

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



FIELD MONUMENTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE
H N D 3 6 N E 0 0 7 A

2 NGR
N D 3 8 2 1 6 5 8 3
3 QUAL
CE

6 SITE NAME
B U C H O L L Y C A S T L E *

10 GENERIC TYPE
CASTLE

14 PERIOD/DATE
LM=15th c AD
15 DATING METHOD
DOC

18 SHAPE

19 THREAT AND DATE

4 DISTRICT
CAITHNESS

5 PARISH
CANISBAY

7 AREA STATUS
8 SITE STATUS
SCHEDULED

9 REGIONAL STATUS

11 CONCORDANCE
ND36NE 7
NMR

12 FORM
STANDING STRUCTURE

13 DIMENSIONS

16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS

17 CONDITION
RUINED

20 LAND USE
BACKSHORE

21 GEOLOGY

22 SOILS

23 VEGETATION

24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE

25 RELIEF
COASTAL PENINSULA

26 ASPECT
NNE=E=S

27 ALTITUDE
0=25m OD

28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)

29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)

1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1975: 1/10,000 MAP
2. RCAHMS: 1911: CAITHNESS INVENTORY: HMSO: pp11-12, No. 32 PLAN
3. MACGIBBON+ROSS: 1889: CASTLES AND DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF SCOTLAND:
4. MONAT, J.: 1931: PLACE NAMES OF CANISBAY CAITHNESS: p6:
5. DONATIONS: 1911: PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL. 45: p366
6. BATEY, C.: 1980: CAITHNESS COASTAL SURVEY: DURHAM U.P.: No 78
7. LAMB, R.G.: 1980: I.A. PROMONTORY FORTS IN THE NORTHERN ISLES: BAR 79: p96

30 GROUND PLAN NO.

31 GROUND PHOTO NO.
H.R./N1/881/12

32 SLIDES NO.

33 HR. AP. NO.

34 NMR. AP. NO.

35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE

36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION

37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

38 SAMPLES

39 PALYNOLOGY

40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.

41 SMALL FINDS

42 MUSEUM/LOCATION

43 OTHER

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER

45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER

46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT

47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT

48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS

49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE

50 RECORDER: DATE
SM: 2.6.1986

51 CHECK: DATE
MWC: 10.5.1986

52 TEXT

"See continuation card for text."

ND 382 658 Bucholly Castle, Freswick(9)

6. " * otherwise known as 'Freswick House', 'Freswick Castle' by Pennant, 'Lamba-Borg' Orkneying Saga."

- 29.
8. MOWAT, J: 1939: THE VIKING SOCIETY FOR NORTHERN RESEARCH: VOL X: pp1-5
 9. HBM(SDD): 1985: LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS
 10. PENNANT, J: 1769: TOUR OF SCOTLAND: : p196 (ILLUS)
 11. TORFAEUS: : HISTORY (TRANS. POPE): : p138
 12. : : ARCHAEOLOGIA SCOTICA: V (PT. 1): p161
 13. LAING, S: 1870: PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL VII: p65
 14. : : CAITHNESS FAMILY HISTORY: : p173
 15. BRAMMAN, J et al: 1976: VISITS TO ANCIENT CAITHNESS: CAITHNESS FIELD CLUB: P 26
NO 16

Buchollie (4) or Bucholie (2, 3) Castle: This castle, dating from the period 1400 - 1542, stands on a peninsula (30.7m) 100 ft high, cut off from land by a trench 7 ft wide and 9 ft deep. (2.1m x 2.7m)

The keep which rose from the edge of this trench measured only 14 by 20 ft over all. Only the W wall, standing (4.4m x 6.2m) 30 ft high, and a part of the S wall remain. The walls of the vaulted basement are 4 ft thick, but on the floors (1.2m) above, only about 2½ ft.

An entrance passage 4½ ft wide gave access to a long (1.7m) narrow courtyard, flanked by buildings mostly bonded with clay.

An extensive kitchen midden lies along the cliff-top to seaward.

The castle was formerly known as Freswick. The property belonged to the Mowats from the time of Robert I (1306-29) until 1661, when it passed to the Sinclairs.

Bucholly Castle (the locally accepted spelling) is as described and planned by the previous authorities. The buildings on the W side of the courtyard survive as grass-covered walling about 1.3 m high. The kitchen midden is no longer visible. See illustration. Published survey (1:2500) revised. (OSFI:RD:9.9.1965)

Seven small fragments of brownish unglazed pottery from a refuse heap at Bucholly Castle were donated to the N M A S by A O Curle. (5)

(HND 36 NE 007B)

Midden deposit sampled. Erosion is extreme on all sides of the castle. (6)

Bucholie Castle has been identified with 'Lamba-borg' mentioned about 1143 in the Orkneyinga Saga. This would imply an earlier castle on the site. (But see also ND 36 NE 1.) (7)

Bucholly Castle is as described and illustrated. The surviving lower foundations are covered by thick vegetation. (OSFI:JB:12.8.1982)

Published survey (1:10,000) correct.

CAN 078

CASTLE. Bucholly Castle. Dimensions, keep approx. 5 x 7 m. and the west wall standing to c.10 m. Extensive midden deposit traced (dimensions 2 x 40 m.) and sampled. Castle ruinous and erosion extreme on all sides. Scheduled monument. Elevation c. 25 m. OD. (6)

ND 3821 6579.

OS. card no. ND 36 NE 7.

(RCAHMS 1911, 11-12 no. 32, fig. 4 MacGibbon and Ross 1889, 161 and 340)

Med.

Plate 2A, B

"Buchallie Castle, then named Lambaburg, is famous for the exploit of Sweyn, the great Orkney sea rover, who was afterwards killed at Dublin, who being besieged there by the Earl of Caithness, let himself down by a rope over the precipitous face of the rock, and swam in his armour to the shore without being perceived. This occurred about the year 1150, and the ruins remain as torfaeus described the castle 700 yrs ago, built on a precipice above the sea."(13)

(7)

There is no mention in the sagas of any of the Caithness promontory castles, except for the incident of c. 1143 when the adventurer Sweyn Asleifsson, who was pillaging in Caithness, stood siege in the fortress of "Lambaborg" (Orkneyinga Saga, chs. 82-3). The place is not described as a "kastall" but as a "vígi" or a "borg", and it was a sea-girt cliff-promontory with a strong stone wall blocking the approach. Lambaborg ("the fortress of Lambi", a personal name) has generally been identified with Bucholie Castle by everyone except Taylor (1938, 390) who prefers the Broch of Ness, on the other side of Freswick bay. If Taylor is right, this implies the re-use of the Iron Age fortifications, the "stone wall" (steinveggr) presumably being the forework which, just as at Nybster, stands in front of the broch. If Bucholie is the correct identification, there is the suggestion that a twelfth-century castle had preceded the existing one. The circumstances related in the saga are not such as to enable the matter to be settled; the argument for Bucholie has been most clearly stated by Mowat (1940). It is however of interest that the older name of Bucholie Castle was Freswick Castle, suggesting a link with what evidently was a high-status establishment at Freswick in Norse times; Sweyn Asleifsson had a strong family connection with Freswick.

32. *Bucholie Castle*.—This castle (pl. V.) has been built on a peninsular rock about 100' in height, standing out of the ocean some 5 m. S. of Duncansby Head, and lying parallel with the shore. The rock is joined to the land by a narrow neck at its NW. angle, which has been cut through by a trench some 7' wide, the bottom of which is about 9' below the level of the threshold of the entrance gate and must consequently have been spanned by a movable wooden bridge. The keep which rose from the outer edge of this trench has been of small dimensions, measuring some 14' x 20' over all. The W. wall, to a height of about 30', and a portion of the S. wall, alone remain. The walls at the basement are some 4' in thickness and above that on the sides only about 2' 6". The entrance passage, 4' 6" wide, and one apartment to the S. of it, occupy the basement and are vaulted; the roof of the upper chamber has also been vaulted, while the intermediate floor has been carried on joists. The entrance passage passing beyond the keep gave access to a courtyard which was long and narrow, and had buildings on each side of it (see ground-plan, fig. 4); these buildings are for the most part built with clay. A kitchen midden of great extent lies along the top of the cliff to seaward.

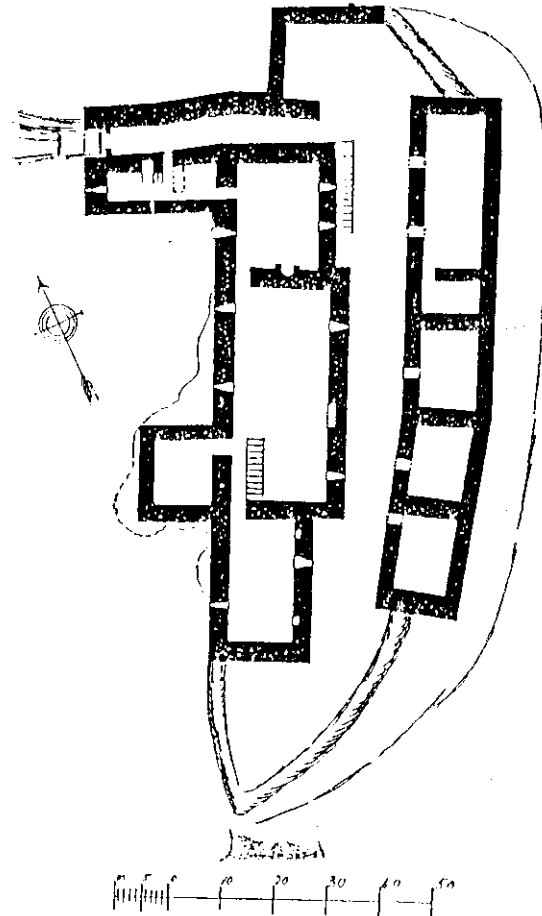


FIG. 4.—Bucholie Castle (No. 32); Ground-plan.

In its defensive arrangements the castle somewhat resembles Girnigoe in having an entrance passage through the keep.

It was formerly known as Freswick, and belonged to the family of Mowat, who likewise owned the property of Bucholie, now called Hatton, near Turriff in Aberdeenshire. The date of their first connection with Caithness is unknown, but one of the family had a charter of the lands of Freswick from King Robert the Bruce. The estate remained in their possession until 1661, when it was sold to William Sinclair, of Rattar.

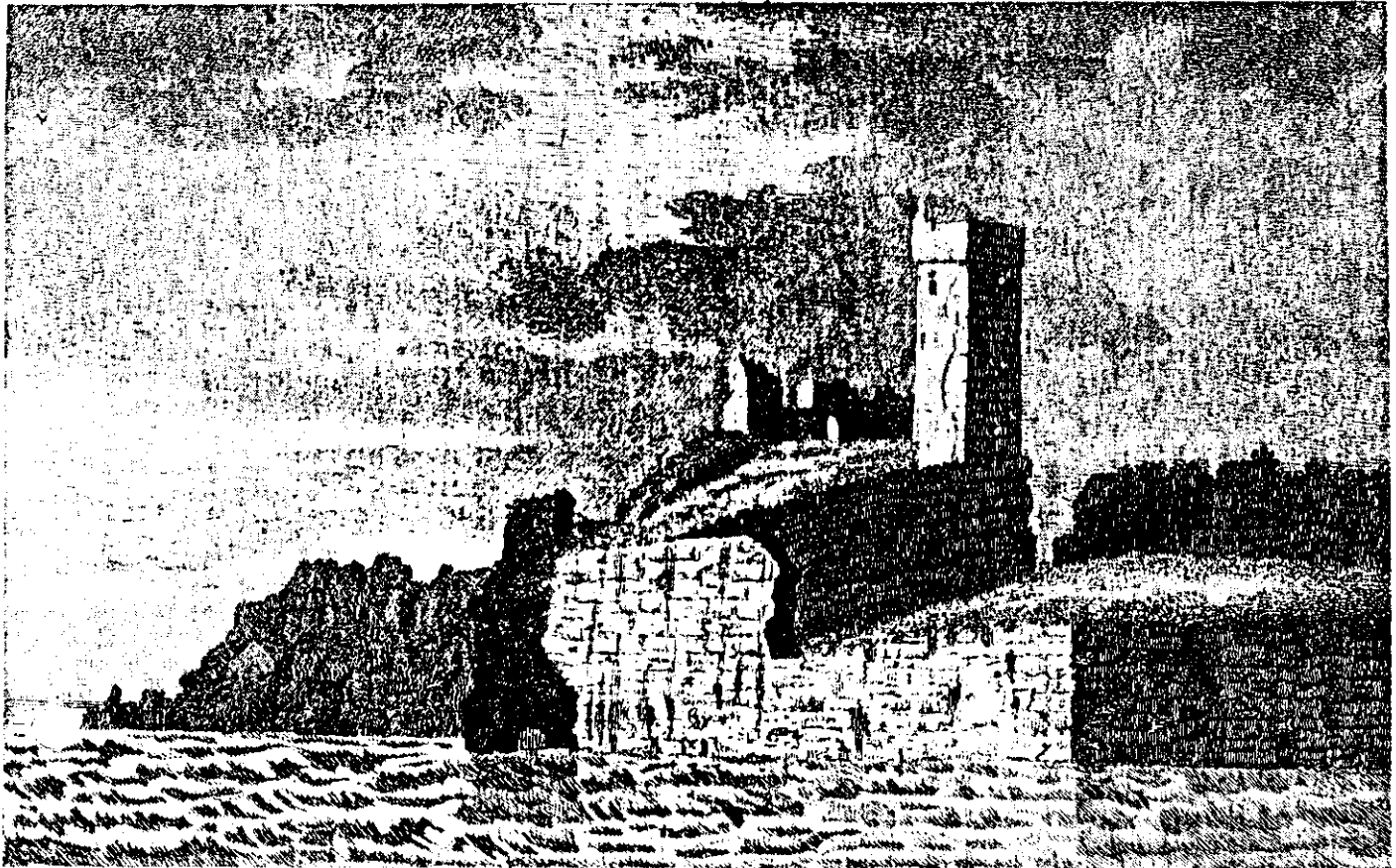
See Pennant's *Tour* (1769), p. 196 (illus. "Freswick Castle"); Pope's *Torfaus*, p. 138; *Archæologia Scotica*, v., pt. i. p. 161; *Antiquaries*, vii. p. 65; *Caithness Family History*, p. 173.

O.S.M., CAITH., viii.

Visited, 5th July 1910.



PLATE V.—Buchholz Castle (No. 32).



Spice print.

Freswick Castle.

J. B. Knight sculp.

Near *Freswick* castle the cliffs are very lofty; the strata that compose them lie quite horizontally in such thin and regular layers, and so often intersected by fissures, as to appear like masonry. Beneath are great insulated columns, called here *Stacks*, composed of the same sort of natural masonry as the cliffs; many of them are hollowed quite thro', so as to form most magnificent arches, which the sea rushes thro' with vast noise and impetuosity, affording a most august piece of scenery to such who are steady enough to survey it from the narrow and almost impending paths.

Freswick castle is seated on a narrow rock projecting into the sea, with just room enough for it to stand on: the access to it while the draw-bridge was in being, was over a deep chasm cut thro' the little isthmus that connected it to the main land. These dreadful situations are strongly expressive of the jealous and wretched condition of the tyrant owners.

FRESWICK
CASTLE.

HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL



ARTEFACTS

ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD

1 SITE CODE
H N D 3 6 N E 0 0 7 B

2 NGR
N D 3 8 2 1 6 5 8 3
3 QUAL
CE

6 SITE NAME
B U C H O L L Y C A S T L E

4 DISTRICT
CAITHNESS

5 PARISH
CANISBAY

7 GENERIC TYPE
POTTERY, SHERDS, UNGLAZED

8 CONCORDANCE
OSND36NE7
NMR

9 MUSEUM/LOCATION OF FIND(S)
RMS (QUEENS STREET)

10 ACCESSION NO.

11 PERIOD/DATE
LM

12 DATING METHOD
TYP

13 FIND CIRCUMSTANCES

14 CONDITION

15 EXCAVATOR AND DATE

16 EXCAVATION RECORD NO.

17 LAND USE

18 GEOLOGY

19 SOILS

20 VEGETATION

21 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE

22 RELIEF

23 ASPECT

24 ALTITUDE

25 DETAILED DESCRIPTION/DIMENSIONS

26 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)
1. DONATIONS: 1911: PROC. SOC. ANT. SCOT.: VOL. 45: p366

27 GROUND PLAN NO.

28 GROUND PHOTO NO.

29 SLIDES NO.

30 HR. AP. NO.

31 NMR. AP. NO.

32 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE

33 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION

34 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY

35 SAMPLES

36 PALYNOLOGY

37 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.

38 OTHER

39 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER

40 ATTITUDE OF OWNER

41 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT

42 ATTITUDE OF TENANT

43 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS

44 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE

45 RECORDER: DATE
HAR: 3.6.1986

46 CHECK: DATE
MWC: 10.5.1986

47 TEXT
"Seven small fragments of brownish unglazed pottery from a refuse heap at Bucholly castle were donated to the NMAS. by A.O.Curle."(1)