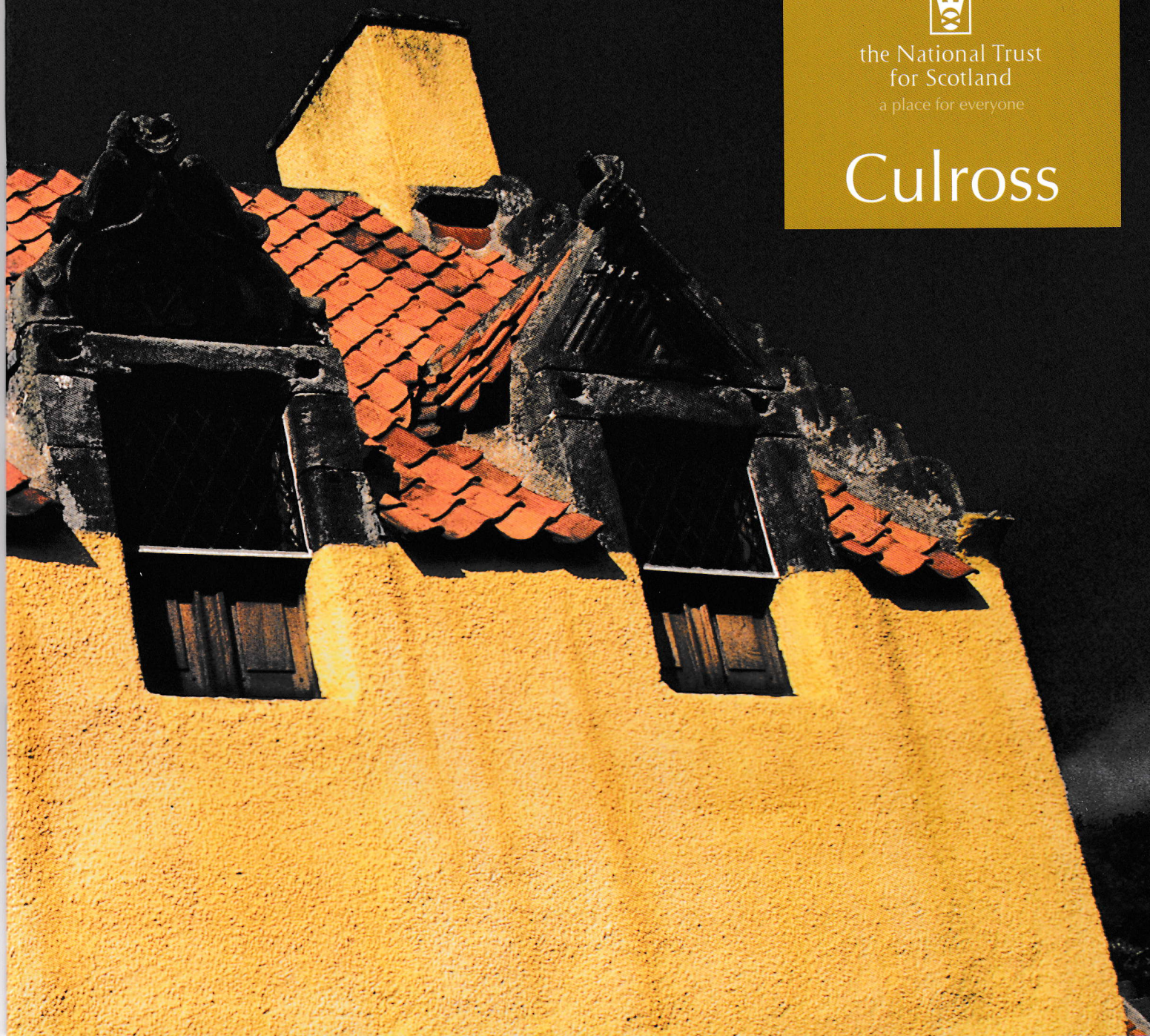




the National Trust
for Scotland
a place for everyone

Culross



CULROSS

A short history of the Royal Burgh

Culross in Fife is a unique survival, a town which time has passed by; the most complete example in Scotland today of a burgh of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.



It looks like a film set. Its little houses, roofed with red pantiles, line narrow cobbled streets which converge on the Mercat Cross. Its inhabitants are long accustomed to film makers using their everyday surroundings as the setting for historical drama.

For Culross is no museum. It is a lively, living community. Most of the houses may date from the seventeenth century, but inside them are families living modern lives.



Seal of St Serf, from a thirteenth-century document

But its history began more than a thousand years ago. In the sixth century Culross was an important religious centre, and its monks figure in a tale which links it with the city of Glasgow. Across the Forth, Princess Thenew was expelled in disgrace by her father, the King of Lothian. She was cast adrift at Aberlady in an open boat and left to perish. Miraculously, wind and tide conveyed her to Culross, where monks rescued her and her son Mungo was born. He was brought up and educated by St Serf, and as a young man travelled westwards to found a religious community of his own.

His tomb is in the crypt of the great Glasgow Cathedral which stands near the site of his first church: he is the patron saint of the city and its coat-of-arms recalls his miracles. In 1503, 900 years after St Mungo's death, the first Archbishop of Glasgow, Robert Blackadder, erected a chapel in Culross on the spot where, by tradition, Thenew came ashore and her child was born. Its ruins can still be seen today.

The monks provided the key which was to unlock the door to Culross's prosperity; they were the first miners. Early travellers in Scotland wrote with awe of the black stones which burned. Coal was plentiful on both sides of the Forth and easily accessible. The Firth itself was not a barrier, but a highway for trade.

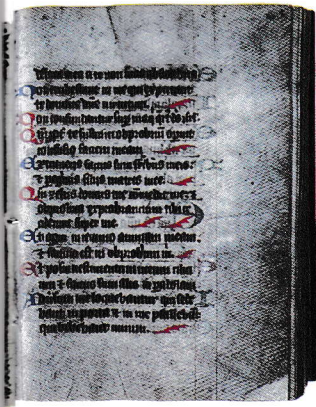
In 1490 Culross was granted a charter by the Cistercian Abbey making it a Burgh of Barony. This conveyed economic privileges, such as the right to buy and sell goods within the boundaries and to hold a weekly market and an annual fair. Only a Royal Burgh, however, could take part in the lucrative import and export trade, and Culross aspired to this status despite the expense involved.

Salt panning was a companion industry to mining. The sea water was run into large, shallow iron pans, and evaporated by fires of inferior coal. This gave off thick smoke, a feature of the shores of the Forth on which travellers commented. It is known that in 1633 Culross had 50 saltpans, and there must have been times when it was a very smoky little town indeed.

The small ships of the day carried coal, salt and other Scottish exports to Scandinavia and the Low Countries. Often they would return with ballast of red pantiles. With the roof coverings came ideas about the roofs themselves, so all along the shores of the Forth are found buildings which echo in design those across the North Sea.

By the time James VI came to the throne, the export of coal had increased to such an extent that he was concerned there would not be enough for home needs. His Privy Council, however, investigated the situation and reassured him, and production continued to expand. The town's importance in this trade is reflected in the fact that the 'Culross chalder' became the





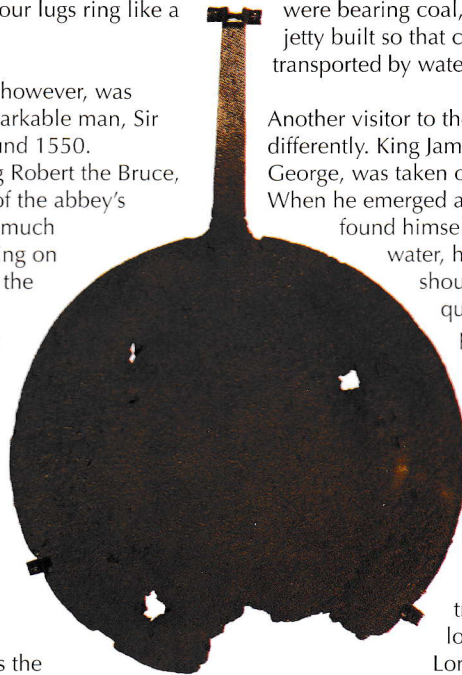
standard Scottish measure for weighing coal.

Coal also played an important part in the other local industry – the making of baking girdles. Legend has it that the smiths of Culross invented this utensil; King Robert the Bruce, who camped at one time near the burgh, is reported to have ordered that his soldiers be provided with iron plates for toasting their oatcakes.

The Culross girdlemakers claimed a monopoly of their craft from ancient times, and this was recognised and re-established in 1599 in a letter from James VI. For 150 years thereafter, the name of the burgh was inseparable from its product, and generations of Scots children heard the parental threat 'I'll gar your lugs ring like a Culross girdle'.

The height of Culross's prosperity, however, was reached during the life of one remarkable man, Sir George Bruce, who was born around 1550. A descendant of the family of King Robert the Bruce, Sir George was granted the lease of the abbey's collieries in 1575. He had gained much technical experience while travelling on the Continent and was thought by the abbey estate's administrator to be the 'likeliest person to re-establish the colliery'.

Between then and his death 50 years later, Bruce – who eventually purchased the colliery outright – pioneered many innovations in coal mining. It seems he began where the monks had left off, defeated by the depth of the coal, ventilation and drainage. By 1592 he was so successful and such was the



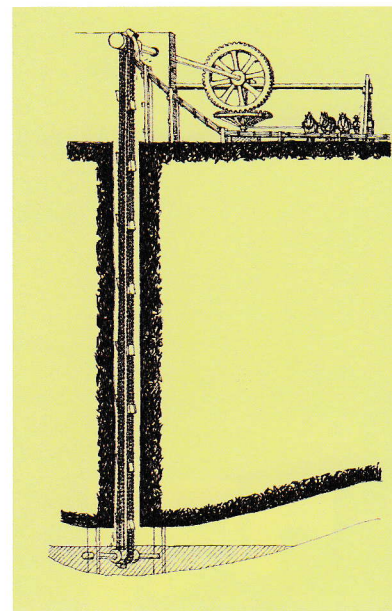
prosperity generated by the colliery that James VI, anxious to increase the royal revenues, accorded Culross the sough-after status of Royal Burgh.

One of Sir George's innovations was the 'Egyptian Wheel', turned by horses and operating 36 buckets on a chain to drain the mine. The monks had worked coal 30ft deep; Sir George made it possible for men to work at 240ft and he went on to develop a coal mine which was the wonder of the world.

'The miners followed the vein of the mine in nine and twenty years they have digged more than one mile under the sea', wrote a traveller. At that point, a shaft led upwards to an outlet on a tidal island in the Forth, where its exit was protected by a 'circular frame of stone, very thick and strong'. The writer, obviously deeply impressed, recorded that while miners were digging coal below 'a hundred of the greatest ships in Britain may sail over their heads'. Some of those ships were bearing coal, for Sir George also had a jetty built so that coal could be rapidly transported by water.

Another visitor to the mine reacted differently. King James VI, as a guest of Sir George, was taken on a tour of the mine. When he emerged at the seaward end and found himself surrounded by water, he panicked and shouted 'Treason!' He was quickly reassured and presumably hurried back to the fine new house which Sir George had built for himself, later known as the 'Palace'.

Sir George Bruce was ahead of his time, not only in technical innovations but also in the treatment of his employees, mostly local colliers, who were described by Lord Dundonald as 'in general, steady,



Artist's impression of Sir George Bruce's mechanism to drain the mine



James VI in 1595, aged 29

sober and men of principle, well-clothed, neat in their persons and well supplied with household furniture'. The miners were paid sufficient every fortnight to support their families, with the balance of their wages every three to four months, to make them 'more economical'.

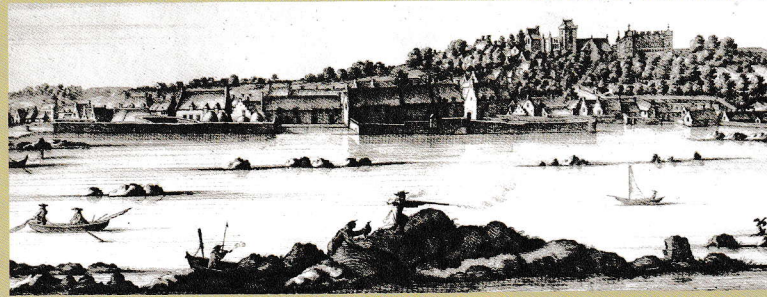
A great storm seriously damaged the under-sea mine workings in March 1625, and Sir George himself died later that year. As well as being a pioneer entrepreneur and industrialist, Bruce had served as a member of the Scottish parliament, and was one of the commissioners who arranged the terms of the Union of the Crowns of Scotland and England in 1603. There is little evidence now of his mining activities, but his 'Palace' still stands.

The decline of Culross's prosperity was a very gradual process. Over the next two centuries its traditional industries died, coal mining petered out, and salt panning with it. The new foundry at Carron in Falkirk opened in 1760, producing cheap cast-iron girdles which drove Culross's wrought-iron product off the market. Quarrying, linen weaving and shoemaking proved inadequate substitutes. More fortunate neighbouring towns pulled down their old buildings and erected new widened streets and generally 'kept up with the times'. In Culross, however, time stood still: for 150 years there was little change.

In 1932 its principal building, Sir George's 'Palace', came on the market. It was bought for £700 by the National Trust for Scotland, then a very small organisation. The purchase accounted for nearly half its first legacy.

By the outbreak of the Second World War, the Trust owned over 20 properties in Culross, including the Study, bought for £150. Their condition may be judged from their cost. Nine buildings were bought for £168 – and this included 'a sum for certain immediate necessary repairs'.

When peace returned, the work of restoration and rehabilitation continued. Old and dilapidated buildings



Culross as illustrated in John Slezer's Theatrum Scotiae (1693)

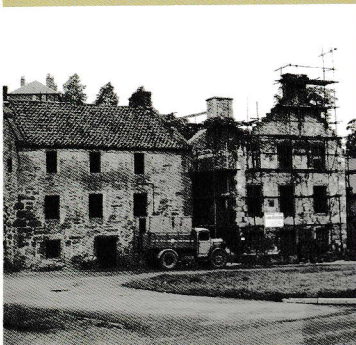
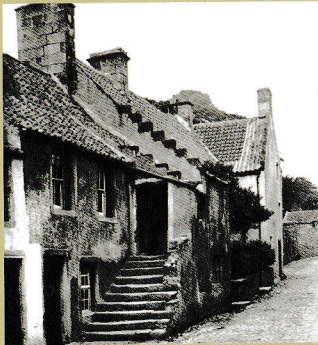
were made new and comely. Culross began to emerge in the role, which it now takes for granted, of one of Scotland's 'show places'. Private individuals played their part and so did organisations. When the then South of Scotland Electricity Board needed a new transformer substation they sited the machinery discreetly in a typical Culross house. The Scottish Special Housing Association (now Communities Scotland) met the need for new houses with a scheme which reflected sympathetically the characteristics of the old.

In 1975 Culross town council, like all such councils throughout Scotland, ceased to exist under new local government legislation. Its last act was to give the Town House, its meeting place and centre of the town's activities since 1626, into the care of the Trust.

To mark the Trust's Golden Jubilee year in 1981, a special 'twinning' link was established with the little town of Veere in Holland, focal point of much of the trade with Scotland – and therefore with Culross – in the Fife burgh's golden age.



Restoration in progress at Culross: left, Sandhaven area; above, the Study



CULROSS

The Palace

Culross Palace, built for Sir George Bruce, is a unique example of a merchant's house of the early seventeenth century; it has been extensively restored by the Trust and Historic Scotland. The term 'Palace' entered the record during the nineteenth century, and seems to derive from the misinterpretation of wording in the title deeds. The house was never a royal residence, although King James VI was a guest of Sir George Bruce several times. Original title deeds refer to the building as the Great Lodging, and it certainly would have been the most impressive burgess tenement in the town at that time, with space for a courtyard, stable block and garden, as well as a house with room to expand if necessary.

The west block dates from 1597 – a carving within one of the ornate dormerheads reads 'GB 1597'. The north wing was built in 1611, and a carving within a dormerhead here reads 'SGB 1611', the 'S' denoting Bruce's title of 'Sir', acquired in the previous year.

The house was sited close to the shore and a short ride from the main mineworkings at Castlehill pit. Bruce must have been able to stand at his windows, with his treasure stored safely in the strongroom behind him, and gaze out towards the Firth of Forth where his ships passed continuously.

After Sir George Bruce's death in 1625, his son George inherited the major part of his father's estate and may have lived at the Palace. His eldest son Edward, 1st Earl of Kincardine, was probably born in the Palace about 1629. An ardent Royalist during the Civil War, Edward was ennobled in recognition of his loyal service by Charles I, just 13 months before the king's execution.



Edward's younger brother, Alexander Bruce, 2nd Earl of Kincardine, was also a Royalist and was exiled to Holland during the Commonwealth, where he married a Dutch heiress in 1659. He returned to Britain in 1660, probably with the Restoration of Charles II, by whom Alexander was held in great esteem as a trustworthy advisor. He held many government offices, including Scottish Privy Councillor and from 1662 to 1674 he was a close advisor to the Duke of Lauderdale, who as Commissioner for the King was virtual ruler of Scotland at the time. Alexander Bruce was eventually forced into political retirement after opposing the severity of Lauderdale's persecution of Presbyterians, and from then on spent more time at Culross.

Alexander and his family lived in the Palace from time to time, but moved to the more spacious Culross Abbey House around 1670. An entrepreneur in the family tradition, Alexander tried unsuccessfully to sell Culross stone to Sir Christopher Wren for rebuilding St Paul's Cathedral. He died in 1680 in financial difficulties.

His only surviving son, Alexander, inherited his father's debts, and was unable to reverse the family's declining fortunes. He became blind and died, unmarried, in 1705, at the age of 39. The estates, including the Palace which probably served as the business centre, were disposed of in a judicial sale. They were bought by Colonel John Erskine of Carnock, whose mother was the granddaughter of Sir George Bruce.

John, a man of unbending presbyterian principles throughout his life, studied law at Leiden University in Holland in the 1680s, and seems to have joined the service of William of Orange and returned to London with him at the 'Glorious Revolution' of 1688. He was made lieutenant-general of Stirling Castle about 1690.

There is a tradition that, for a period, the swarthy Colonel John Erskine of Carnock lived in the West Building of the Palace while his second cousin, the fair-skinned Colonel John Erskine of Alva, occupied the North Building. The two were nicknamed the 'Black Colonel' and the 'White Colonel', and the house was known as The Colonel's Close from this time until the mid-nineteenth century.

John Erskine of Carnock was MP for Culross at the Scottish parliament from 1702 to 1707, and at Westminster after the Union. He was elected a merchant councillor on Culross Burgh Council in 1704. The 'Black Colonel' wasted much of his wealth on lawsuits, one of which occupied 33 years of his life and was not settled when he died in 1743.

In 1752 the Palace was purchased by Robert Halkerstone, the burgh's town clerk, one of whose daughters lived there after his death until she in turn died, at the age of 86, in 1840. The house then passed to a kinsman of her father, Captain James Ker. He never lived in the property but let it out to separate families. At the time of the census in 1851, 16 people, including



a bachelor weaver, a carter and labourer and their families, were all living in the oldest part of the Palace. The 1611 block was sometimes used for Masonic and other convivial gatherings. It was at this time that Captain Ker misread the title deeds of the building, which in this way acquired its incorrect title of 'Palace'.

In 1853, after the death of Captain Ker, the Palace was sold for £140 to Alexander Luke, a prosperous carrier who already owned Bessie Bar Hall. From 1855, there is no evidence of anyone living in the buildings;

a visitor recorded that some of the rooms were used for lumber storage. Under the ownership of Miss Mary Luke, who inherited the Palace in 1877, the buildings fell into neglect, and in the early twentieth century it was recorded that the doors were off their hinges and windows broken; children played games in the rooms and housewives used the yard as a drying green.

The Earl of Dundonald bought the Palace in 1921 – probably for sentimental reasons, since he was descended from the original Sir George Bruce. However, he never took up residence and, in 1932, sold it to the National Trust for Scotland. It was given over to the state for safekeeping until 1991, when it was handed back to the Trust's care as the climax of its Diamond Jubilee celebrations.

The complex of buildings with ornate dormer windows, crow-stepped gables and pantiled roofs, creates a strong impression of the seventeenth century. The house was built from local sandstone, and the walls were harled to protect the stonework from harsh weather. The rooms have been presented in two different styles; broadly that of the seventeenth century for those rooms still retaining the character of that period, and that of the early Georgian period for the rooms that were panelled in the 1740s.



The flight of stone steps leading to the entrance of the West Building

Tour of the Palace

From the reception area, climb the forestair to the Hall.

The Hall

The Hall and the adjacent Withdrawing Room were originally one room known as the Gallery. Its present form dates from George II's reign. The plain vaulted ceiling, although much renewed and repaired, follows the early seventeenth-century design. Over the fireplace hangs a primitive seascape of seventeenth-century date which came from Cammo House, near Edinburgh.

The refectory table is early seventeenth century but the top is later. The court cupboard, for the display of cups and plates, is also early seventeenth century, as are the pair of leather-covered armchairs. The remaining furniture dates from the late seventeenth century. The brass alms dishes are of the same period and the two pewter tappit hens and chamber pot are eighteenth century.

The Withdrawing Room or Parlour

Formed out of the south end of the Gallery, the room was panelled in the early eighteenth century and the marbled decoration is original. The built-in buffet is a rare survival and was for the display of porcelain and delftware.

The portraits are as follows: to the right of the fireplace, The Hon John Erskine, in classical costume (Scottish, c1700). Above the dresser, John Erskine of Carnock, the 'Black Colonel' (Scottish School c1680) and, to the left of the fireplace, his wife Liliastirling (in the style of William Aikman, 1682-1731).

The walnut cabinet-on-stand dates from the reign of William and Mary. The fall front opens to reveal a secretaire with drawers and a central cupboard. The oak dresser is earlier but much restored. The dining chairs are early eighteenth century; they retain the turned stretchers of the seventeenth century but sport plain black splats reminiscent of the Queen Anne style.



The gateleg table dates from the same period; the oak bureau and the side table date from about 1760. The upholstered armchairs are French, early eighteenth century. The brass candlesticks are Norwegian and the pewter ones Dutch. The delftware which hangs on the walls is eighteenth-century Dutch. In the buffet are displayed some English delftware plates and miscellaneous collection of late eighteenth-century English teaware – mainly associated with New Hall and other Staffordshire potteries.

The Hall

The Bedchamber for the Principal Stranger

In houses of any consequence a room was always set aside for accommodation of the most important guest. Travelling in the days before railways was a slow, arduous business and guests would certainly be expected to stay for several days. In this room, there is an independent entrance behind the curtains.



Bedchamber for the Principal Stranger

At each end of the room some of the late sixteenth-century painted decoration has survived. The stonework and roofing tiles had been exposed for many years until 1994, when the room was relined to simulate what is thought was its original appearance.

The four-post bed on loan from the National Museums of Scotland is a composite piece but dates mostly from the early seventeenth century. The crewelwork bedspread is early eighteenth century. The remaining furniture is seventeenth century.

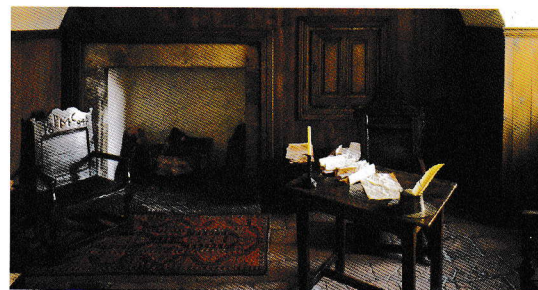
The Laird's Room and Strongroom

With the stone-vaulted strongroom leading off, this room was undoubtedly the private apartment occupied by the laird. The early Georgian panelling with its painted marbled decoration replaces a late sixteenth-century scheme, vestiges of which can be seen to the left of the bed. Beneath the plaster ceiling a sixteenth-century tempera painted ceiling survives, part of which was formerly on view to visitors. Because of the later more complete decoration, it was decided to close this off, to

allow the room to be displayed and furnished sympathetically.

It was quite usual in the past for sitting rooms and parlours to contain a bed, the use of rooms being much less clearly defined than today. This was a room to live, eat and sleep in at will. With the exception of the corner chairs and the livery cupboard in the recess, which are late eighteenth century, the furniture dates from the reign of George II.

The adjoining strongroom has been furnished as the laird's inner sanctum. At a time when the tenure of land depended on the evidence of documents it was essential that these were stored in an impregnable and fireproof place. The woodwork and cupboards were reinstated in 1994. The furniture includes seventeenth-century pieces, notably the small chest of drawers on the left and the armchairs each side of the fireplace: that on the right is Scottish and that on the left English.



The Strongroom



The Laird's Room

The Painted Chamber

The splendid painted decoration of this room is original, and probably dates from the early seventeenth century, following the building of the Palace in 1597. Wall coverings were expensive, and painted wood panelling provided a less costly method of decoration. The wooden ceiling

is decorated with 16 allegorical paintings, similar to engravings of the Flemish School of the sixteenth century. Near the top of each is a moral maxim in Latin and below a rhyming couplet. Full details are given on an information sheet in the room.

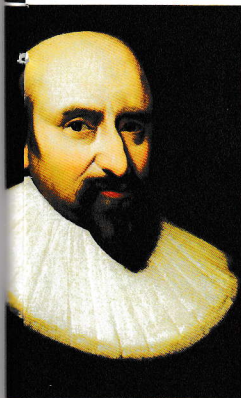
The original use of the room is not clear but undoubtedly it would have been a haven from the hurly-burly of the

household and treated in much the same way as the long gallery in a great house, for the display of fine furniture and pictures. The large carved cupboard at the end of the room is late seventeenth-century Dutch and, opposite the windows, the important English chest showing Dutch influence dates from the 1640s.

The portrait over the fireplace of Sir George Bruce is attributed to George Jamesone.

The walnut armchair to the left of the fireplace is a rare early seventeenth-century example; that to the right is Charles II period. The remaining furniture dates from the second half of the seventeenth century.

Go down the turnpike stair to continue the tour in the Garden Room.

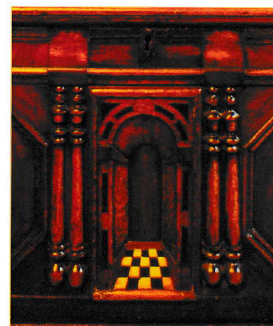


The Garden Room

There is no evidence to support the actual use of this pine-panelled room at the rear of the property. Both the panelling and the basket-top chimneypiece date from the second quarter of the eighteenth century. The hob grate, supplied by the Carron company, dates from the 1780s.

The windows have shutters but there were no curtains – privacy and warmth were provided by the four-post bed with its suite of curtains all around. The crewelwork is a modern copy of what was being produced in the early eighteenth century.

The closet would have been used to store clothes and in addition would have housed the close-stool (commode). The bed is late eighteenth century and the remaining pieces date from the reign of George II.



Detail of panelling on the English chest in the Painted Chamber



Covered seat made by the Head Gardener

The garden to the rear of the Palace is a re-creation, incorporating features that would have been found in a garden of the early seventeenth century. Many paintings of this period that include views of gardens give clues about their design and content. These sources are mostly from continental Europe, but given the close trading links that Culross enjoyed with the Continent it is likely that similar horticultural practices prevailed here.

Although few records exist of what Culross Palace garden contained, by carefully analysing its context and setting, together with available literature and illustrations of the period, it is possible to compose a design of a Palace garden and the features it may have contained in the early part of the seventeenth century.

Culross has a long horticultural heritage dating back to when the monks founded the Cistercian Abbey here in 1217. In 1503 it was recorded that Dene Matho Tachet of Culross Abbey sold 15 'plowm' trees, perhaps bullaces, to the treasurer of James IV. This type of cultivation was possibly continued by the Palace after the dissolution of the Abbey during the Reformation. It was certainly continued in Abbey House, as evidenced in the engraving by Slezer (1693) of its extensive gardens. But the earliest records of the gardens at Culross Palace are to be found in a book by David Macgibbon and Thomas Ross, *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (1887), which describes the Palace in great detail but only says of the garden that it 'forms a sort of hanging garden with several terraces commanding a fine view of the Firth of Forth and the country beyond'.

A H Millar, in his *Fife: Pictorial and Historical* (1895) shows the front courtyard but makes no mention of the rear garden. The first edition of the Ordnance Survey map in 1861 shows very little detail of the garden other than the outline of the walls, paths and a building situated to the rear of the main garden area.

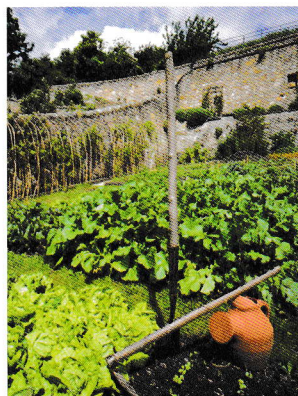
In 1933, a year after the Palace was bought by the Trust and placed in the care of the Ministry of Works (now Historic Scotland), the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland described the Palace in great detail but not its garden. In his book *Scotland Under Trust* (1939), Robert Hurd described the Palace garden in some detail:

'The other main feature of the Palace is the garden lying between the house and the cliff at the back. Some years ago this slope was a wilderness of vegetables with only faint reminders of its original character as a most unusual terrace garden. Now, since the Office of Works has taken it in hand, the vegetable patch has given place to a veritable pleasance, sheltered and sunny, and full of flowers and fruit trees, set off by smooth lawns in the foreground. The retaining wall carries a terraced walk containing three recesses for busts, and gives the upper part of the garden a pleasant if somewhat naive architectural character.'

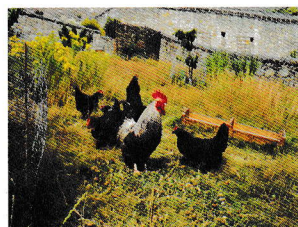
In November 1991 the Trust took back full responsibility of Culross Palace from Historic Scotland and began a major programme of refurbishment of both the Palace and the garden, to more closely represent its appearance in the early seventeenth century. The Palace was never a royal residence but the home of a wealthy merchant, so the garden has been re-created accordingly.

This was a period of political stability and prosperity, following the Union of the Crowns (1603) and the generation of wealth created by increasing trade and expanding industry. More people could afford to maintain a well-stocked garden and gardens became an immense status symbol. Their high walls provided privacy and security and gave the impression of a safe haven from the wild and untamed countryside and also from the squalor of urban life. Here, the privileged could enjoy quiet contemplation, meditation and recreation. Gardens of the wealthy, although still practising the utilitarian domestic cultivation of plants, also included areas for pleasure. The style of pleasure gardens began to change as the new Renaissance took hold around Europe.

The Palace garden at Culross reflects this: it allows for recreation and relaxation but also supplies a large domestic dwelling with fresh culinary produce, cut flowers and plants for medicinal use. Sir George Bruce was widely travelled and well educated and his garden would have incorporated contemporary innovations in garden design and exotic plants for food, healing and ornament to impress his visitors.



The vegetable garden



Scots Dumpies



Borage flowers

The covered walkway, arbours, exedra, flowery mead and formal beds full of plants with a specific purpose, as well as plants grown for their scent, were common features of contemporary garden design. The basic layout retains the essential components of a period garden, with its enclosing walls and rectangular raised beds – an orderly formality that signified the taming of nature.

Sections of the garden are partitioned with hand-made rustic fencing such as willow or hazel wattle fencing, adding to the period effect. The paths were constructed using crushed cockle and mussel shells, all of which would have been locally available. The narrow terrace at the top of the garden has berry fruit growing against the walls and three herb benches. This area would have provided a lookout platform for Sir George, where he could survey the activity in the burgh and harbour below and the traffic of merchant ships up and down the Forth.

The growth of global exploration meant that new plants were constantly arriving in Britain in the early seventeenth century. We know the range of plants that would have been available from John Gerard's *Herball*, first compiled in 1597, and from a detailed inventory of plants grown by Charles L'Ecluse (Clusius) at Leiden in 1594.

The National Trust for Scotland began the first phase of re-creation in the spring of 1993 with the removal of all the modern plants. The turf was removed in the main part of the garden to create the raised beds with intersecting paths. Here a representative selection of period vegetables are grown, such as skirret (similar to parsnip), scorzonera, salsify, alexanders (a celery-like vegetable), Good King Henry (similar to spinach) and other crops which are no longer common.

In the orchard you can see unusual fruit trees such as mulberry, quince, medlar, fig and a collection of period apple varieties. Peach, apricot, pear, cherry and vines are also grown against walls elsewhere in the garden. Although it is not now possible to procure the precise varieties of fruit and vegetable grown during the early seventeenth century, the aim is to most closely represent types that might have been available then.

As well as period fruit and vegetables, the garden contains a wide variety of herbs and other plants that might have been used in the house at this time. Aromatic plants would have been made into posies, nosegays and pot-pourri to ameliorate the general household stench. Plants such as sweet woodruff and meadowsweet were also grown for strewing on the floor inside the house.

The garden would have been well stocked with medicinal herbs to treat everyday ailments – a luxury available only to the wealthy. Common plant remedies were dandelion, a diuretic, and chickweed, used in making poultices – so the medieval garden would have looked rather 'weedy'. Others, such as elderberry, rowan and mugwort, were hung in the house to ward off evil spirits, while some were grown for making soaps, dyes and cosmetics, or used in brewing or wine making – an important function as water was too impure to drink.

Livestock – hens and probably a pig or two confined to a corner – fed with scraps from the kitchen, would have been an important part of the medieval garden. The chickens at Culross are Scots Dumpies who roam in and out of the orchard, fed on morsels from the tearoom: in return they produce eggs. The Dumpy is one of the original types of Scottish domestic fowl, renowned for their hardiness and versatility, and were brought here, it is thought, by the Romans.

The garden continues to be developed; a recent addition, the Mary Luke Garden was completed in 2008 and can be found on the top terrace. Here, two



Raised bed illustrated in a sixteenth-century woodcut

hand-made arbours are separated by a lawn full of wild flowers, known as a flowery mead. Along with fantastic views, this intimate pleasure garden has its own exedra and plants of the period. In future developments we hope to show more features associated with gardens of this period.



The North Building

The North Building was probably used for entertaining and convivial gatherings, up to the mid-nineteenth century.

During recent years, Historic Scotland conservation staff have been engaged on a comprehensive programme to clean, consolidate, repair and retouch the tempera-painted boards which adorn the interior rooms. Although fragmentary, the original boards clearly illustrate the complex decorative scheme used on the barrel ceilings of the upper rooms and in the beam and board decoration in the lower rooms. A similarly decorated beam and board ceiling may be seen in the Town House nearby. Such decoration was typical in Scandinavia and the Low Countries, which had extensive trade with Scotland in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

When these painted boards were first restored in the 1930s, the conservators used a mixture of wood-flour and resin as a filler and as a consolidant to repair the broken and missing areas of the boards – unfortunately, it is these fillings which have shrunk, become loose and now require to be replaced with balsa-wood.

The fragile nature of the ancient timber and the painted decoration demands a constant programme of surveillance to ensure that these unique examples of Scottish Renaissance interior decoration will be enjoyed by future generations of visitors and – perhaps equally important – preserved as a source of academic or historical research.

On leaving the North Building turn right to the bakehouse.

The Bakehouse

The large flat stones outside the entrance to the bakehouse cover wells that would have supplied the Palace with hot water. As a well-to-do establishment, the Palace had its own bakehouse: the beehive bread oven still survives, although in a rather mutilated condition. The oven is to the left of the fireplace. It would have been heated initially by a fire of furze (gorse or whin) and faggots (bundles of sticks), then kept hot by transferring coals from the fire to the left of the bread oven. The remains of the bakehouse chimneys, now covered with aluminium caps, can be seen outside the garden room. The size of the bakehouse suggests that it supplied more than the inhabitants of the Palace: perhaps bread and bannocks were sold to Sir George's workforce.

The Kitchen

The vaulted kitchen retains its great open fireplace. The unique open stone watercourse to the left of the chimney corner, which continues through the wall into the bakehouse, was supplied by hand from the well outside. The domestic utensils of brass and iron are mostly eighteenth century. The wine cellar on the left has been suitably equipped.

Next door to the kitchen is the storeroom, where bread would have been kept, along with barrels of barley, herring, meal, cheeses and dried fruit. Also kept here was the pewter in daily use.



The exedra – an outdoor bench with a high back, sometimes used to screen one area from another

A ceiling panel in the North Building (photograph courtesy of Historic Scotland)





CULROSS

Culross Trail

The trail begins at the car park at the west end of the town. Houses restored by the Trust are identified by circular wall plaques.



1 The Palace

See pages 5-11.

2 Bessie Bar Hall

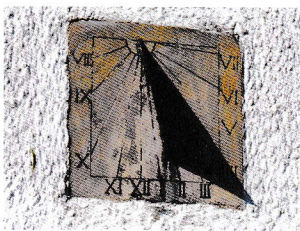
At West Green, 100 yards to your left, is a building with a forestair and gable-end to the road. This is Bessie Bar Hall. Bessie, who it is thought was Sir George Bruce's sister or niece, was a maltstress in the late sixteenth/early seventeenth century, and the hall was her malt house. Adjacent, behind a wooden door, is the Bessie Bar Well, dug at the instance of the town council in 1598 to provide water for the town.

On your right is a building dated 1796, with an arch leading into a courtyard. These two houses were restored and presented to the Trust in 1962 as a contribution to World Refugee Year.



3 The Sundial in the Sandhaven

East of the Palace is an open space, the Sandhaven. A wall-mounted sundial on the second block of restored houses on your left is typical of the individual detail on Culross buildings. These houses were the merchants' store sheds and living quarters: situated on the edge of the harbour, their style of architecture reflects a strong Dutch influence.



4 The Gallery and Pottery

Beyond it is the Gallery and Pottery, one of many private restorations. The Tron itself is on your right; its stone platform supported the weighing beam which served the burgh's trade. As only Royal Burghs could trade overseas, the Tron was used by Customs Officials to weigh the cargoes being exported to assess the amount of export tax to be levied on the merchants.

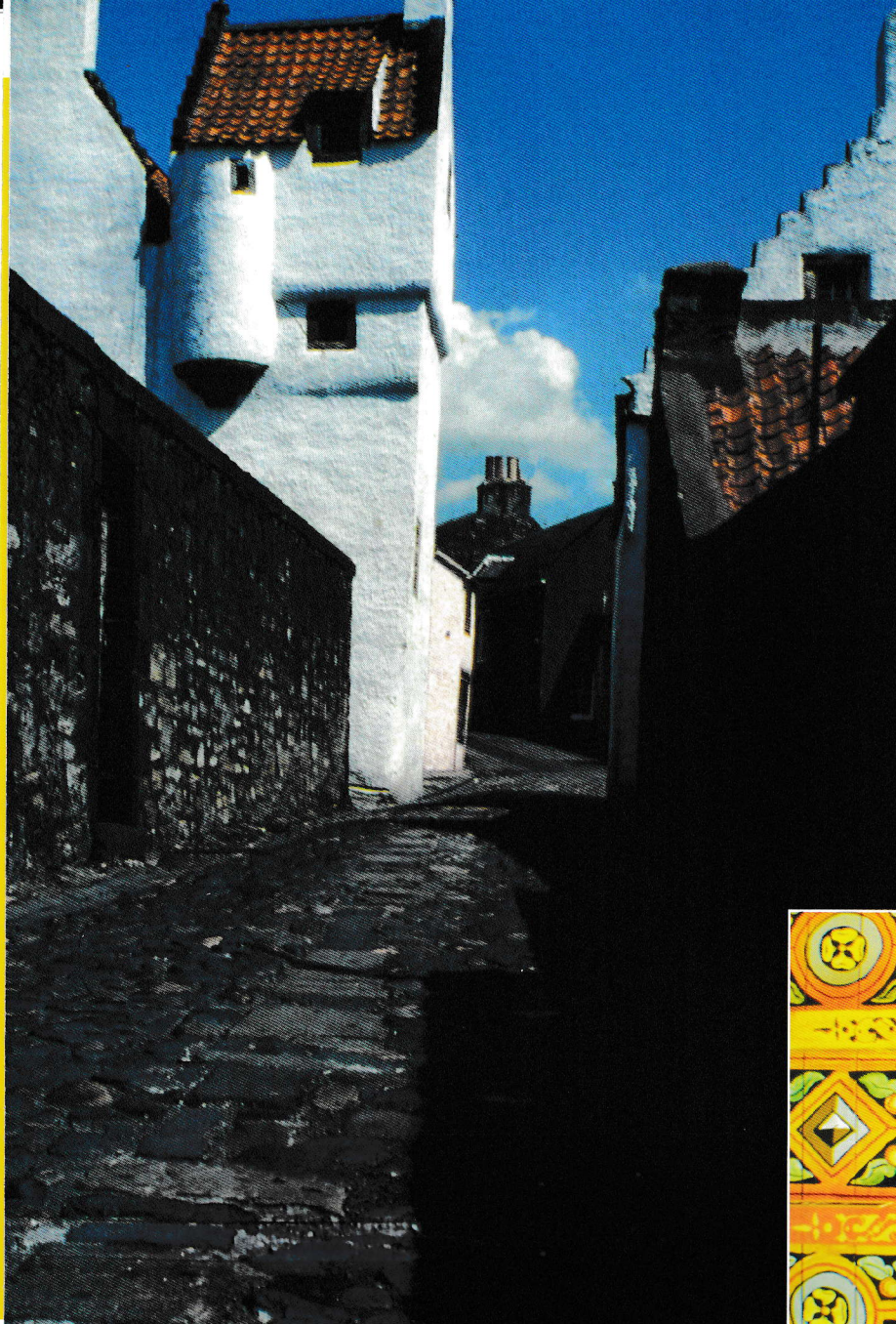


5 The Town House (National Trust for Scotland)

The Town House, which dominates the Sandhaven, was built in 1626: its clock-tower and new frontage were added in 1783. Until local government reorganisation in 1975, the town council used to meet here. The ground floor was used for many years as a tollbooth or prison for debtors. 'Witches' were imprisoned in the attic.

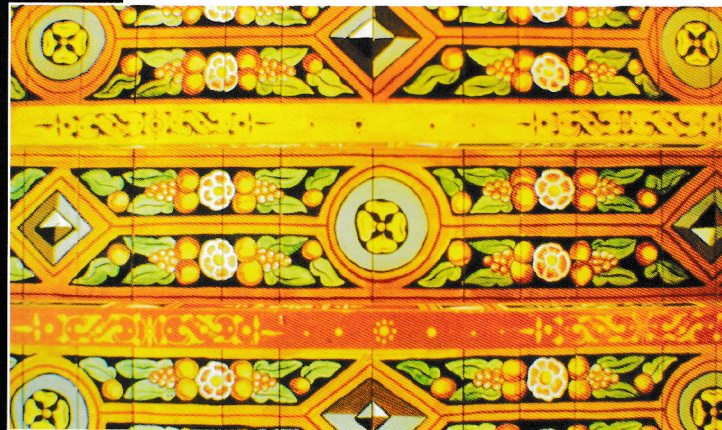
Turn left into Back Causeway.





6 The Study (National Trust for Scotland)

Ahead you will see the Study, a merchant's house built c 1610, the grandest house in Culross after the Palace. To the right of its gable, crow-stepped like so many others, is the corbelled Outlook Tower (that is, projecting beyond the face of the wall). The building takes its name from the tradition that it was used in the late seventeenth century as a study by Bishop Leighton of Dunblane on his occasional diocesan visits to Culross. The Outlook Tower, his study room, gives splendid views over the Forth.



7 The Haggs or Stinking Wynd

On the left before you reach the Study is the new housing development, McDonald's Lands, built by the then Scottish Special Housing Association in a style to accord with its surroundings. Immediately below the Outlook Tower on the left, a pathway known as The Haggs or Stinking Wynd leads uphill. Like other Culross cobbled ways, its centre is several inches higher than its edges; this was the 'crown o' the causie' (causeway) where the local worthies walked – poorer folk gave way in the gutters.



8 The Oldest House

In the centre of this picture is the house traditionally known as the oldest house in Culross. On its gable, facing the Square and the Mercat Cross, is the date 1577. It is possible, however, that the datestone comes from another building.



9 The Mercat Cross

The Cross itself dates from 1588, but only the base is original; the shaft was replaced in 1902.



10 The Greek Inscription

As you begin to climb Tanhouse Brae, on your left is a house with a Greek inscription over the window. Translated, it reads 'God provides and will provide' and was the home of a sea-captain with a taste for the classics.

11 The Butcher's House

The occupant of the next house on the left was more down-to-earth. A cleaver and steel denote his trade of butcher, and alongside are the initials IS/IL and the date 1664.



12 The Lockit (Locked) Well

Past the high wall on the left is Erskine Brae where, set in the wall, is the disused Lockit Well. This very deep well is thought to have been used by the followers of St Serf. In former times it was activated by a pump handle, and the water emerged from a pipe below.



16 The House with the Evil Eyes

Continue uphill, passing the Abbey, to the House with the Evil Eyes, so called because of the shape of the windows in its Dutch gable.



17 The Abbey

On your left as you retrace your steps is the entrance to the Abbey, founded for the Cistercians by Malcolm, Earl of Fife, 1217.



18 The Churchyard

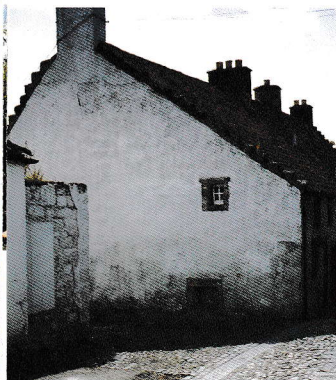
In the churchyard are many tombstones bearing the trademarks of the butchers, bakers, weavers and girdlesmiths of the old town.



19 The Church

The church itself was restored in 1633: its south wall, between the tower and the seventeenth-century manse, is the original wall of the western portion of the Abbey, the Lay Brothers' Choir. The Bruce Vault, off the north transept, has a fine alabaster monument with effigies of Sir George, his wife and their eight children. Outside are the ruins of the monastery, in the care of Historic Scotland.

Below the ruins, turn left and follow the grass path down the hill to the main road and walk east.



24 Bishop Leighton's House

On the left is the house where Bishop Leighton lodged during troubled religious times (see note on the Study, page 18).

Turn right into the main road.

25 The Electricity Substation

On the corner is a typical small Culross house. It contains, however, an electricity substation – a gesture by the then South of Scotland Electricity Board towards preserving the character of the little town.

26 The Green

As you make your way back to the car park you will pass the Green. This is reclaimed land, for long ago the tide reached what is now the line of the road. Beyond, you will see evidence of more recent reclamation.



27 The Boathouse

Adjacent to the car park is a large vaulted building of the early nineteenth century. Originally this was the boathouse of Balgownie House across the road.

There is change all around, but the historic heart of the little town remains much as it was 400 years ago – and still beats strongly.