
Doocots in the Falkirk District

Geoff B. Bailey

Man's domestication of the pigeon is of considerable antiquity and extends well back beyond written records. The Egyptians built great square towers, which narrowed as they went up, of mud brick with old, cracked water jars for nests. Towards the top they had protruding branches placed into the structure to provide perches. These purpose-built structures first enter the written record in the Fifth Dynasty, c3000 BC (Darwin). Rock pigeons are often mentioned in the Old Testament in a domesticated setting. Isaiah chapter LX verse 8 is perhaps the earliest reference: "*Who are these that fly as a cloud and as the doves to their windows*".



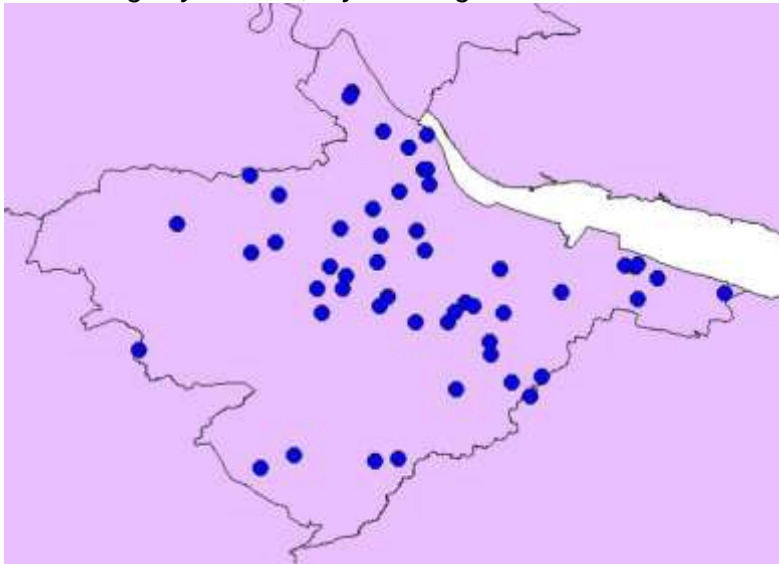
The Romans, as always, made a practical proposition out of the keeping of birds and a number of very informative books were published by them upon the subject. Varro, in the third book of "*De Re Rustica*" published in 37BC, devoted much space to the raising of large numbers of birds and fish in specially constructed aviaries and fishponds. Chapters 23-31 give a comprehensive guide to the organisation of aviaries, which begins as follows: "*aviaries must be built along the far walls of the yard, because the droppings of birds are of the utmost importance for cultivation*". He also mentions five other requirements for the keeping of birds in man-made structures. These are shelter, ventilation, ease of access, protection from vermin and the provision of nesting facilities. These should therefore be found in all such structures from the Roman period to the present. The Romans became very proficient at providing them and kept pigeons in a *columbarium* or *peristeron*, which held as many as 5,000 birds. It is possible that it was the Romans who introduced the *columbaria* to Britain for a number of excavated buildings have been tentatively identified as such (Chambers).

Illus: The picturesque Doocot at South Bantaskine painted by Georgina Wade Wilson.

In England the pigeon-house became known as a dovecote, often spelled "dovecoat" in older documents, which became "doocot" in Scotland. No doocots are mentioned in the Domesday Book. The oldest surviving structure built solely as a doocot is at Garway, Hertfordshire. On the tympanum of the entrance it bears the inscription: "*In the year 1326, this dovecote was built by Brother Richard*". As the building belongs to the Knights Hospitallers it may suggest that it resulted from continental influence. When doocots first came to Scotland is unknown. They were certainly present by the thirteenth century. Their early distribution reflected not only the centres of the richer arable lands, but also the feudal make up of the society. In the fifteenth century the doocot was considered the legal right of only abbeys, castles and baronies.

In 1503 James IV directed all lords and lairds to make deer parks, fishponds, rabbit warrens and doocots for the benefit of the community (sic). It is therefore not surprising to see them mentioned in a long list of items confirmed by James V upon Lord Alexander Livingstone in 1600. The burgh of Falkirk was thus gifted:

"in free blanch, fee and heritage, with free barony, free burgh in barony, free forestry, and free regality for ever, by all its rightful meiths and marches, lying, from ancient times, as said



is, in length and breadth, with houses, buildings, woods, plain s, muirs, marshes, ways, paths, waters, pools, rivers, meadows, grazings, pastures, mills, multures, and their sequels; hunting, hawking, and fishing» peats, turf, coals, coal-heughs cunnings, and cunningairees, doves and dovecots, smiddies and malt-kilns, breweries, whin and broom, woods, groves, sprigs, faggots, rafters, gravel, stone and lime..."

Quite a long list!

Illus: The distribution of doocots in the Falkirk area is related to the better agricultural land.

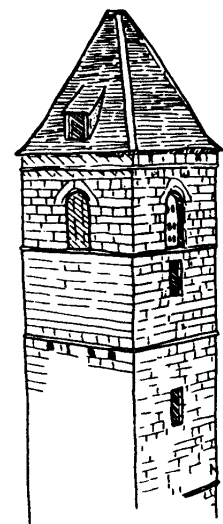
It was in the fifteenth century that the second floor of the tower of Inchcolm Abbey was converted to house pigeons. At a slightly later date the towers of parish churches were also often utilised, the birds being the property of the minister. This was not always appreciated by the congregation who were often seated under this part of the church and so had a more intimate contact with them during the long sermons. Until recently doos were still kept in the tower of the old parish church at [Airth](#), the upper storey windows being filled with wooden shutters and six entrances cut in the south window for the birds. An estimate of work by James Hardie for [Falkirk Parish Church](#) shows that a similar arrangement pertained there –

"Laurieston 4th Sept 1830. To make the Falkirk Church stiple watter tight in the places where I mentioned as being out of repair To fill the window on the south west side with wood barges and frame the breadth and thickness the same as the old one and put two new barges in the one on the north east side and repair the slates above the pigeon holes will require the sum of ten pounds Sterling."

(Falkirk Archives a717.08).

For the gentry and clergy there were many sound reasons for keeping birds. Eggs and young pigeons (peesers) as well as the adult birds provided an extra source of protein, particularly welcome in the winter months when most other forms had been dried, smoked or salted to preserve them. The droppings were not simply a nuisance, they could be used as fertiliser, for tanning leather, or as an ingredient in lye for washing clothes amongst other processes.

The value of pigeons as food was sufficient that on 27 August 1686 William Lang, carrier, transported 50 pairs of pigeons and a basket of fruit from [Kinneil](#) to Hamilton for the Duke of Hamilton; and on 10 September that year a further 25 pairs of pigeons and a basket of fruit.



Airth Tower

(The pigeons would all have been dead, as on 9 October he took 30 pairs of pigeons and 'some quick' i.e. live, pigeons.). Their monetary value was quite high and in 1698 the Hamilton estate "Received from Anthony Elye for Pidgeons sold be him out of the Doucat of Kinnell Spring & Autumn 98 70.18.6" (Hamilton Library 201169/10). An assessment of Carronhall estate in 1751 also demonstrates the commercial value of doocots: "a very large pigeon house which used to be farmed at £3 Str a year." (GD65/200). This may be compared with the £1.4s paid for 16 pairs of pigeons from Newton on 9 April 1753 (CS96/1410).

Throughout the 1820s the estate factor at [Callendar House](#) sent pigeons to Mrs Forbes and her young family as they moved around central Scotland (Forbes Papers 1155/14, 1172/1), noting in March 1825 that "the Pigeons is rather young for Killing but will do by the end of next week" (Forbes Papers 1146/15)

The doocot was a particularly useful source of food during sieges. Furthermore, it was discovered that pigeon dung, being rich in potassium nitrate, could be mixed with black earth and sulphur to produce a form of gunpowder. Trained birds also carried messages.

These benefits were jealously guarded; early legislation encouraged the construction of doocots and offered them protection. In 1424 it was decreed that "destroyers of pigeonhouses" were to be punished as severely as "stealers of green wood by night" or "peelers of bark to the destruction of trees", and the penalty was a fine paid to the king. In 1503 the parents of children who broke into doocots were made responsible with a fine of two thirds of a pound. Not that the children escaped, but they were merely flogged. By 1567 shooting at the laird's pigeons was punishable by forty days in prison, and a second offence might mean the loss of the right hand. Under James VI these penalties became eight days in the stocks or a ten pound fine for a first offence; forty pounds for a third offence which was paid on pain of death.

Penalties were not always so severe, as is shown by this local example from 8 January 1695 taken from the Falkirk Barony Court Book:

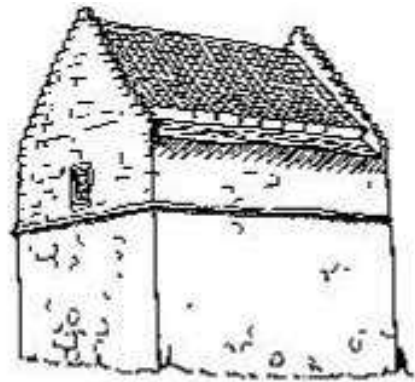
"Anent ye complent given in be ye fiscall qra John Rae sone to John Rea mert. In ff for killing and shutting of doves contrair to the acts of Parliat. And Sevl. Acts of court. The fiscall pst and the def.er not compeiring, Is holden as confest And fyned conform to the act of Paliat. And ordains the officers to Imprisonne him qll payt. And to take his gun from him And Discharges his father to Intertain him nether in meat nor drink in tyme coming oyr wayes to be lyable for his fault and Discharges him and all oyr persones to carry guns urtout the Mr of same ---- his consent. Under ye pains cont. in the Lawes and Acts of parliat. By and attour imprisonment" (Volume 4, 55).

Poaching became more common as time went on. Local landowners banded together and subscribed to societies for the protection of their stock and their rights. The "Affiliation for Preserving Pigeons" was one that operated in this area in the first quarter of the 19th century. It pressed for the prosecution of anyone found taking the birds without permission. John Ogilvie of [Carron House](#) was one of the leading promoters of that society and on 29 March 1812 he wrote to Graham of Airth:

"As I understand the late mischievous practice of shooting & killing pigeons is again generally resorted to, I beg leave to send enclosed 2 advertisements of the afelliation for preserving pigeons some years ago - which I would request of you to order one of them to be put on the church gate on Sunday - and the other at the miln of Airth, - or public smithy & c - as I have directed here for Bothkennar Kirk & smithys - and Lady Eleanor Dundas has done the same over the Carronhall estates. You will observe that your worthy mother subscribed the first association, which was afterwards joined by several other proprietors of pigeon houses (some of them since dead) and prosecutions for examples was at the time made by Mrs Higgins, who I presume will approve of the present measure..." (NLS 10877/112).

Less specific, but still involving pigeons, was the Society for the Protection of Property in the Eastern District of Stirlingshire. In 1854 it offered a whopping three guineas reward for information concerning the steeling of pigeons from the doocot at Newton Place, [Bothkennar](#), belonging to Mrs Campbell (Falkirk Herald 2 Feb 1854). It did not stop the pilfering and the Falkirk Herald contains many examples of this activity. On 13 April 1871, for example, it reported that Alex Rae, James Wotherspoon and William Waugh, all boys belonging to [Carronshore](#), were "*charged with the theft of three pairs of pigeons at Carronhall on Sunday last. They pled guilty, and after a suitable admonition the Sheriff sentenced the two former to pay a fine of 10s each, or suffer 10 days' imprisonment, and Waugh a fine of 5s, or the same number of days in prison. The fines were paid.*"

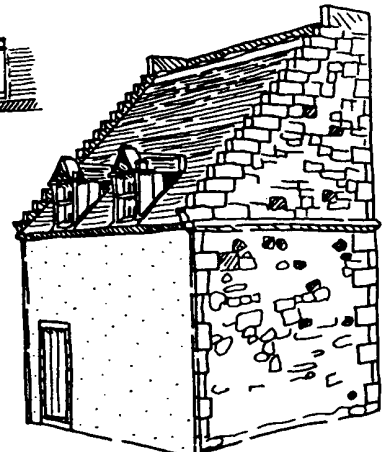
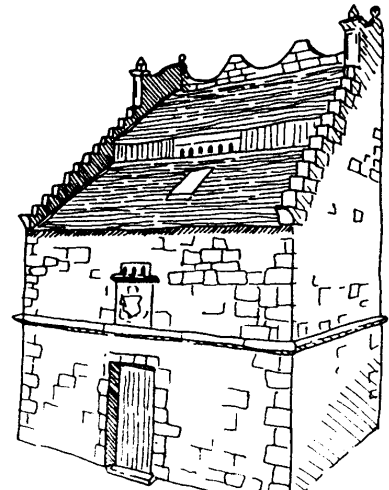
It is difficult to date the earlier doocots, though it appears that the first stone purpose-built structures were the late fifteenth and sixteenth century "beehive" type. This was evidently an old form, for Fordun, writing before 1385, described the Roman structure known as [Arthur's Oven](#) at Stenhousemuir as "*a small round chamber, like a pigeon house*". This shape may have developed from the practice of utilising circular turrets on the outer defences of castles as pigeon-houses. Mertoun House doocot in the Borders has the earliest datestone on a beehive doocot and reads 1576. No doocots of this form survive in the Falkirk District. One was demolished within living memory at [Dunmore Park](#) and the circular doocot shown on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map at South Bellsdyke may have been similar. A fine example may be seen as close as Linlithgow, near to the railway station. It has three string courses and an external diameter of 65 ft. It belonged to the Rosses of Hallhead, Renfrewshire.



Illus: Bonhard Doocot with coat-of-arms in the gable.

At 1591, the doocot at [Bonhard](#) is the earliest dated such structure in the Falkirk District. Its early date is reflected in its simple form, being constructed like a dwelling house with the pigeon holes set in the roof. It did, however, possess a string-course, which was a functional adaptation for a doocot. These projecting "rat-courses" were thought to deter vermin from climbing the walls, failing which they made a convenient perch for the birds.

Much more efficient than the beehive design, or the early rectangular buildings with pitched roofs rising to a central ridge, were the "lectern" doocots of the seventeenth century. The main characteristic of the lectern type is the monopitched roof, usually facing south and with crow-stepped gables on which the pigeons could perch and preen. The entrances to most doocots face towards the warm south but the high gable walls and the screening back wall of the lectern doocot provided extra shelter from the wind. Their interiors could be easily subdivided to create separate chambers, thus reducing the disturbance to the birds. This also meant that more nesting boxes could be provided, as did the rectangular shape. The lectern type is the most common form of doocot in Scotland and most of the rectangular plan doocots in the Falkirk area were probably of this form. At [Westquarter](#) the lectern doocot bears the date 1647 and is a finely decorated specimen. That at [Blackness Castle](#) may have been earlier but is now ruinous. Further



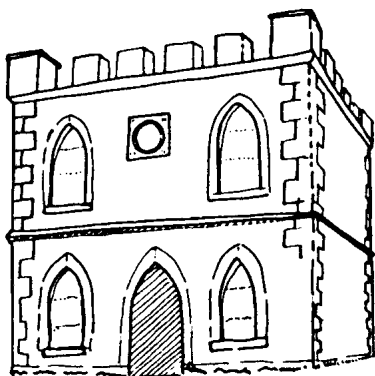
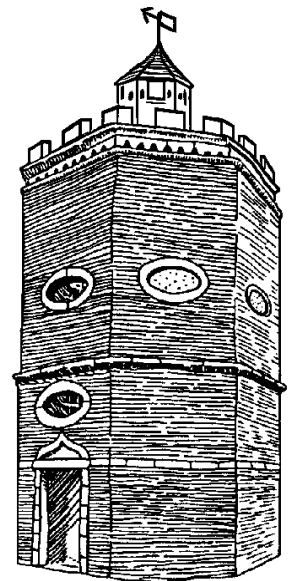
Muiravonside

examples can be seen at Kinningars and [Muiravonside](#), although the latter only dates to the mid-nineteenth century.

Dooocots became so popular that by 1617 the right of owning and maintaining one was limited by statute to lairds whose lands produced "*ten chalders of victual*" (about ten tons) annually. Only one doocot could be built for this measure, but there was no limit on size or location, except that it should be sited no more than two miles away from the owner's land. However, in 1682 it was judged that Durie of Grange, Burntisland, was not obliged to demolish his doocot even though he no longer owned the required land, but he was forced to close up the pigeon holes; a decision confirmed in 1741 in the Lords, where it was decided that Justices could not order the demolition of a doocot if the owner had been in possession of it for several years. By 1752 the allocation had been increased to one doocot for every ten chalders of produce.

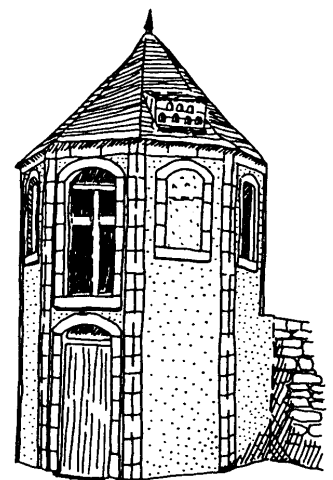
From the beginning of the eighteenth century the range and number of estates claiming the right to a doocot increased as the legislation was relaxed. With the Act of Union in 1707 there was increased stability in agrarian life in Scotland. By 1725 even William Young of Summerhouse in the [parish of Slamannan](#) and Regality of Callendar was able to dispoise to his heir of the same name the "*Cunnings Cunniggars doves dovecots hunting hauckings foulings gates and passadges parts pendicles and pertinents*" of his lands. The household accounts of 1775 give the value of "*2 pr pidgons*" at 11d (see Calatria 2). As the century progressed, the agricultural wealth rose, as did peoples' awareness of their surroundings. Estates were formally laid out and architects were employed to create new views across the landscape. The appearance of doocots was up-graded and an amazing variety of new forms created. The octagonal brick doocot at Carron House, built towards the end of the century, exemplified this move quite well. It stands in a carefully chosen location adjacent to the river and the red brick harmonises well with the cream-coloured sandstone.

Illus: Carron House Dooocot (roof reconstructed).

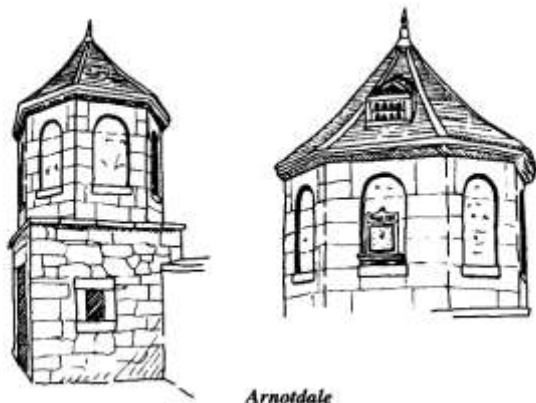


Illus: Parkhill Dooocot.

The early nineteenth century saw a revival of the Gothic taste with the introduction of ogee roofs, quatrefoil windows, arrow slits and crenellations. [Parkhill](#) doocot displays many of the characteristics of this period. It was constructed in 1814 for Robert Warden who carried out numerous other improvements to the estate, including the planting of most of the trees that now decorate the grounds. The doocot was situated at the end of a short avenue of trees aligned with the large apse at the rear of the House. Its doors and windows have pointed arches in the Gothic style, and its roofline is embellished with squat battlements that emphasise their architectural nature and lack of function. On the side of the doocot facing the house is a circular stone panel proclaiming the date and the initials of the builder with pride. Likewise, the [South Bantaskine](#) doocot had Gothic windows, but its octagonal body placed upon a rectangular base, was more suited to an ogee-shaped roof.



Camelon House

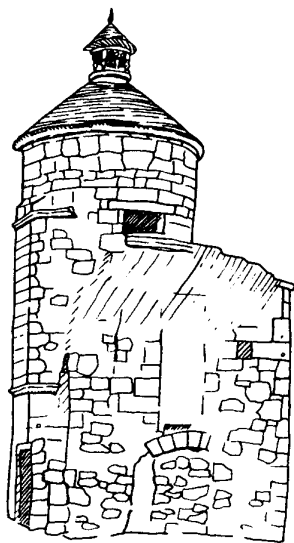


Arnotdale

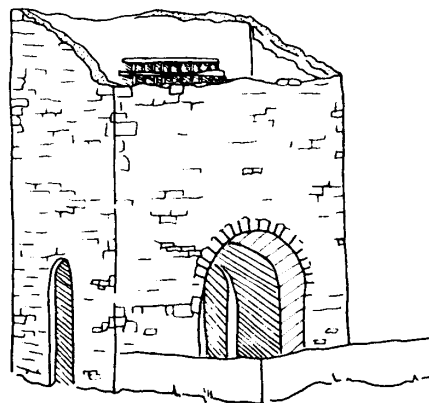
The doocot at [Arnotdale](#) was probably slightly later than that at South Bantaskine. It too possessed an octagonal body on a rectangular base, but here the windows have simple arches and the roofline is not as strong, reflecting the increasing influence of the Greek Revival style. Arnotdale was built in 1834. Not far away, another octagonal doocot was built at the [Mansion House, Camelon](#), with a dormer similar to that at Arnotdale. Here the windows had flatter arches and the roof only a simple pitch. The corner angles were of dressed sandstone, emphasised by harling in the backset walls between them. It

had separate entrances on the ground and first floor. In each of these last three examples the lower storey has been used for some other purpose. Amongst the uses to which such lower compartments were put are hen houses, wine cellars, potting sheds, donkey houses and icehouses.

In some cases existing buildings were adapted as pigeon houses. At [Dunipace](#) the old stairwell of a demolished house was re-roofed and given a circular Glover to provide access for birds. The doocot at Kinningars started life as an engine house for a steam-driven beam engine associated with the adjacent coal pit shaft and was only later converted into a standard lectern pigeon house.



Dunipace



Kinningars

The doocot at [Callendar House](#) was relocated in the mid 1820s. It had formerly stood close to the axial vista at the far side of a field on the opposite side of the main road from the house. Now it was integrated into an expanding stable complex which also included a milking house and factor's house. An account for the building of the doocot, dated December 1828, survives among the Forbes Papers (GD171/3098). It is here quoted in full:

"To Building Pigeon house per Offer	£155.-.-	
To Additional work on top Ditto	25.-.-	
		£180.-.-
To 145 1/2 Days work of Masons Building wall at Pigeon house and Building Conduits Causewaying hen Court and under Building walls in Woodyard and Building at Wighing Machine & ec at 2/8d per Day		19.8.-
To 18 1/4 Days of a labourer at Ditto @ 1/8d per Day		1.16.5
To 25 Carts of Ruble Stones to Ditto @ 1/ per Cart		1. 5.-

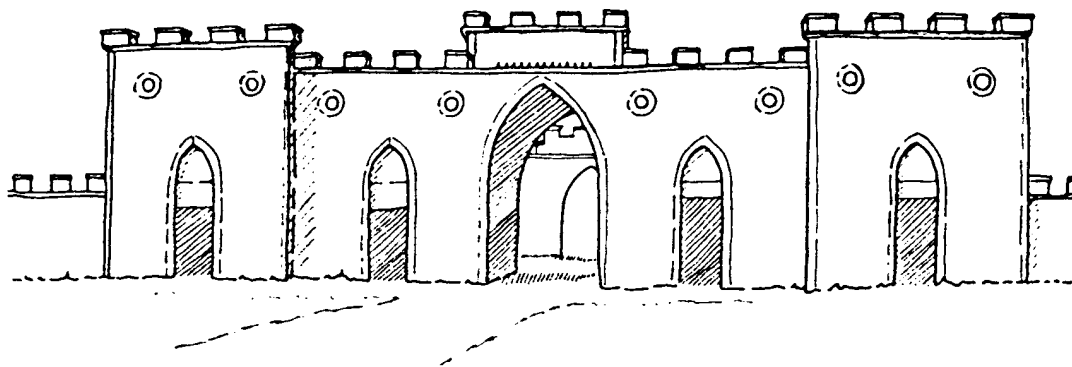
To Carriage of Ditto 25 Carts @ 1/6d per Cart	1.17.6
To 14 Carts of flags to Ditto @ 2/ per Cart	1. 8.-
To Carriage of Ditto 14 Carts at 1/6 per Cart	1. 1.-
To 7 Carts of Lime to Dittos @ 9/ per Cart	3. 3.-
To 10 yards of Cop to wall at Pigon house at 3/ per yard	1.10.-“

Its basement incorporated kennels. The setting has changed since it was constructed and a lower stables' courtyard was created to its south, further expanding the range of working buildings.

After the first decade of the nineteenth century most doocots were designed as an integral part of the farm and stable blocks, usually as a copula over the main entrance arch. Fine Gothic specimens of this type occurred at [Dunmore Park](#), [Herbertshire](#), [Carbrook](#) and [Avondale](#). The latter of these also hangs over the main drive to the house creating a wonderful reveal as the carriages passed under it to see the rich expansive facade of the main building across the lawn. At [Carriden](#) a central tower of 1818 rests on the east elevation which fronts the house.



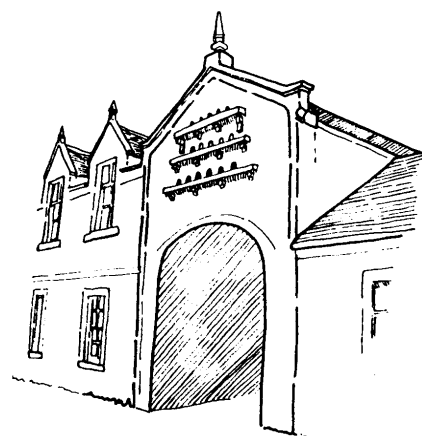
Callendar Park Stables



Avondale

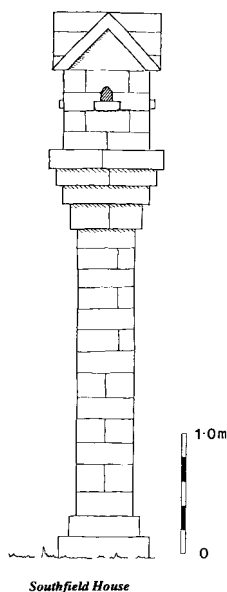


Dunmore Park



Balquhatston

Perhaps the latest doocot to be built in connection with a stately home in the Falkirk District was that attached to the coach-house at [Powfoulis](#). This remarkable structure is a triumph of the Scottish Baronial style current in the 1870s. It harks back to the corbelled turrets of the earlier castles – architecture had come full circle – though with much embellishment. The tower at Powfoulis is slender and tall and almost seems to defy gravity as it clenches the south corner of the coach-house.



A most unusual pigeon house stands on the main lawn at Southfield House near Slamannan. Wooden lofts set on poles are common across Europe and in America but scarce in Britain. This is an Art Nouveau design executed in stone, complementing the neighbouring Summerhouse



Some farm outbuildings were given a few pigeon holes in their gable walls and their attics were utilised as lofts. Although not a common practice in the Falkirk District, some of these still survive. That at Gilmeadowland is interesting in that not only does it have a horizontal stone slab below the holes as a perch, it also has a slab set vertically on the north side to protect the birds from the wind. The stones from the entrance façade to the gable doocot in the barn at Glen Farm near Hallglen (now the Milk Barn) were placed in Falkirk Museum when the building was demolished. The old dairy at Burnfoot, on the edge of the town opposite the [Erskine Church](#), had its own solitary hole and other town buildings were likewise treated.

In 1812 the Board of Agriculture noted a tradition that the pigeons of Stirlingshire were larger than elsewhere in Scotland "*probably from the idea of the superior quality and quantity of their food*" (Graham 1812, 307). The Reporter of this suggestion was unable to confirm it, even after the minutest enquiry.

By the middle of the nineteenth century doocots were decreasing in popularity and architects were turning their attentions to other buildings. With the advances in animal husbandry and the introduction of new crops and methods of storage there was no longer any dependence upon the pigeon. Indeed, they could be seen as a positive nuisance. It has been estimated that in 1796 Mid-Lothian pigeons had eaten enough grain for 3,000 people and that in Fife some 300 private doocots offered accommodation to a breeding population of about 36,000 pairs of birds. The demise of the doocot was slow and inevitable, although many remained in use within living memory. Muiravonside, Callendar Park and Arnotdale doocots, owned by the Falkirk District Council, are inhabited but not harvested. Others have been given new functions; that at Powfoulis is now a wardrobe. However, many remain derelict and may well join the ranks of the many that have left us with no trace of their former existence other than a small mark on a map. It would be regrettable to lose any of those still standing.

Dooocots in the District are commemorated by two street names - Dovecot Road at [Westquarter](#) only dates back to the construction of the model village; but Dovecot Brae at Cowdenhill, [Bo'ness](#), has a greater antiquity and is sufficiently removed from the known structure at Kinningars Park to suggest that it refers to a doocot not otherwise recorded. The name "Dovecote Park" occurs on a number of occasions and examples include Parkhall, [Airth](#), Northbank and Callendar where the structure no longer remains, and at [Grange House](#) where Kinningars Park is sometimes referred to as Dovecote Park. Cushie Park in

Muiravonside derives its name from the French for wood pigeon and may simply be a sign of pretension.

Illus: The Stables at Penicuik House.



Finally, mention should be made of the doocot at Penicuik House which, although not in the District, has an interesting connection with the Roman temple at Stenhousemuir known as Arthur's O'on. In 1569 Henry Sinclair described the Roman monument: "*Julius's Huis on the Water of Carron is made round like a Doucote*" (Sibbald 1707). This description is echoed in a note jotted onto the flyleaf of a book in the library at Penicuik House and thought to be the hand of Sir John Clerk. It reads:

"Orchardhead/2. October 1712

I measured Arthur's Oven or templum Termin which is 23 feet of Diameter; within is [blank] feet whereof measured; the wall 4 feet thick built with ashlar within and without; & about 30 feet high; after the fashion of our antiquat dovecots open above about 6 feet of diameter; the door is towards the east, 4 feet broad & 8 high & arched. It stands at the east angle of the garden of Stenhouse which belongs to Sir Wil. Bruce in the Carse of Bothkennar two miles by west of Orchardhead." (Steer, 1976).

In 1743 Sir John was horrified to hear of the deliberate destruction of Arthur's O'on, so much so that he decided to have an exact replica built near Penicuik House. This was placed on top of his stable block and completed in 1860 as a doocot with some 800 stone nesting boxes and a potence, still extant, with large wooden ladders. It is well worth a visit.

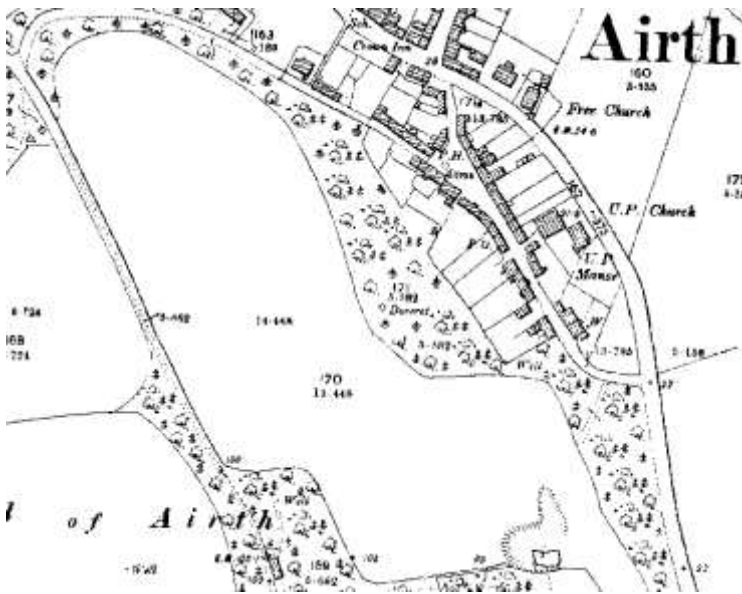
[Appendix : Inventory of Doocots / contd.](#)

INVENTORY OF DOOCOTS

The doocots are listed in alphabetical order, usually being known by the name of the house to which they were attached. This is followed by the Site and Monuments Record number and a grid reference in brackets (the number of figures used indicating the accuracy with which the structure can be located). When this is followed by an asterisk, the doocot is still standing and may be worth visiting before it too disappears, though some are on private land. Those with two asterisks are readily inspected.

<u>Airth</u>	<u>Kersiebank</u>
<u>Airth Castle Stables</u>	<u>Kinneil</u>
<u>Arnotdale</u> **	<u>Kinningars</u> **
<u>Avondale</u> *	<u>Larbert House</u>
<u>Avonhill</u>	<u>Little Kerse</u>
<u>Balquhatston</u>	<u>Mannerston</u>
<u>Bearcrofts</u>	<u>Manuel Mill</u>
<u>Blackness Castle</u> **	<u>Merchiston Hall</u>
<u>Bonhard</u>	<u>Muiravonside</u>
<u>Callendar House</u>	<u>Mungall</u>
<u>Callendar House Stables</u> **	<u>Neuk</u>
<u>Camelon Mansionhouse</u>	<u>Newmills</u>
<u>Carbrook</u>	<u>Newton</u>
<u>Carriden</u> *	<u>Nicolton</u>
<u>Carron Hall</u>	<u>North Bank</u>
<u>Carron House</u> *	<u>Parkhall</u>
<u>Castlecary Castle</u>	<u>Parkhill</u> **
<u>Compston</u>	<u>Pocknave Mill</u>
<u>Craigend</u>	<u>Polmont Park</u>
<u>Dalquhairn</u>	<u>Powdrake</u>
<u>Dorrator House</u>	<u>Powfoulis (SMR49)</u>
<u>Dunipace</u> *	<u>Powfoulis (SMR50)</u> **
<u>Dunmore Park (SMR26)</u>	<u>Seabegs</u>
<u>Dunmore Park (SMR27)</u> *	<u>South Bantaskine</u>
<u>Falkirk</u>	<u>South Bellsdyke</u>
<u>Forganhall</u>	<u>Southfield</u> *
<u>Herbertshire</u>	<u>Stenhouse</u>
<u>Grange</u>	<u>Westquarter</u> **
<u>Kerse</u>	<u>Woodside</u>

AIRTH – SMR 3 (NS 8985 8743)



There must have been an early doocot associated with [Airth Castle](#), but its location is obscure. Dovecot Park on the estate is mentioned in the 1820s. Prior to that, in 1808, two men, Archibald Rae and John Kemp, were paid for cleaning out a pigeon house. The 1921 Ordnance Survey map shows a rectangular doocot lying in the shelter of the hill to the south-west of Low Airth, but nothing now remains on the ground. As this land came into the possession of the Bruces in the fifteenth century it is possible that it is the original location, far enough away from the castle that the pigeons would eat the grain on the lands of the neighbours.

Illus: 1921 Ordnance Survey Map.

AIRTH CASTLE STABLES – SMR 2238 (NS 8988 8684)

A pigeon house was incorporated into the refurbishment of the stable block at Airth Castle in 1806 (NLS 10902/180). It was examined by John Graham of Powfoulis in 1811:

"I have examined the pidgeon house and I find that it will be ready come a week & will procure from 20 to 30 pairs for you" (NLS 10877/95).

ARNOTDALE – SMR 4 (NS 8801 8026)**

Arnotdale House was constructed around 1830 for James Russel the solicitor and the doocot was built shortly afterwards in 1834, as is testified by the date on a sundial set below a blank window on its south side. The buildings to which it was attached had originally been pig-houses but must have been considered too close to the house. A small court was opened up in front of the doocot so that it was flanked by piended single-storey buildings. It has a square base and the existence of two doors on its north side, and a small window in each of the south, west and east walls, suggests that the ground floor was used as a garden shed. The upper floor is octagonal with blind arched windows in each side under a projecting cornice, which carries the roof in a Greek revival style. It is built of ashlar masonry placed upon a plain square string-course, whilst the masonry of the lower storey is of random rubble with dressed quoins. The roof is slated, ogee in form rising to a pointed spike which used to possess an iron trefoil finial. A small dormer in





the roof, facing southwards towards the house, gives access for birds. This is one of three that formerly crowned the gracefully curved pitched roof, each with two dove openings. The roof was re-slating in 1995. After James Russel, [Arnotdale House](#) was subsequently occupied by James Ross of Lime Wharf, Robert Barr of [Inn Bru](#) fame and Sheriff Moffat. In 1920 it was purchased by [Robert Dollar](#) who gifted it to Falkirk Burgh and consequently the grounds are now known as [Dollar Park](#) and are maintained by Falkirk Council.

Illus: Arnotdale Doocot with the former Park Aviary.

AVONDALE – SMR 5 (NS 9534 7916)*

A low battlemented tower is placed over a stone archway of the square courtyard of farm buildings at Avondale House. It houses a doocot which, like the tower, dates to the early nineteenth century. It has twelve arched dove holes in a row sitting on the string course which extends to either side as the eaves. The long entrance drive to the mansion passes under the pointed doocot arch to become an open drive again as it swings across the lawn to the mansion. The estate was originally known as Clarkstone.



Illus: The East Façade of the Stables at Avondale House.

AVONHILL – SMR6 (NS 8948 7235)

A doocot formerly stood immediately to the north of the carriage drive to the house from the west. It was presumably built in the early nineteenth century along with [the house](#) and lodge. The present West Lodge has a squat, square crenellated tower and the doocot may have been of the same form. On the night of 9 August 1892 two local miners broke into the doocot and stole 30 pigeons (Falkirk Herald 13 August 1892).



The house was destroyed by fire in 1953 and the estate fell into neglect. Nothing remains to be seen of the doocot.

Illus: Ordnance Survey Map showing the Doocot at Avonhill.

BALQUHATSTON – SMR 7 (NS 8577 7265)*

Three rows of entrance holes are arranged over a blocked up pend which formerly led to the stable square. Each row is provided with a long perching ledge. This doocot is unusual in facing north.



Illus: Balquhatstone House and Stable Wing looking south.

The pend was inserted around 1850 but did not operate for long and was blocked up before 1900. The doocot replaced one in the west gable of the same wing which can be seen in the photograph on the left.

Illus: The West Gable of the Stable Wing of Balquhatstone House c1880 with the Courtyard entrance on the right.



BEARCROFTS – SMR 8 (NS 9520 8113)

A doocot is mentioned at Bearcrofts, in [Polmont Parish](#), in the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 22 March 1757 (and the Caledonian Mercury on 13 June 1759). Both doocot and farmstead have now disappeared.



Illus: Blackness Doocot looking east.

BLACKNESS CASTLE – SMR 9 (NS 0547 8006)**

About 150yds south of the enclosure of [Blackness Castle](#) stands a ruinous doocot. It is oblong in shape, but only the north wall remains to any height containing a single string-course. The building measures 22ft 11ins by 15ft 10ins externally, with an entrance with set-back rebates in the west wall. The doocot may date to the late sixteenth century.

BONHARD - SMR 12 (NT0147 7978)

Illus: Ordnance Survey Map of 1856 (National Library of Scotland).

Some 30yds east of the [House of Bonhard](#) was an oblong doocot with crow-stepped gables. The pitched roof rose to a central ridge and was [pantiled](#) down to the vertical boarding containing the entrances for the birds, below which it had five rows of slates. There were seven pigeon holes in the boarding which gave the southern facing pitch a step. The doocot measured 17ft from north to south by 20ft 10ins from east to west and had one string course approximately three-quarters of the way up the tall side walls. Inside were 771 nests. A small entrance faced north, it had a rebate for the door-frame, with a thin lintel stone beneath a simple relieving arch. In the west gable, set one course above the rat-course was an armorial panel, much worn, within a border of four stones having a simple rounded moulding and a second border on the stone itself enriched with an egg and dart motif. At the top of the panel was the motto: "WE BEIG/ZE SE VARLE" (We build, ye see, warily). The shield was parted per pale and charged dexter: On a fess three mullets as many Cornish kaes or jackdaws, for Cornwall; and sinister: Quarterly, first and fourth, three crescents within a royal tressure, second and third, three garbs or three escutcheons, for Seton of Touch or of Abercorn. Below the shield were the initials N.C., for Nicholas Cornwall, and M.S., with the date 1591. Nicholas Cornwall acquired Bonhard in 1578; he was provost of Linlithgow in 1592 and died in 1607 aged 70. He was married three times, first to Agnes Halkheid of Dysart in 1551, and then to Mary Stewart of Castlemilk. Forty years after his first marriage he seems to have married a third time and it is this marriage, with Marie Seton, which was commemorated in 1591 with an armorial panel on the doocot at Bonhard.





Illus: The Doocot at Bonhard with the Coat-of-Arms on the West Gable.

In February 1671 the Regality Court book of Bo'ness notes that "*Robert Cunyngham declaires that he saw James Robertson, in Bonhard, shoote and dove bot alledges that he had ane order from the shirref-deput to shoot al suck doves he could find in respect they prejudged his dovecot.*" (Salmon 1913, 98).

The value of the doocot is indicated in a record of April 1772. By this time the estate of Bonhard had fallen into the ownership of the Duke and Duchess of Hamilton and was administered on their behalf by a Mr Burrell. He writes:

"This morning Andrew McVey in Borroustoun came and made offer of £22 Scots per acre for the Mansion house farm of Bonhard extending to 44 acres with the sum of £13 Sterling for the house, garden and dovecoats extending to 3 acres, extending in whole to £93.13.4. On condition that...the house and office houses be made wind and water tight, together with the dovecoats" (Burrell's Journals, Hamilton Papers).

The use of the plural may indicate that the neighbouring doocot at [Northbank](#) was included in the deal.

The doocot was demolished in 1962 along with the house, but fortunately some photographs of it are lodged in the National Monuments Record.

CALENDAR HOUSE – SMR 13 (NS 900 799)

A rectangular shaped doocot is shown in "Dovecot Park" to the north of Calendar Road opposite the avenue to the [house](#) on a plan of 1781. It was presumably demolished in the early 1840s when the mainline railway to Falkirk Grahamston was constructed; its replacement in the stables having already been constructed in 1828.

"Dovecote Croft" was the rallying point for the [Jacobite](#) troops occupying the town of Falkirk in January 1746 (Bailey 1996, 49).

CALENDAR HOUSE STABLES – SMR 14 (NS 8969 7948)**

This structure replaced an earlier building, which had been demolished during the construction of the mainline railway. It now stands behind a later low single-storeyed curved stable block. It was built in 1828 as a freestanding crenellated tower but within a few years a long agricultural block with tall narrow first floor windows and piended roof was attached to its west. The lower part of the tower was used as kennels and at 16ft above the ground a string-course marks the upper storey which contains 884 sandstone nest holes. The tower measures some 21ft square. The entrance holes for the birds face south and are seven in number. It is now owned by the Falkirk District Council.

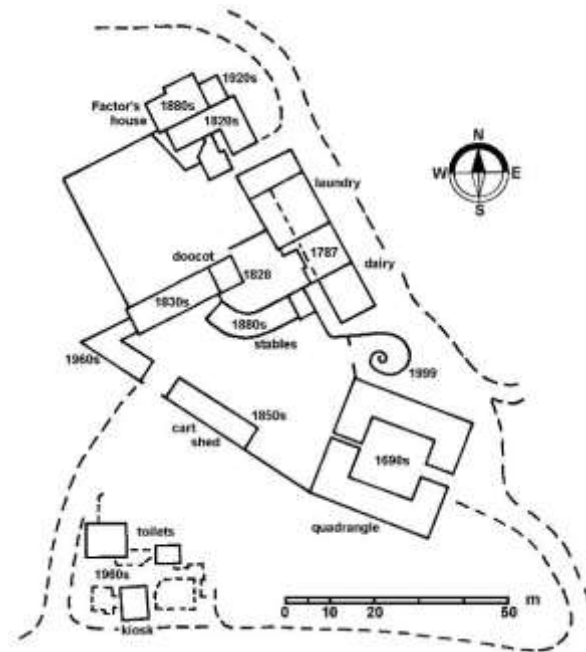




Illus: Callendar House Doocot with the high-rise flats in the background and an interior view.

In 2003 the cracked door lintels and sills were replaced.

Illus: Replacing the lintels on the Callendar House Doocot.



Illus: Plan showing the phases of the various buildings making up the stables complex at Callendar Park.

CAMELON MANSIONHOUSE DOOCOT – SMR 15 (NS 8677 8028)

Camelon Mansion House was built in 1758 but the doocot for which photographs survive was much younger. The doocot was situated 10m north of the House on the northern boundary wall of the courtyard and adjacent to its entrance gateway which in style reflected that of the south gate. The small two-storey building was based on an octagonal plan. The upper storey had windows in each side, blind except for a larger window/door over the entrance. The walls were of coursed random rubble with dressed quoins and a simple cornice; the door and windows margins backset to accommodate harling. The roof was slated in the form of a pavilion and the seven dove holes were placed in a dormer facing SSE.

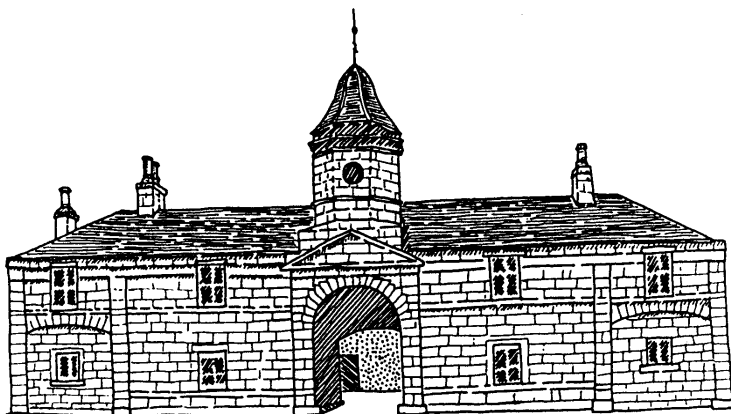
Illus: The Doocot and gateway at Camelon House looking north-west with hay ricks and the new Carmuir's School in the background.



The style of the doocot suggests that it was not an original feature of the 1758 House and may date to around 1800. The doocot was demolished along with the house to make way for the present housing development in the early 1920s.

Illus: The Doocot just before demolition. The pyramidal finial has been removed from the gate column and a shed built in the courtyard.

An earlier doocot is mentioned at Camelon House in the Edinburgh Advertiser of 28 March 1775.



CARBROOK – SMR 607 (NS 8377 8547)

The doocot was placed in the ornamental cupola over the pend of the square stable block to the west of the house. It was demolished in the 1960s.

Illus: Carbrook Stables.

CARRIDEN - SMR 17 (NT 0237 8075)*

At [Carriden](#), a solid square three storeyed tower on the east side of the courtyard of the stable block contained a doocot in its upper floors. String-courses occur above and below the second floor, the lower one bearing the date 1818. The roof is slated pyramidal and formerly had dormer openings on each side, each with five openings for the birds. The 915 wooden nest holes have also been removed due to dry rot and a water tank was inserted. Around 2013 the tower was converted into a residential unit.

Illus: (Right) The main façade of Carriden Coachhouse looking south-west.



Illus: (Above) The courtyard view of Carriden Stables.

CARRON HALL – SMR 18 (NS 8935 8392)

A rectangular doocot is shown on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map 250yds east of the [Hall](#) in a wooded enclosure opposite the drive and just east of the main road to Kinnaird and [Carronshore](#). It was demolished c1950. The estate was owned by the Dundas family.



Illus: 1860 Ordnance Survey Map showing the “Dovecot” at Carronhall.

CARRON HOUSE - SMR 19 (NS 8976 8266)*

The doocot stands 300yds south-east of [Carron House](#). It is an octagonal Georgian structure of red brick with freestone dressings, measuring 18ft in diameter over walls 2ft thick. The door has an ogival pediment, and an oval window above it. At half-height there is a wide rounded string-course, with a range of oval windows above it, blind except in the side containing the door. The wall finished in a moulded cornice, with a perching course and eight entries below it for the birds on each face, some of them blind. Fragments of this cornice now litter the ground around the doocot, and the upper part of the brickwork is suffering from exposure to the weather. It was originally surmounted by a plain parapet-course, behind which the low-pitched roof rose to a timber Glover surmounted by a weather vane. The nests are brick built, arranged in 24 tiers of 6 nests on all sides but that with the entrance. There were 1016 nests in all. Listed B.

Illus: Carron House Dooct.



The area in which the doocot stands was the courtyard of a pitch house erected for Francis Garbett & Co in the 1760s. A dry dock for building ships lay just to the north. However, after John Ogilvie purchased the sequestered estate of Carron House from the creditors of [Charles Gascoigne](#) in 1783 he converted the pitch house into estate offices and built the doocot.

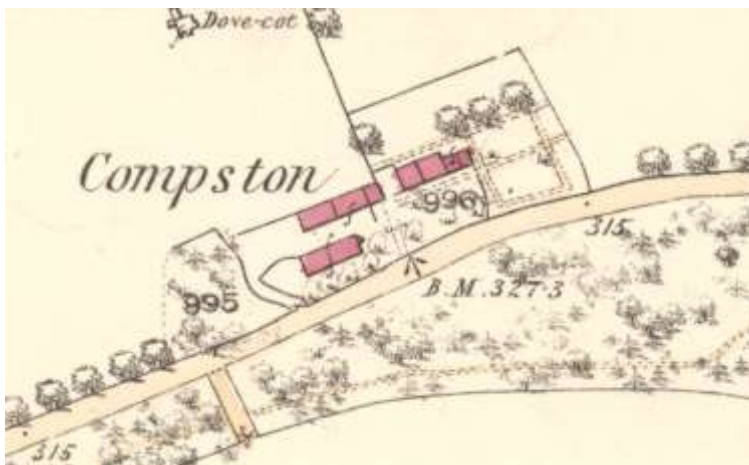
Ogilvie struggled to keep the public out of his new estate and tried to stop boats from being tracked up the river from the bank in front of his house. Around 1797 this dispute came to a head and he employed one of his servants to spy on shipping from behind his pigeon house. Whilst observing how the vessels were tracked along the river, the servant noted the direction of the wind from a four pointed weather vane on top of the doocot (SRO GD65/261).

The doocot is now owned by the Dawson Trust and is deteriorating rapidly.

CASTLECARY CASTLE – SMR 1047 (NS 7868 7748)

A castle and lordly residence such as that at [Castlecary](#) might be expected to have had a doocot and it comes as no surprise that the 1732 charter to James Dundas mentions the lands “*with the manor place, houses, biggings, yards, orchards, parks, woods, dovecots, rabbit warrens...*” (C2/93/187 No.139 – Reid).

A rectangular building with piended roof is shown just to the south-east of the enclosed garden at Castlecary Castle on an estate plan of 1758. It is thus in the NE corner of the orchard, and forms part of the formal setting of the outbuildings and avenues (RHP 6103). The building was probably removed when the railway was constructed.



COMPSTON – SMR 20 (NS9345 7568)

The doocot at Compston is shown on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map 55yds north-west of the house as a rectangular structure with various projections. In 1955 it was described as a featureless pile of rubble (RCAHMS 1963, 397). Nothing now remains to be seen.

Illus: 1860 Ordnance Survey Map (NLS).



CRAIGEND – SMR 21 (NS 9345 7568)

Situated adjacent to the walled garden of the House, the site is now covered by a bing from the neighbouring brickworks. A photograph belonging to the Avonbridge Local History Group shows that it was a large octagonal tower with a low-pitched roof and a series of bird holes facing south-east. It appears on the 1860 and 1897 Ordnance Survey maps.

Illus: Extract from the 1897 Ordnance Survey Map (NLS).

Illus: The Craigend Doocot can be seen in the distance in this snowy scene taken from just behind Craigend House.



DALQUHAIRN – SMR 22 (NS 9051 7246)

Three ledged pigeon holes were formed in an internal gable of the east range of outbuildings at the courtyard of [Dalquhairn House](#). These must have been inserted after the room at the end of the range had lost its roof and passed out of use (RCAHMS 1963, 356). All these buildings and the house have now been demolished.



DORRATOR HOUSE – SMR 24 (NS 873 813)

The Edinburgh Evening Courant of 13 February 1800 advertised [Dorrator House](#) for rent along with its pigeon house. At the time it was tenanted by Major Hay.

Illus: Extract from the Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1859 (NLS). The doocot was probably the small rectangular building immediately to the west of Dorrator House.

DUNIPACE – SMR 25 (NS 8380 8190)*

In 1754 the ancient mansion house of [Dunipace](#) was demolished and a smaller house was built a little to the west. The only part of the old house to be retained was a 17th century stair tower which lay just to the north of the new drive. It was evidently kept so that it could be converted into a doocot. The tower appears externally as part of an octagon, though only three of its sides are completely free. Each of the free sides measures 5ft 11ins except the west one, which is enlarged to 7ft 3ins at its base to accommodate the entrance door. The masonry is rubble with neatly squared dressings, and there are two moulded-courses; the uppermost portion of the tower is circular, finishing in a moulded eaves-course, and was no doubt added when the tower was turned into a doocot. Consequently the interior is essentially circular throughout and has been divided into



a basement and an upper floor. There were 287 nests in the lower part and 195 in the upper portion, all of tile. In 1956 the potence still survived carrying a ladder of 22 rungs. The roof was slated, and carried an ornamental lantern adapted for the entry of pigeons by 36 dove holes. This has now collapsed, but a photograph in the National Monuments Record shows its form. Another large opening for pigeons was made on the south just below the level of the upper string-course which, however, terminates before reaching this point. Some of the tiled nest boxes remain.

Illus: The former Stair Tower at Dunipace House.

The Edinburgh Evening Courant of the 3rd February 1794 advertised :

"The Mansion House of Dunipace, situated on the banks of the River Carron, with office, Garden, and pigeon house. The house is modern and will accommodate a large family".



Illus: The interior of the Doocot at Dunipace House.

DUNMORE PARK – SMR 26 (NS 8845 8928)



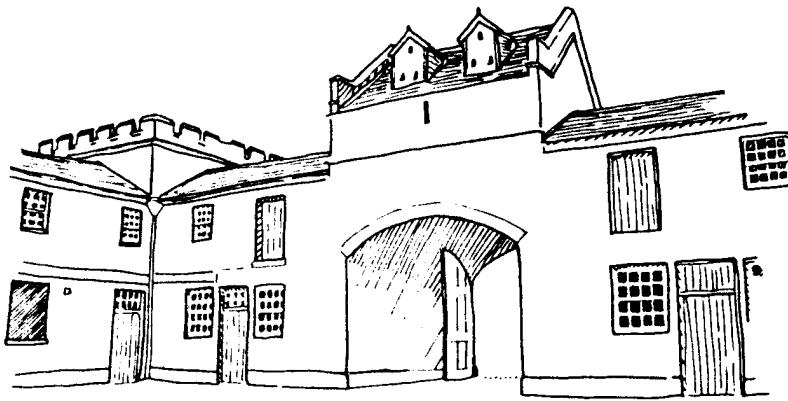
A circular doocot is shown to the north of the house on the 1862 Ordnance Survey map. Some of the people brought up on the [Dunmore Park](#) estate can still remember this as a standing structure and describe it as a circular corbelled building with a hole in the centre of the roof - that is a beehive doocot. Its last use appears to have been to house the gamekeeper's ferrets. Nothing remains on the ground to indicate its former existence.

Illus: Extract from the 1862 Ordnance Survey Map (National Library of Scotland).

DUNMORE PARK – SMR 27 (NS 8832 8907)*

An early nineteenth century square doocot built over the pend leading into the stable courtyard. There are two dormers facing into the courtyard with entrances for the birds. The outer facade of the doocot is Gothic in character and contains a crossed loophole, which may have provided additional access. The north and south walls have a band shaped string-course.





The doocot and stables were probably designed by William Wilkins some time after he had finished the new house in 1822. Listed B.

Illus: The Doocot at Dunmore Park Stables from the Courtyard. Fire damage to the west wing.

FALKIRK – SMR28 (NS 8871 7991)

An entry in the Register of Sasines in 1733 refers to:

"all and haill his house high and laigh lying upon the east syde of the wind called Bantaskines Wind --- and all and heall that his north yeard or orchyard with the summer house and dovecott above within the said yeard" (Reid's notes - 1733 RS59/16 f.279v).

This must be the same as that referred to in the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 28 February 1767

"a yeard, summerhouse, and dovecoat on the south side of Falkirk, possessed by Jas Boyd, gardener".

Boyd's nursery is shown north of the washing green on Black's plan of 1830 – now the [Comely Park](#) area around the Cow Wynd. However, his residence would have been in the town. In 1788 we have another advert:

"Also to be sold the houses, garden and dovecott, lying in the town of Falkirk, which belonged to John Rankin jun, merchant there." (Edinburgh Evening Courant, 27 September 1788, 4b).

All of this suggests that the doocot lay on the south-facing slope just to the north of the Howgate. The combination of summerhouse and doocot along with its early mention hints that it may have formed part of the townhouse of the Livingstons of Bantaskine. We might expect there to have been a similar doocot for the townhouse of the Livingstons of Westquarter to the east of Pleasance Lane.



FORGANHALL – SMR 1312 (NS 896 815)

Shown on an estate plan of Forganhall, belonging to Alexander Glen, in 1788 (Falkirk Museum Archives). This large rectangular structure was still standing in 1860 and was presumably demolished when [Abbots Foundry](#) was extended into the area c1880. The site is now occupied by the Bankside Industrial Estate.

Illus: Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1859 but published in 1894 (NLS).

GRANGE – SMR 37 (NT 009 814)



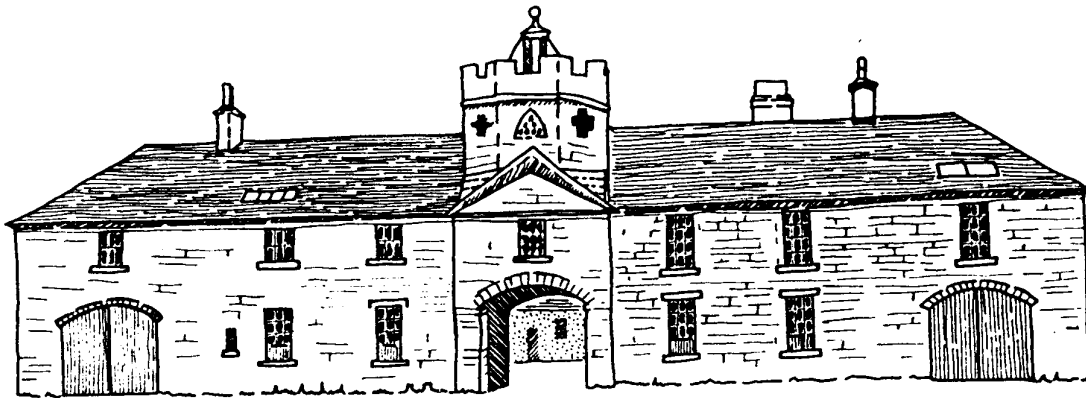
The doocot for Old [Grange House](#) was evidently in the vicinity of [Dooct Brae](#) to the north-east of the house. In the late 18th century William Cadell was:

"Proprietor of All and Whole the lands and barony of Grange Philpingstone, including both halves thereof, lying in the county of Linlithgow, with the town thereof, manor place of Grange, houses, biggings, yards, orchards, doves, dovecots, tofts, crofts, milns" (Cadell Papers).

Illus: Grange House with pigeon loft above the 19th century doorway.

In the 19th century Old Grange House was divided into flats and a new doorway and porch were added to the west of the tower. This porch was provided with three pigeon holes. Demolished 1906.

HERBERTSHIRE – SMR 29 (NS 8041 8324)



Herbertshire

A doocot was included in the farm court of [Herbertshire Castle](#) in the early nineteenth century, replacing an earlier one of which nothing is known. The doocot was octagonal in form with seven dove holes and was situated above a pend. In February 1806 the farm was described as "*complete and commodious, forming an elegant square, and slated, in the lawn, with a pigeon house*".

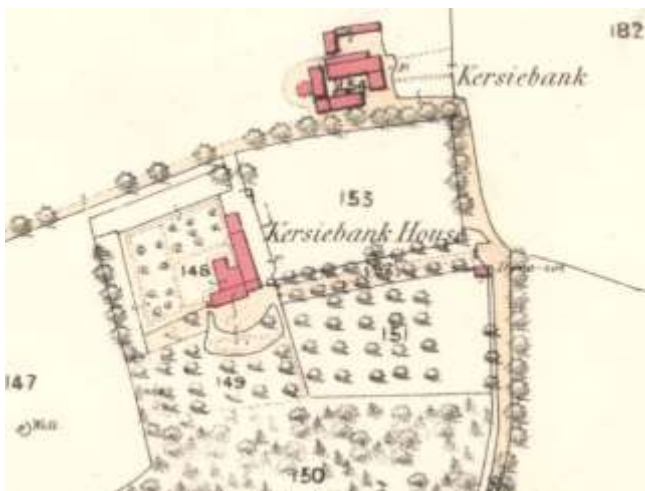
During the [Second World War](#) the stables were used as an ARP centre and for preparing communal meals. In the following decade a housing scheme was constructed around them and it was only in the 1970s that the stables were demolished.

KERSE – SMR 30 (NS 916 819)

The Caledonian Mercury of 28 May 1741 mentions a pigeon house belonging to [Sir Alexander Hope](#). Its location is not known.

In the late 18th century a large octagonal doocot was incorporated into the west wing of a large stables complex and this may be the same structure. When the [Forth & Clyde Canal](#) was constructed it ran alongside this complex (see RHP6115 dated c1768). The doocot had a slated roof forming a segmental dome capped by a Glover. They were demolished in the 1930s.

Illus: Kerse House Stables and Dooct looking east across the Canal.



KERSIEBANK – SMR 31 (NS 9362 7964)

On 2 February 1760 the Caledonian Mercury noted a pigeon house in connection with Kersiebank House (as also the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 9 January 1760). The doocot is shown at the east end of the drive from Inchyra House on the 1862 Ordnance Survey map. It was rectangular in shape.

Illus: Extract from the 1862 Ordnance Survey Map (National Library of Scotland).

KINNEIL SMR 32 (NS 9798 8007)



The 1856 Ordnance Survey map shows an aviary adjacent to a kennel block and keeper's house in the open space at the centre of the seventeenth century plantation of Kinneil Wood. However this would be an unsuitable location for a doocot and this aviary is more likely to have been a pheasantry. Duchess Anne had two doocots erected at Hamilton in the 1680s, each with over a thousand pigeon nests, and it may be assumed that one was also constructed during her improvements to the [estate at Kinneil](#). Pigeons were often sent from Kinneil to Hamilton ([see above](#)). The location of the large doocot at Kinneil is not known but it would have been visible from the house and as it does not appear on the

1856 map it probably lay within the formal gardens west of the house. These were converted into meadows at the end of the 18th century and nothing now remains to be seen.

On January 1686 workmen at Kinneil were busy rooting out thorns, elder trees and ash roots "*between the pigeon house and the little bridge*," (Marshall pers com F1/532/2). Presumably the little bridge was the footbridge over the Gil Burn.

KINNINGARS – SMR 33 (NT 0139 8129)**

In 1803 James John Cadell took up residence at new Grange House and [Old Grange House](#) ceased to be the residence of the lairds of Grange. He made extensive alterations to the house and it may have been at this time that he had the redundant pumping engine house to the south converted into a doocot. The beam engine had been used to pump water out of the coal pits on the estate but as that part of the coalfield became worked out it was no longer required. It is shown as a "Dove cot" on the 1854 Ordnance Survey map and the park in which it stood consequently became Dovecote Park, though it is still called by its older name of Kinningars Park.

Illus: Kinningars Doocot looking north-east.



The conversion produced a common lectern type of doocot with random rubble walls patched with brick. It formerly possessed crow-steps but is now roofless and partially ruinous. The structure is pierced by large round archways on the ground floor and a round-arched door in its west end. The upper part had some 415 brick boxes. Listed C.

LARBERT HOUSE – SMR 34 (NS 8495 8236)

The Edinburgh Evening Courant of 24 March 1804 mentions a pigeon house at Mountriddell in the parish of Larbert. The house is today known as [Larbert House](#).



LITTLE KERSE –

SMR 35 (NS 9400 7944)

In July 1729 the Echo advertised the lands of Little Kerse with

"convenient house, with dovecot two miles from Polmont, holden of his Grace the Duke of Hamilton, and John Hamilton, Bangour".

This substantial rectangular structure lay to the north-east of the mill at [Millhall](#) in an area now used as a car park for Polmont Wood.

Illus: Extract from the 1862 Ordnance Survey Map (NLS).

MANNERSTON - SMR 152 (NT 046 789)

The sale of Mannerston in 1758 mentions a "dovecote" (Edinburgh Evening Courant 9 May 1758).

MANUEL MILL – SMR 36 (NS 9706 7625)

Indicated on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map this doocot has now completely disappeared. It stood immediately north of the [Manuel Mill](#) House and was rectangular in plan. A doocot is mentioned here in the Edinburgh Evening Courant on 2 February 1754.

Illus: 1863 Ordnance Survey Map of Manuel Mill (NLS).



MERCHISTONHALL –

SMR 39 (NS 881 808)

See [Mungal Hall](#). A circular doocot is shown to the north of the House on the 1860s Ordnance Survey map.

Illus: 1862 Ordnance Survey Map showing the Doocot at Merchistonhall (NLS).

MUIRAVONSIDE – SMR 38 (NS 9651 7535)**

Illus: The present Doocot at Muiravonside.

Projecting from the east end of the wall that divides the garden from the offices of [Muiravonside House](#) is a large doocot. After years of neglect and use as a garden shed it was restored in 1982 by a Manpower Services Commission project. It measures 19ft 3ins in breadth by 15ft 5ins in depth externally and is of the lectern type with a lean-to roof sloping up between flights of crow-steps to just in front of a high back wall to which it is connected by a short length of flat lead flashing. It is built of rubble with backset dressings. The recent renovation has hidden the alterations carried out to the entrance, reinstating the original. The back wall is, however, still breached by a mullioned window and a smaller shuttered window offset at a higher level. Entries for the birds are in two well-built stone fronted dormers which incorporate landing ledges. Each dormer houses six arched entrance holes, and a circular hole in the pediment. There is a string-course for perching at eaves level. Only a small number of the original wooden nesting boxes survived intact. In form the doocot is seventeenth century, but its date of construction was considerably later. The home farm was moved from the area presently occupied by a car park to its present site in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and the present doocot belongs to this period. An earlier doocot is recorded in 1787 when Muiravonside House possessed

"nine fire rooms, with a milk house, laundry, stables, coach-house, good garden and dovecote" (Edinburgh Evening Courant 12 April 1787 4b).

Muiravonside Country Park is maintained by Falkirk Council who should be commended for their care of this monument. Listed B.



Illus: Muiravonside Doocot before restoration.

MUNGALL – SMR 39 (NS 881 808)

The Edinburgh Evening Courant of 26th June 1782 advertised [Mungall](#) "with pigeon house, and salmon fishing in parish of Falkirk". This is the doocot listed under [Merchistonhall](#).

NEUK – SMR 40 (NS 910 867)

This doocot was an octagonal stone tower set in the centre of one side of the court of offices at The [Neuk](#) near Airth. Being in the line of the roof it was only accessible by a ladder that was placed against its door on the north side. The walls were of ashlar sandstone, 18ins thick. Six sides of the doocot presented an oval recess. There were two dove holes in the south side. Inside there were 272 nesting boxes reached by a potence ladder. The house and the farm were built in 1812 by [John Alexander Higgins](#). Both were demolished in the early 1970s.

The pigeon house is mentioned in newspaper adverts to rent the mansion in 1852 and 1862 when it is described as productive.

NEWMILLS – SMR 41 (NS9193 8717)

The Caledonian Mercury, 8 February 1757, advertised [these buildings](#) for sale "with new pigeon house, one mile from Airth". The Edinburgh Evening Courant two days later notes it as large.

NEWTON - SMR 42 (NS 9139 8293)

A crown charter of the lands of Newton in 1627 stipulates that a proper mansion should be kept up at [Newton](#) with hall, chamber, policies, dovecot and so on, suitable to the estate. This may imply that there was not at that time a suitable dwelling within the property. The same phraseology appears in the special retour of William Bruce as heir to his father, dated 3 January 1655:

"...And sicklyke building and upholding upoun the foirnamed sevin oxingait and halfe oxingait of land of Newtoun, ane sufficient mansioun, with hall, chalmer, kitching, douckat, and uthr policies necessary correspondent to the ground".

Illus: 1865 Ordnance Survey Map (National Library of Scotland).



William Bruce seems to have constructed the house in 1661 for a dormer pediment bearing that date survives. The doocot would have been erected shortly afterwards and a retour of 1690 mentions a "new mill and dovecot built by William Bruce of Newtoun upon the said lands of Newtoun." The rectangular doocot is shown 180yds south of Newton House on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map. This shape suggests that it was a lectern style doocot with a monopitched roof typical of the mid 17th century. Over its doorway was a coat-of-arms in relief depicting a saltire and chief for the Bruce family. Next to it was the date 1772 which presumably refers to a later repair. Latterly the doocot was part of the neighbouring farm of Towncroft. Nothing now remains visible.



NICOLTON SMR 43 (NS 9471 7784)

In 1860 a rectangular doocot stood immediately to the north of the present range of farm buildings. Its size and shape suggest that Nicolton was an important house on the road from Linlithgow to Falkirk. No trace of it now exists.

Illus: 1862 Ordnance Survey Map (National Library of Scotland).

NORTH BANK (NT 0100 8030)

In 1744 William Adam, architect in Edinburgh, produced a report for the Duke of Hamilton concerning the condition of [Kinneil House](#) and its associated buildings as well as a pigeon house at Northbank (Lennoxlove Papers 2177/348). The latter is listed amongst the properties belonging to the Duke of Hamilton in 1759:

"the Property of the Lands of Bonhard and Northbank... the Manour-place, Yards, Office-houses, and Dovecot of Northbank" (Airth Papers 10857/174).

Dovecot Park appears on an estate plan of 1812 at "North Bank" near [Bonhard](#). A large circular structure, presumably the doocot, lies on its northern boundary. It is not on the 1856 Ordnance Survey map.

PARKHALL – SMR 44 (NS 947 772)

A map entitled "Plan of the Estate of Parkhall - The property of J. Livingstone, Esq. has "Dove Cote Parks" to the north-east of the house and this appears as "Dove Cote Park" on a plan of 1780 (RHP 1537).

PARKHILL SMR 45 (NS 9282 7874)**

To the rear of [Parkhill House](#), at the former end of a small avenue of trees placed in line with the large bay window, stands a square doocot with Gothic Details. On top of its walls are large battlemented blocks, which would have screened the now missing low-pitched roof. An entrance faces the house, above which is a square panel containing a circle; in the quadrants so formed are the initials R/W above the date 18/14. The initials are those of Robert Warden who made alterations to the house and built the pigeon house. The entrance for the birds is in the east wall and a further doorway occurs in the south or back wall. The doocot was consolidated when flanking flats were built just in advance of the building in 2002. Listed B.



Illus: Parkhill Doocot before consolidation.

POCKNAVE MILL (NS 9198 8501)



Shown on the 1860 map, there is no remaining trace of this doocot. The doocot is mentioned on the 26 March 1792 in the Caledonian Mercury. Nothing can be seen on the ground today.

Illus; 1862 Ordnance Survey Map (National Library of Scotland).

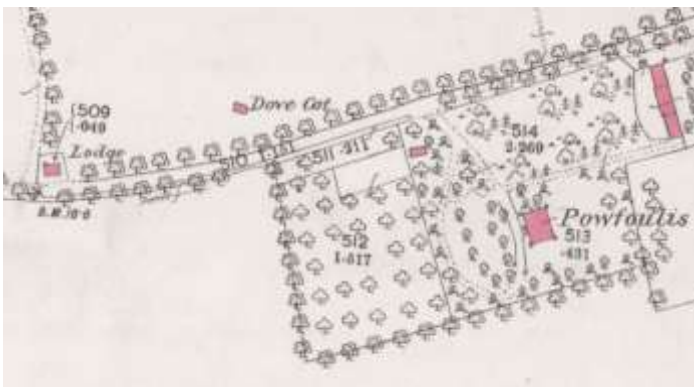
The doocot here is probably a reminder that [Pocknave](#) was once an important harbour belonging to the Bruce family.

POLMONT PARK – SMR 47 (NS 931 792)

The doocot here must have been contemporary with the house built "*within the last few years*" and mentioned in the Edinburgh Evening Courant of 21st July 1804.

POWDRAKE – SMR 48 (NS 943 823)

A photograph taken in 1923 for Scottish Oils shows a tall outbuilding to the west of this farm, with a small entrance at the top. This appears to have been a doocot. Both farm and doocot have long since been demolished.



Illus: Ordnance Survey Map surveyed in 1859 (NLS).

POWFOULIS – SMR 49 (NS 9168 8570)

In 1860 a rectangular doocot stood immediately north of the approach drive to the [house](#) within a large walled enclosure (it also appears on a plan of 1855 - SRO RHP1541). It was demolished shortly afterwards and replaced by the remaining structure in the coach-house. Nothing can now be seen on the ground.

POWFOULIS – SMR 50 (NS 9183 8571)*

The former coachman's house possesses a corbelled dovecote tower attached to its south-west corner at the foot of a crow-stepped gable. It is a very pleasing example of the Scottish Baronial style current in the middle of the nineteenth century. The slated roof of the tower is steeply pitched and terminates in a weather vane. The lower portion has now been converted into a wardrobe but some of the original mechanism for closing off the external entrance holes, in order to facilitate harvesting, still remains in the upper part. It formerly possessed 156 wooden nests which extended from 5ft 6ins above the ground up to the ceiling. Although the internal diameter is only just greater than 12 ft it also had a wooden ladder of 22 rungs. It is presently well maintained.



Illus: The Doocot Tower at the Coachman's House, looking north-east.



In February 1890 the dovecote at [Powfoulis](#) was the centre of attention as three labourers from Falkirk paid it a visit late one night. They blocked up the exits so that the pigeons could not escape and then broke into the building. Using nets they captured over fourteen birds and then made their way home. Unfortunately for them they were spotted on the deserted road near Skinflats by two policemen doing their night rounds and the live birds were seen flying off as they approached. The birds were taken live so that they could be used for shooting. It may have been as a result of this incident that the new doocot was built on the two-storey extension to the coachman's house and the old one demolished.

Illus: Powfoulis Coachhouse Doocot looking east.

SEABEGS (NS 82 79)

A sasine of 1727 for Seabegs states

"all and Heall the mantion house or manior place of Seabeggs, ofice houses, yeards, orchyeards, Dovecoat, parks and inclosures." (Reid notes - RS59/15 f 78 v).

SOUTH BANTASKINE – SMR 51 (NS 8703 7913)

An early nineteenth century doocot once stood to the east of [South Bantaskine House](#). It consisted of a square lower structure, measuring 15ft by 12ft, with a large segmental arch, over which was an octagonal superstructure. Each face of the superstructure had a blind Gothic window, except that on the south above the segmental arch which was pierced by ten bird-holes and provided with perching ledges. The window on the east side functioned as an entrance, reached by a ladder. The lower floor was rubble whilst the upper storey was coursed. The slated roof was ogee shaped, surmounted by a finial composed of a metal ball on a pole. At some time a small dormer had been placed on the south side of the roof to provide additional access for the birds. Although it survived for some time after the demolition of the house, it too was demolished by the District Council.





Illus: Views of South Bantaskine Doocot.

The lower part of the structure originally formed a pend into the former stable block. The doocot used to bear a green copper plaque on the south wall showing a crown over the word "Imperial", and it is known that the stables, coach-house, etc. were insured by the Imperial Company.



SOUTH BELLSDYKE – SMR 52 (NS 9058 8455)

A circular doocot built astride the south boundary wall of the farm at Bellsdyke is marked on the 1860 Ordnance Survey map. It is possible that this was a beehive form but nothing now remains to confirm this. It may be the doocot referred to as being part of the lands of Bellsdyke and Northmains in the Edinburgh Advertiser of 24 August 1810.





SOUTHFIELD – SMR 53 (NS 8424 7205) *

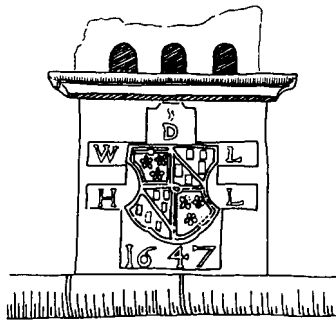
A most unusual pigeon house consisting of a 0.48m square stone column, 3.4m tall, surmounted by a stone dwelling with pitched roofs presenting a single pigeon hole with a rest and a gable to each face.

STENHOUSE – SMR 54 (NS 8785 8300)

A nineteenth century octagonal doocot was placed over the entrance to the stables which stood a little to the north of the house of [Stenhouse](#). It had a semi-circular opening in the south side, which probably contained the dove holes.

WESTQUARTER – SMR 55 (NS 9132 7871)**

This doocot stands near the west end of Dovecot Road, [Westquarter](#), where the new houses of the model village have spread over what were once the lands of [Westquarter House](#). It is in an excellent state of preservation being in the possession of Historic Environment Scotland, who renewed the roof. Slightly oblong in plan, it measures 18ft 3ins from east to west by 16ft 3ins transversely over walls 2ft 10ins thick and is built of random rubble with dressed quoins and door-rebates. The door is in the centre of the south side, and above this a heavy, round perching-course runs all round the building. Resting on this above the door is a heraldic panel topped by a small moulded cornice above which there is a row of three openings for the birds. From the wall head of the south wall the roof sloped up towards the north wall, which is considerably higher, the slope being interrupted to provide space for a further row of six openings for pigeons. Fleming's drawing shows a slightly different arrangement of these openings; he illustrates at least twelve in number spaced evenly throughout the length of the doocot, and not placed centrally as are the present six. This change in layout may have occurred when the building was re-roofed. The side walls are crow-stepped to a point about half way up the upper portion of the roof, where they meet the returns of the tabled parapet that tops the north wall; this parapet is finished with scrolls and pilasters, and bears ball finials at the corners. Fleming's drawing shows ball finials at three out of the four peaks of the parapet, and a suggestion of these can be seen in the photograph reproduced in volume 2 of the Proceedings of the Falkirk Archaeological and Natural History Society. The inner faces of the walls consist wholly of stone built nests, which number 868; they are built in regular rows each about 9ins high, and the openings which are separated by spacing stones of uniform thickness, average 8ins in width and 1ft 6ins in depth. The floor is laid with bricks, in which a circular setting marks the socket-hole of the vanished potence. Interestingly, the doocot was used as a police store in the 1950s. Listed A.



Westquarter

The panel above the door bears on a slightly sunk field, a shield enclosed by a line which probably represents a bordure and charged: quarterly, 1st and 4th, three cinquefoils, two and one, within a tressure; 2nd and 3rd, a bend between six billets. Above the shield appear the letters S/D, and separated by it are the initials WL/HL; taken together these stand for Sir William Livingstone of Westquarter and his wife Dame Helenore Livingstone, whom he married in 1627. Below the shield is the date 1647.

Caledonian Mercury 1 April 1725, 5:

"There is to be exposed to sale by Voluntary Roup, in the House of Arthur Reid Vintner in Edinburgh, upon the second Wednesday of April Inst., 1t 3 a-clock in the afternoon, the Estate of WESTQUARTER, of yearly Rent, the Sum of 1000 l. on Money; 21 Bolls, 3 Firlots Meal, and 20 Bolls, 3 Firlots bear; with a Manor-place of 30 Fire-rooms, most of them finished and painted; having 32 Acres of inclos'd Ground about it, with Stone and Lime Dykes, a good Dovecot and Office-houses, and beautified with much old Planting and a Rookery."

On October 23 1773 the Caledonian Mercury advertised

"The Mansion of West Quarter, sometime called Edenbelly, with stable for twelve horses, brew house, Oven, larder, slaughter house, hen house, swines' court, wash house, and pigeon house."

WOODSIDE – SMR 56 (NS 947 836?)

A doocot is mentioned in connection with [Woodside](#) in the Edinburgh Evening Courant on 20 June 1793.

Many of the farm buildings and outhouses of domestic dwellings were provided with a set of dove holes and the following list gives a few examples.

Avonbank, Polmont.
 Binniehill Cottage, Slamannan.
 Bulliondale, Avonbridge.
 Burnfoot Dairy, Falkirk.
[Callendar Park](#) gardener's cottage, Falkirk.
 Cobblebrae Farm, Bainsford
 Denny Cross, Denny.
[Denovan Mains](#), Dunipace
 Gilmeadowland, Muiravonside.
 Glen Farm, Hallglen.
 Newton Mains Farm, Bothkennar.
 Wallside stables, Tamfourhill.
 Wester Jaw, Slamannan.
 Wilderness, Airth.
 Woodend, Allandale dated 1868.

Wooden box-type pigeon house attached to the exterior of buildings were relatively common in the late 19th century but these leave no trace and it is not possible to provide a comprehensive list of them.



Binniehill Cottage



Avonbank Farm



Cobblebrae Farm



Callendar Park Gardener's Cottage



Dorrator Mains



Gilmeadowland Farm.



Newton Mains Farm



Kidd's Smithy.

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