enters off the passage to the entresol. It has been an upper prison or guard-room, with a garde-robe, and has a trap down to a dark dungeon beneath.

The view of the hall (Fig. 202) is very striking in its ruined state, with the bold arch thrown from wall to wall for supporting an upper partition which divides the top floor into two rooms. The hall is lighted

with two seated windows, and two others kept at a high level in order to admit of the mural chambers above described below them (see Section). The mural chamber off the side seated window is in a similar manner kept at a high level, so as to allow the mural chamber over the entrance passage to have suitable head-room. Two other small chambers

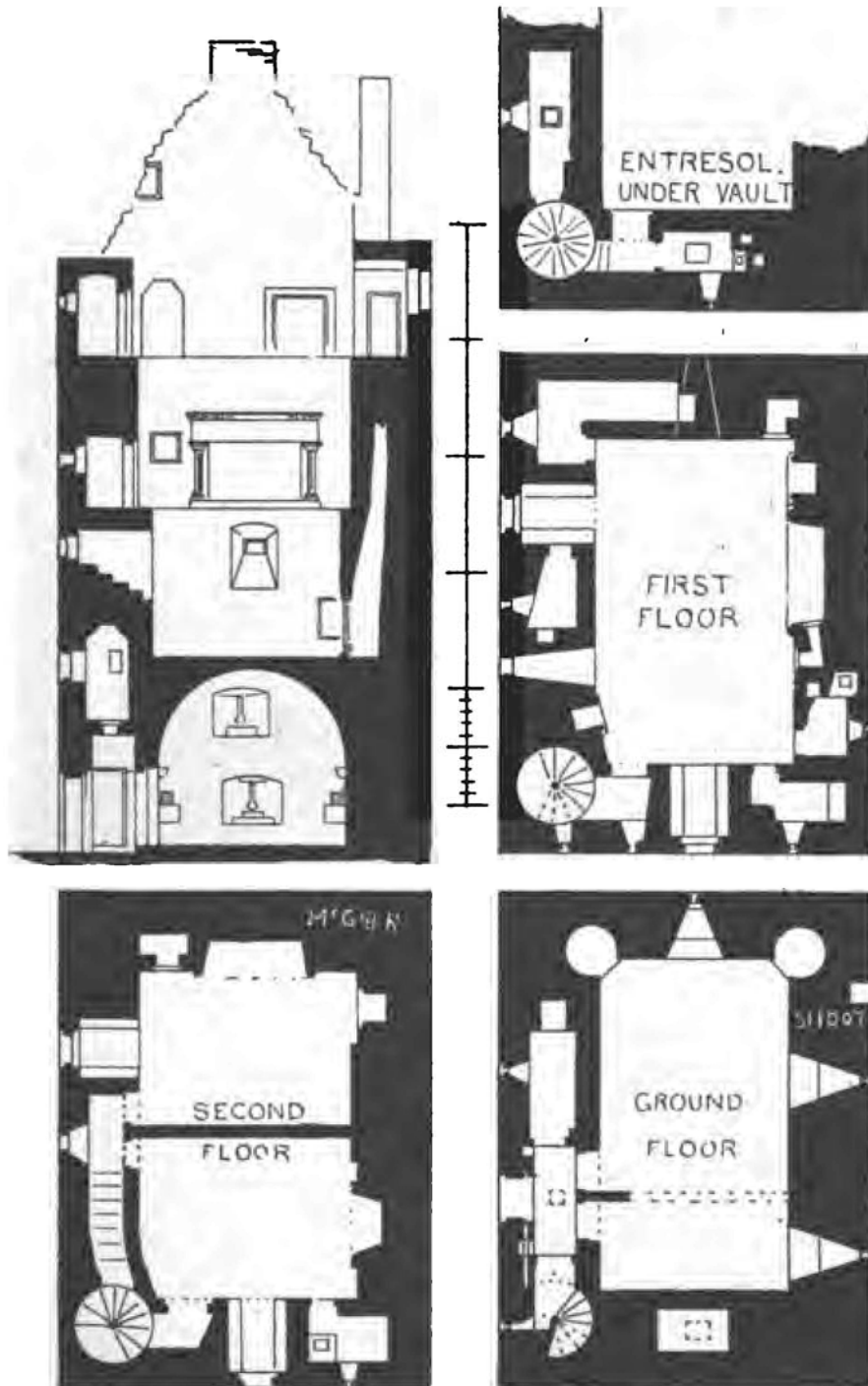


FIG. 201.—Cardoness Castle. Plans and Section.

enter off the hall, each having a garde-robe. The fireplaces of the hall and the upper hall (both seen on the sketch, Fig. 202) are good examples of the fifteenth-century type so common in Scotland, but they are above the average in design and workmanship. Unfortunately

both are in a slightly ruinous state, but are well worthy of having means taken to preserve them. As will be seen on the plan of the hall, there is a curious opening from the ingoing of the fireplace, about 12 inches

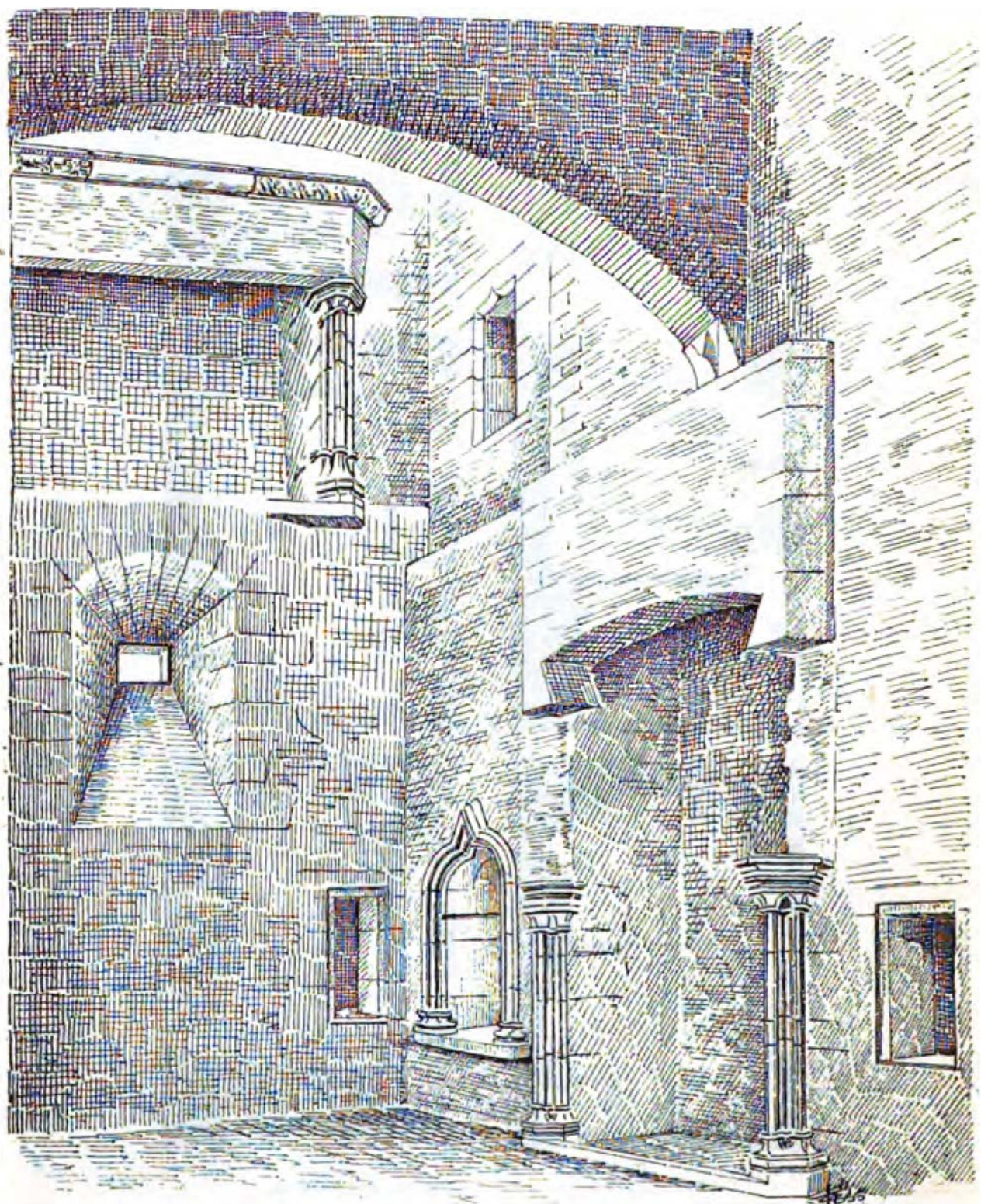


FIG. 202.—Cardoness Castle. Interior of Hall.

square, which turns at right angles and opens into the hall, somewhat like a similar opening seen at Gylem.

The upper floors, as already mentioned, are each divided into two

apartments. These do not enter one off the other as usual, the one farthest from the stair being reached by a mural passage, as shown on the plan of the second floor.

Cardoness belonged to the MacCullochs, a family of old standing in Galloway, and it is generally supposed that the castle is of about the same date as Threave, but its details show it to be of a later period, probably the end of the fifteenth century.