

# Aiket Castle



HERITAGE & CONSERVATION STATEMENT

4°37 west architects ltd | for Mr. A Gordon | March 2024

# Contents

Aiket castle- Introduction .....	2
History & Description of Aiket Castle.....	3
Photographs of previously consented works .....	13
Site and wider context .....	18
Additional works .....	20
Photos in context .....	22
Effect on Significance .....	30
APPENDIX 1 – extract of listing.....	31
References .....	32

## **Aiket castle- Introduction**

These works at Aiket Castle comprise alterations to previous planning and listed building consents and encompass:-

- The addition of two bays to the double garage to the North elevation (access from drive)
- The addition of small bays to the south elevation of the swimming pool aligning with the feature gable building line
- The enclosure of exposed balconies/ roof terraces at high level

The previous consents being:-

13/0179/PP	Extensions, alterations, and refurbishment of Aiket Castle
13/0180/LB	Alterations and Refurbishment of Aiket Castle
16/0776/PP chapel	Revised proposals-alteration and extension to include private and cloistered gallery link, roof room and lift
16/0778/LB chapel	Revised proposals-alteration and extension to include private and cloistered gallery link, roof room and lift
16/0885/LB	Repair and reinstatement of courtyard access arch and part of barmkin wall (partly retrospective)
16/0993/ AMPCC	Discharge of Condition Nos 2 (External Finishes), 6 (Window Specification), 8 (Stained glass window details) and 10 (rainwater goods) of planning consent No 16/0776/PP
17/ 0247/PP	Erection of swimming pool annexe
17/0434/LB	Erection of swimming pool annexe
17/0433/AMPCC	Discharge of Condition 2 (Written Scheme of Investigation) of Planning Consent No 17/0247/PP

## History & Description of Aiket Castle

Aiket Castle is located in open countryside approximately 2 miles southwest of the village of Dunlop in East Ayrshire. It is a category C(S) listed building, its form and role have changed over time to reflect the societal changes made manifest from its suggested construction as a defensive tower house c 1479 (HES , 2005) to its extensive reconstruction and restoration by Robert and Katrina Clow, who purchased the ruined shell in 1976 and reinterpreted the dwelling as a sixteenth century towerhouse, sensitively combining 15th and 16th century features, with Georgian window sizes to produce a coherent composition based largely on conjecture, which was awarded a Europa Nostra award in 1987.

The recent alterations and extensions summarized above have provided flexible contextual accommodation suited to a 21st century lifestyle, whilst referencing the aesthetic and craftsmanship of the past.

A charter for the land at Aiket was granted to Alexander Cunninghame in 1479 which probably marks the date of the building of Aiket Castle. The Aiket Cunninghames were descended from the Cunninghames of Bedlands (Baidland), who in turn were cadets of the Cunninghames of Glencairn

Given the location – elevated land on a river bend, it's likely that there was a fortified building in prior existence. The original castle was located in the two eastern bays of the reconstructed castle, and this demarcation is still visible on the south east elevation. These bays are the tallest part of the composition.

Robert Cunninghame of Aiket was involved in the murder of the Earl of Eglington, and murdered a neighbour, Sir John Mure of Caldwell. Surviving a poisoning attempt by his wife, he was shot and killed near the castle in 1586. The castle and lands were subsequently forfeited. On repossessing the castle, Cunninghame's widow remodeled it in the late 16th century style in 1592, with the kitchen wing added (current cottage wing)

The ninth laird James, having played a part in the ill fated Darien Scheme, opposed the Union of 1707; he was forced to sell Aiket to a branch of the Dunlops of Dunlop who carried out the 18th century remodeling and owned the castle until the late 19th and 20th centuries, when the castle was let as a farm labourer's dwelling (Lindsay, 1994)

There is no pictorial evidence as to Aiket's appearance prior to 18th Century, when it was modernized in a classical style; it was reduced to three stories- the top storey fortifications removed- a reflection perhaps of political stability and tastes of Enlightenment Scotland. A nepus gable was also installed to the north-western elevation, and the windows were enlarged. The effects of this remodeling were illustrated by MacGibbon and Ross (MacGibbon, 1892)- see figures, 1 and 2. The location of the former staircase is noted on the first-floor plan of Figure 2- this was later reinstated in the 1976-79 reconstruction.



Figure 1 – NW Elevation – source MacGibbon & Ross

“Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland, vol iv (1892), pp365-7”

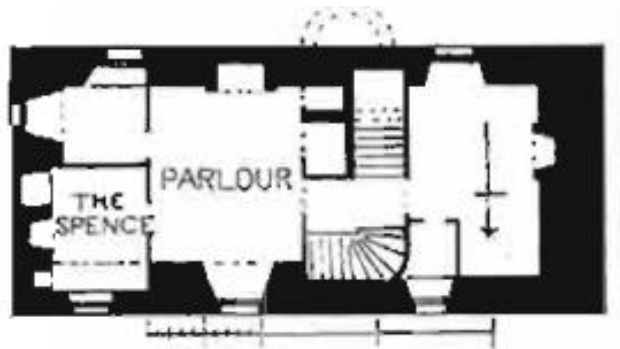


Figure 2 – First Floor Plan – source MacGibbon & Ross

“Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland, vol iv (1892), pp365-7”- note dashed position of former corbelled stair to upper floors

Paterson (paterson1847) states that there was formerly a moat, however there is no trace of this

Remnants of earlier construction that remain are the vaulted ceiling to the ground floor dining room, parts of the ground floor walls, the fireplace jambs in the first floor drawing room are attributed to the 15<sup>th</sup> century in the extract of listing (see Appendix 1). The stone staircase to the first floor dates from the 17<sup>th</sup> century. The original main entrance prior to the 18<sup>th</sup> century remodeling was on the southeastern elevation, and the current

doorway is modelled on one at Beddenheath Castle near Stepps which is of a similar timeframe and possibly by the same stonemasons.

In 1957, a fire caused significant damage, contributing to the later collapse of the north east gable taking with it the central vault to the entrance area.

From Canmore, (Canmore, 2012) we have pictures of the ruin- see Figures 3-4` ; the likeness to the MacGibbon and Ross illustration in Figure 1 is clear



Figure 3 – Aiket Castle 1974

Source Canmore- catalogue number SC 1242969



Figure 4 – Aiket from the west 1974

Source Canmore – catalogue number SC 2612646







Figure 7: OS map 1856 – source National Library of Scotland

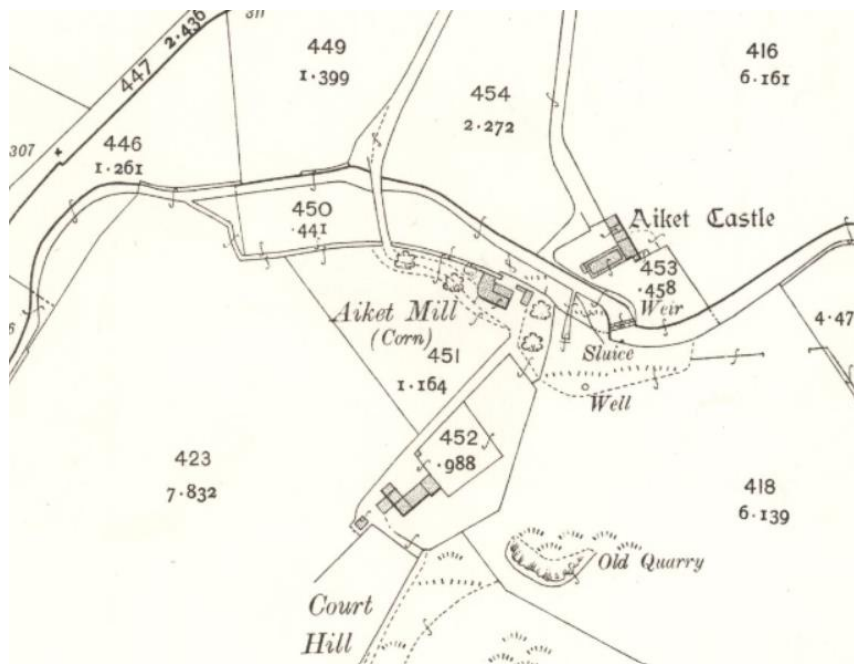


Figure 8: OS map 1910 – source National Library of Scotland

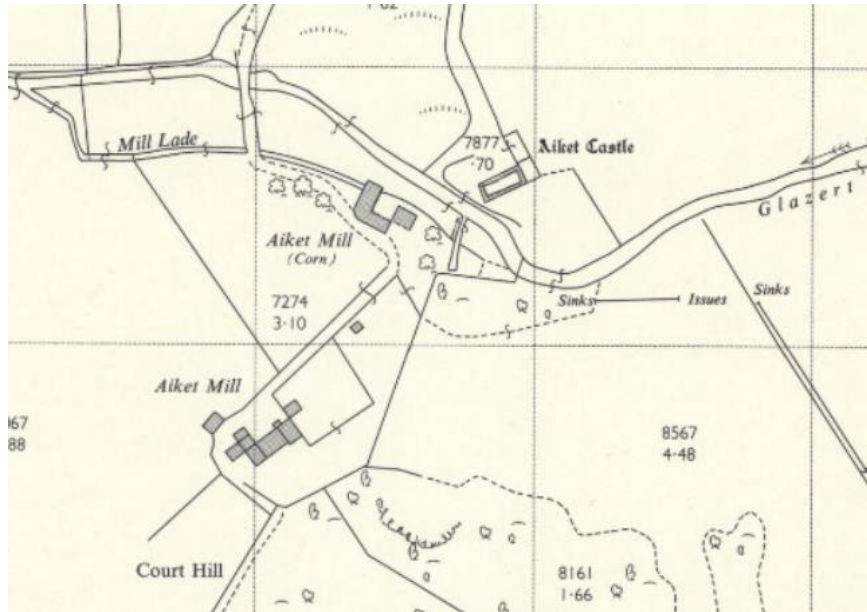


Figure 9: OS map 1968 – source National Library of Scotland. Castle reduced to ruin following 1957 fire.

Following purchase of the ruin in 1976, Robert and Katrina Clow had to stabilize the structure- all walls above ground floor ceiling level, except for the south west gable and the western end of the south east elevation walls were taken down and rebuilt in cavity brickwork, maintaining the external and internal wall lines, and ingeniously utilizing the depth created in between to accommodate storage, sanitary and servicing provision, thus maximizing the accommodation and retaining the internal footprint of the building. Weaving together documentary evidence and emulating sixteenth century detailing, the resulting tower house is a sensitively executed reconstruction, belying its age and seeming authentic. Some aspects, whilst faithful to 16th century design have proven difficult to live with; within the original footprint, rooms are small, and circulation remains torturous.

Previously B listed, the relisting to category C(S) reflects the degree of new construction. See Figures 5- 9 below depicting the property prior to the most recent works being undertaken.



Figure 10– south east elevation



Figure 11 - North west elevation



Figure 12 – north west / west gable



Figure 13 -north west elevation from garden. Cottage to foreground

The purchase of the property in 2011 by Mr. Gordon, saw the accommodation upgraded to address the circulation, room sizes and lack of flexibility. Alterations and extensions now provide flexible accommodation for everyday domestic life and entertaining. In addition to the living and sleeping accommodation, a lift, a private chapel, a swimming pool and a double garage have been provided. The garage mitigates the potential for damage to the barmkin wall and archway at the castle itself, as the arched opening is narrow, limiting vehicular access.

Whilst construction is modern, enabling larger spans and floor depths, materials and finishes have remained traditional; traditional craftsmanship is evident throughout, from stone and leadwork to internal joinery and stained glass, which, in the private chapel portrays part of the history of the barony of Aiket, tying the building back through the centuries.

In recent works the composition has been broken into a series of smaller planes and masses. This gives the impression of a chronological development of the complex as a whole and helps to maintain the original castle as the dominant mass, while achieving the aspiration to complement the architectural character and historic interest of Aiket.

Detailing references the original composition, with a variety of opening sizes, stonework features and lime render finish. Timber elements introduced hint at an older history.

The manipulation of scale is retained; the cottage, always a part of the main house is now connected directly at both floors, its scale acting as a foil to the massing of the extended main block behind. The principal elevation remains the south eastern one, overlooking the Glazert burn. The new extensions drop down from four storeys where abutting the original building to the storey and a half / single storey massing of chapel and pool. An enlarged terrace area with retaining wall unifies the southern setting, whilst more intimate external spaces are created around the chapel area, where the scale is smaller.

The accommodation overall provided by previous consents from 2013 to 2017 provides :

9 No. public rooms the five existing spaces in castle and cottage areas, plus the great hall lounge , family lounge, gallery and third floor roof room

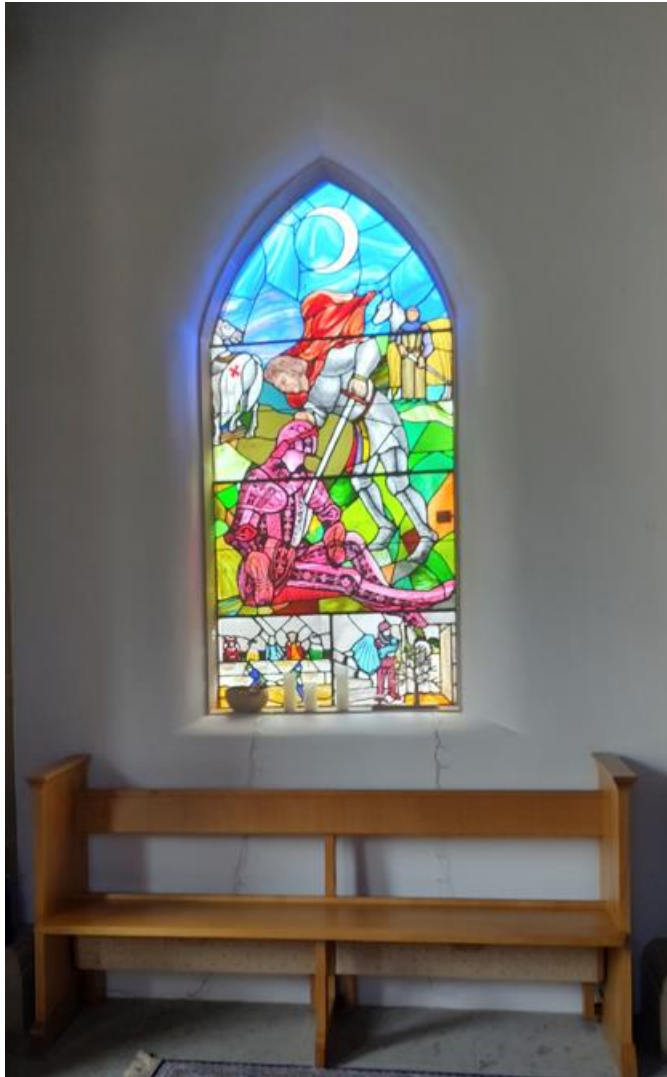
6 No Bedrooms – 4 No. within the castle, as before; 1 No. within the cottage and 1 new bedroom in the extension wing on the 2nd floor.

A private chapel, swimming pool and double garage

This application provides one additional apartment to the second floor- a large room which was formerly the covered roof terrace, and makes alterations to the third floor roof room to from a bedroom, ( a net gain of 1 bedroom within the dwellinghouse) garages and extends the pool with the addition of two rooms formed as infill bays.

This is a legacy building and may be used partly for public use; the diversity of accommodation provided anticipates this.

## Photographs of previously consented works



*Figure 14– stained glass window in chapel*



*Figures 15-16 - internal stone corbel and vaulted cloister link.*



*Figure 16 internal detailing continues aesthetic from original house*

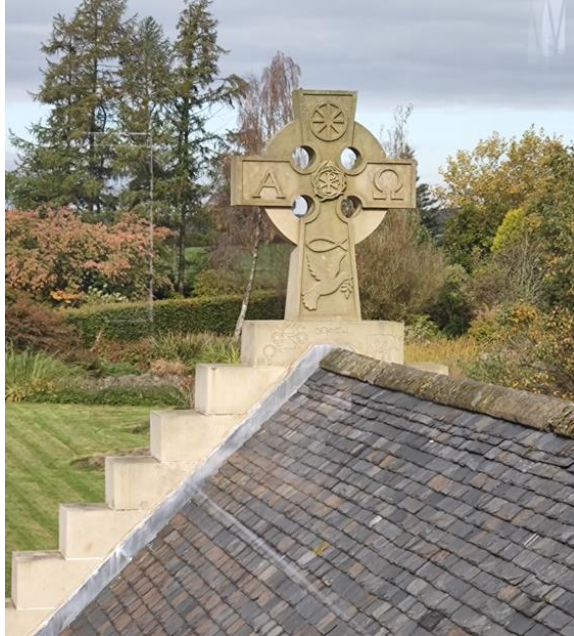


*Figure 17 – traditional stone, render and leadwork – extension SE elevation first and second floors – the modulation of planes*



*Figure 18 looking southwest from northern chapel courtyard – manipulation of scale*





*Figures 19-20 west elevation of chapel – domestic scale relating to cottage wing and garage. Traditional skills*



*Figure 20-21 Pool building with exposed oak frame*

## Site and wider context

The castle occupies a prominent and attractive setting on a meander of the Glazert Burn which flows through the 95 acres of gardens and grounds within which the castle is located. The gardens to the southeast are terraced, with hard landscaping and retaining wall adjacent to the building and soft landscaping falling to the burn below. To the west, soft landscaping falls to the burn, which is more deeply incised as it flows between the castle and the mill with the castle occupying a prominent position on a rock outcrop immediately above the burn. Across the burn from the castle is an attractive stone built former grain mill which has been restored. This building is served by mill lades and stone channels dating from the 18th and 19th centuries, some of which were partially renovated in 2003/04. This reflects a local wider agricultural architectural vernacular, tracking changes in agricultural production methods from enclosure to mechanization, and the rise and fall of estates and families through wars of independence, the Jacobite revolution, the Scottish enlightenment, the slave and tobacco trades and colonialization, and the industrial revolution, with the flux of fortunes and the resultant impacts on land use and labour.

Surrounding farms are also listed, Loanhead (B listed, dates from c 1830 however earlier "Loanhead" farm shown on Roy's map of 1747); Braehead, (C listed dating from 1771); Leahead (C listed, dating from 1830s on the site of a Lee Farm, shown on Roy's map of 1747) and Low Borland (B listed, farmhouse dating from 1810, however the farm was in existence in 1640). Listings include former threshing barns, byres, stables and haylofts. The protectionism of the Corn Laws, (1814-1846) following the Napoleonic Wars would have fueled the rapid expansion of domestic grain production, reflecting the consolidation of wheat production, investment in buildings and increase in landowner wealth that is evident during this period. The repeal, and subsequent impact on agriculture, where unemployed agricultural labour fed the increasing demand of urban industrialization can be evidenced by the castle's status being reduced to farm labourer and animal housing at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries.

Aiket Castle, the adjoining wall, the Barmkin Wall (to the front of the castle and enclosing the courtyard), Aiket Mill, the former mill lades, and elliptical arched stone bridge over the Glazert River are listed, Category C (S). Relevant extracts from the list of buildings of architectural and historic interest relating to Aiket Castle and Mill are attached as Appendix 1

The reconstructed tower house is a sensitive interpretation of that typology, incorporating older elements spanning centuries into a coherent whole. Its C(S) status reflects its many qualities whilst acknowledging that it is in effect mainly a reconstruction which strives to blend authenticity in materials, techniques and some salvaged elements with the demands of 20th century domesticity. It is of its time, given the evolution of conservation approaches since, a reconstruction today may be a very different interpretation.

The rich history of Aiket Castle and the families who owned and fought over its lands is reflected in the inclusion of Aiket Castle and Aiket Castle Grain Mill in the Sites and Monuments Record for the West of Scotland. In other words, these buildings are

considered to be of archaeological interest and this interest may be a material consideration in any planning applications affecting them.

In response to this, Rathmell Archaeology were previously appointed to undertake a desk based assessment and field based evaluation of the proposed development area in order to establish definitively the nature of any archaeological resource which may be affected by the proposals and to recommend how any resource discovered should be recorded or protected.

In summary, this concludes that the buildings have been extensively altered on many occasions over the last several hundred years. Any archaeological interest remaining would have been recovered during the last rebuilding in the mid 1970's and it is most unlikely that any significant interest remains.

In planning terms, the wider context relates to biodiversity, ecology, flood risk and land use and character.

Aiket Castle is sited outwith designated landscape character areas and protected sites; a wildlife corridor is defined west of Loanhead and Braehead farms , however the NBN Atlas logs no protected species close to Aiket. Bats range over East Ayrshire, however there are no empty buildings nor hollow trees near the castle to suggest that bats would be affected by the construction works. The Castle sits within a managed landscape which will be further developed to ensure biodiversity is both supported and promoted as the climate changes.

In LDP2, the area around Aiket will change status from a Rural Diversification Area to a Rural Protection Area. This will maintain the character of the area whilst permitting sensitive development once adopted. Aiket castle is part of the East Ayrshire path network with a right of way across the grounds, encouraging public use, sustainable travel and promoting health and wellbeing. These rights are being respected and maintained.

Whilst changes in weather patterns have increased the flood risk from medium to high in this area, the alterations sit outwith the flood area described on SEPA flood maps. Consultation with David MacPherson of Ayrshire Roads Alliance confirms that flooding is not considered an issue for the development works. The terrace retaining wall to the southeast also acts as a barrier to rising river levels.

For the construction works, the continuity of materials and detailing, and maintenance of the dominance of the tower house within the overall composition has been a key aspect of all of the works, with the aim of demonstrating continuity whilst differentiating the old from the new. The carbon footprint has been reduced by offsetting the inherent inefficiencies of the 1970s build with a more thermally efficient construction for the new building works.

## **Additional works**

This application finalizes the works at Aiket Castle and is a consequence of assessing the building in use and addressing issues and shortfalls. The changes made are noted below.

The addition of bays to the double garage (1.4m x 4.9 metres each) – made necessary to accommodate the model of cars. The bays are located to the driveway side, with leaded roofs with parapets. The walls are finished in lime render with feature sandstone at openings, corners, skews and eaves. The garage forms the boundary for a courtyard of essentially single storey buildings- it is here that the scale breaks down, in contrast to the original building and four storey extension, continuing the large/ small contrast manifest in the original composition. The garages have neither a direct visual , nor physical relationship relationship with the original towerhouse and their impact on it is negligible. They do however, remove vehicular traffic from the main entrance area, improving the setting and amenity.

The addition of bays to the southeastern elevation of the pool – these provide WC, shower and multifunctional room which can be used for exercise, relaxing or hobbies, broadening the use of this building with a view to futureproofing the layout. These bays (4.1 x 2.6m and 6.2 x 2.6m) infill areas either side of the projecting gable; they provide a flush building line, whilst stepping down the scale at roof level. The oak frames are exposed per the feature gable window; the use of external timber linking to the gazebo feature on this elevation. They are infilled with masonry at low level, finished with lime render, and glazed above, the fixed lights referencing the geometry of the fenestration to the adjacent chapel building. The low roofs break up the southeastern elevation, helping to reduce the scale of this building. The effect of this is negligible to the main elevation – the chapel link and gazebo effectively break the elevation into two perceived parts. It does bring a human scale to the termination of the building line.

Changes to fenestration to the north side of the pool; these were originally envisaged as “slot” windows, similar to ones to the rear of the cloister link. Whilst featuring on an elevational drawing of the whole northwestern façade, the building is not experienced as a continuous panorama, rather a series of linked spaces. The chapel effectively cuts the composition into two sides on this northwestern elevation; the pool has a more direct relationship with the chapel, with which it forms a small courtyard. The pool building was found to be dark, with glare experiences from the glazing to the south eastern elevation, Enlarging the windows with timber tracery provides an immediate reference to the chapel fenestration. The windows now provide sufficient ambient light levels to avoid the need for additional artificial lighting, and reduce glare, making this a sustainable solution to lighting issues. The effect of this change to the original building is negligible- there is no direct relationship between the rear of the pool and the original towerhouse.

The enclosure of covered roof terraces- issues with terrace drainage in an ever more inclement climate coupled with low utilization prompted these to be enclosed. The small terraces adjacent to the original gable, and at the stair tower have been enclosed

with leaded glazing above the battlements to reduce the solidity. The third floor link corridor is now internal, altering the access point to the roof room, which in conjunction with the southern terrace being similarly enclosed, has enabled this space to become a further bedroom with an en suite formed within part of the area which was formerly the terrace at the stair tower.

The enclosure of the large, covered roof terrace has been carried out per the smaller terraced areas, infilled with leaded windows to reduce the effect of enclosure with as much void as solid. This has provided a flexible well lit room, capable of fulfilling many functions. This is accessed from the extension, or from the **brastiche** on the floor below via an external timber stair.

The exposed timbers and internal stonework detailing these enclosed spaces enable continuation of an established aesthetic. The robust construction refers back to the original tower house and provides flexibility for the future. The leaded roofs and fenestration define these as another layer in the history of the building, legible as a separate intervention, yet in materials and detailing reference the earlier works.

As two of the third floor terraces directly abut the towerhouse the setting is affected. The roofed terraces were established via previous consent. The enclosure of these subtly affects the perception of solid to void. For the rear link corridor, the effect is smaller as it is set back from the rear elevation line, and within the confines of the stepped gable. As the southeastern terrace sat atop the projecting feature bay it now has a different relationship as its eaves line sits above the eaves of the tower house. To address this impact, the fenestration has adopted a tripartite rhythm, and wood finish colour to relate to and become part of the main bay elevation, reinforcing its verticality and emphasizing the old/new junction. The roof ridge height remains subservient to the tower house.

The enclosure of the large roof terrace has been similarly detailed, maintaining the battlement wall detail to both interior and exterior to enable this alteration to be read as a separate intervention – another layer in the history of the building. The north western elevation scale is reduced by the extension of the of the leaded roof to form a canopy over the stair access/ exit point The scale of the windows, combined with the leaded roof seeks to minimize the effect of this intervention; the ground floor colonnade and first floor windows, via the scale and geometry, remain the focus of this part of the elevation.

## Photos in context



*Figure 22 – Aiket Castle northwestern elevation- the manipulation of scale and planes as a foil tot the solidity of the reconstructed tower house- garage to foreground.*



*Figure 23 – Aiket Castle northeastern elevation-garage bays, pool rear fenestration, enclosed roof terrace*



*Figure 24 – Aiket Castle part elevation to northwest ; enclosed roof terraces; multipurpose 2<sup>nd</sup> floor room to left, third floor link corridor abutting tower house gable.*





Figure 25 – Aiket Castle northeastern elevation-existing/ new junction



Figure 26 – Aiket Castle southeastern part elevation – existing/ new junction , enclosed terraces at second and third floor



Figure 27 – Southeastern elevation of pool building. New bays reduce scale and refer to other timber structure



*Figure 28 – southwest cottage elevation / north western castle elevation*



*Figure 29 – southwest cottage elevation / north western castle elevation; enclosed third floor terrace*



*Figure 30 – looking to north east elevation from pool/ chapel courtyard -stepping down in scale, layering of planes and materials*



*Figure 31 – south eastern elevation – enclosed terrace at third floor*



*Figure 32- southeastern elevation from terrace looking towards southwest*



*Figure 33- southeastern elevation from terrace looking towards north east.*



*Figure 34- third floor southeastern enclosed terrace – looking out to north east*



*Figure 35- third floor southeastern enclosed terrace – looking out to south west*



*Figure 36- internal timber detailing – enclosed terraces*



*Figure 37- internal timber detailing – enclosed terraces*

## **Effect on Significance**

Given their location and scale, the additions to garages and pool have little effect on the significance of the tower house.

The enclosure of the existing covered roof terraces affects the original asset via the relationship to the existing gable/ junction between old and new. Whilst previous consents provided the leaded roofs, enclosure has made internal that which was external and altered the solid to void relationship on the overall elevation.

By reinforcing the tripartite nature of the projecting masonry bay a vertical emphasis is produced heightening the junction between old and new. At the larger roof terrace the effect is of a horizontal emphasis in counterpoint, reinforcing the verticality and solidity of the tower house.

These alterations and additions to the main house accommodation seek to protect the fabric from potential routes of water ingress, particularly the original gable given the future weather projections. Materials, details and techniques deployed echo those used in the tower house.

They also improve the flexibility of the accommodation offered, an important consideration to enable such buildings to continue as valuable assets without significant further change. The changes within the extended accommodation enable the tower house itself to be preserved.

## **APPENDIX 1 – extract of listing**

Listing - AIKET CASTLE WITH ADJOINING COTTAGE, BARMKIN WALL,

Category C

Date Added: 03/03/2005

Local Authority: East Ayrshire

Planning Authority :East Ayrshire

Parish: Dunlop

NGR: NS 38788 48757

Coordinates: 238788, 648757

### Description

Late 15th, 16th, 17th and 18th century fragments; rebuilt from ruin Robert Clow, 1976-79. 3-storey and attic, 3-bay (end bay to W 3-storey), rectangular-plan tower house with crowstepped gables, pedimented doorpiece, gabled dormers, bartizan to W corner, round stair turret corbelled out from 1st floor to SE; open courtyard to NW enclosed by single storey and attic cottage to NE, and barmkin wall with arched entrance.

Sandstone and whinstone rubble to 1st floor; Kennet brick above (see Notes); white harling; sandstone ashlar dressings. Raised ashlar window margins. Timber-boarded, studded door in roll-moulded, pedimented 18th century doorpiece to centre of NW elevation; fairly regular fenestration to bays.

Predominantly 12-pane glazing in timber sash and case windows. Coped, gablehead stacks. Crowstepped gables. Graded grey Forfar sandstone roofing stones.

INTERIOR: stone staircase rising from entrance hall. Circa 1600 vaulted kitchen with bread oven and 17th century arched fireplace; 15th century vaulted dining room (former store) to E of hall. 15th century roll-moulded jambs with semi-octagonal capitals to former Great Hall fireplace on 1st floor. 18th century sandstone chimneypieces to 1st floor sitting room and 2nd floor bedroom; 17th or 18th century moulded stonework to windows and elsewhere in various rooms.

MILL LADES AND FORMER AIKET CORN MILL: 18th and 19th century mill lades and associated stonework. Probably 18th century lade channels to W of mill; 19th century terracotta pipeline to W of mill; channels with stone edging adjacent to mill building. L-plan random rubble former corn mill. Renovated and modernised 2003-4.

BRIDGE: elliptical-arched bridge over Glazert Burn. Sandstone rubble with dressed sandstone arch and parapet coping.



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