

Studying Scottish castles: a biographical introduction

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First compiled in 2005 as a contribution to a festschrift in honour of David Newman Johnson (d. 12 October 2025), this essay brings together brief biographical accounts of six of the leading figures who have shaped the modern history of Scottish castle studies. In birth order they are Robert William Billings, architect (1813-74), David MacGibbon, architect (1831-1902), Thomas Ross, architect (1839-1930), William Mackay Mackenzie, historian (1871-1952), William Douglas Simpson, librarian and historian (1896-1968) and Stewart Hunter Cruden, architect (1915-2002).¹

Although these scholars remain hugely significant, individually and collectively, they make up only part of the historiography of this vast subject, and these notes constitute merely a first step towards a greater multilateral study of Scottish castellology. There remains much scope for enlarging upon the themes indirectly touched upon here and for adding to this pantheon with biographies of earlier antiquarians and more recently deceased scholars. This slightly recast recension has been updated between January and April 2026.²

Robert William Billings, architect (1813-74): author and illustrator of *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1845-52).³

Born in London in 1813, Billings showed precocious talent as an architectural draughtsman, and from the age of thirteen his exceptional skills were honed in a seven-year apprenticeship to John Britton, a leading contemporary topographical draughtsman, author of the *Beauties of England and Wales* (1801-18). Evidently without formal training as an architect Billings was elected Associate of the RIBA on 27 July 1835. He was based in Bath at that time and may have been receiving practical training in the office of Peter Frederick Robinson, his principal RIBA proposer. Examples of watercolour drawings of churches executed during his sojourn in Bath between 1834 and 1837 are in the Victoria Art Gallery, Bath, and the National Gallery of Scotland, Edinburgh. In this early phase of his career he assisted Sir Jeffry Wyattville with the final stages of the reconstruction of Windsor Castle and made drawings of the ruins of the Palace of Westminster after the fire of 1834.

Beginning in 1837 with George Godwin's *History and Description of St Paul's Cathedral* Billings came to be much in demand as an illustrator of architectural publications and moved back to London. Carlisle and Durham Cathedrals figured prominently in a series of publications in the 1840s, which also included the highly regarded *Illustrations of the Architectural Antiquities of the County of Durham* (1846). On his arrival in London in 1844 the Scots architect, William Burn, commissioned Billings with an advance of £1,000 to undertake *The Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities of Scotland*, foreseeing that such a corpus of material would serve as an important source of new building design.

Billings's place in the pantheon of Scottish castellologists rests upon this remarkable three-volume work which is widely acknowledged as the finest single collection of 240 engravings of Scottish castles and churches. The project entailed a

country-wide survey of Scotland, and in the North-east Billings was greatly assisted by his friend, Thomas Mackenzie (d.1854). He also explicitly acknowledged his considerable indebtedness throughout to Aberdeen-born John Hill Burton (1809-81, historiographer-royal of Scotland from 1867), for the accompanying historical commentaries, some 22 of which appear in the text as discrete ‘historical sketches’.

Published in parts by William Blackwood & Sons between 1845 and 1852, the work first appeared under the name of Billings and Burn, but after a dispute, Burn withdrew his funding and his name was removed from the title page. Commercially the book proved to be a success, and for over three decades became the source book for every Scottish practice undertaking commissions in the Scots Baronial idiom. The work gained a new lease of life with its re-issue in a four-volume edition introduced by Sir Robert Rowand Anderson in 1901. Billings’s more technical studies in Gothic geometry and tracery, published under various titles between 1840 and 1851, also had a considerable influence on contemporary architectural design.

As a practising architect after 1852 Billings remained London-based but his business became predominantly Scottish, much of it for the Royal Engineers at Edinburgh and Stirling Castles. Significant domestic commissions in Scotland included work at Castle Wemyss, Renfrewshire, Gosford House, East Lothian, and Dalzell House, Motherwell, Lanarkshire. Between 1854 and 1872 designs for these and other works were exhibited regularly at the Royal Academy.

Leaving moveable estate of ‘under £2,000’, Billings died on 14 November 1874 at The Moulinère, Putney, London, a one-time home of Sarah, Duchess of Marlborough, which he had bought in 1865. His wife, Antoinette (née Clarkson), whom he had married on 21 April 1836, died in 1884.



Figure 1. Coxtan Tower (from Billings, *Baronial and Ecclesiastical Antiquities*).

David MacGibbon, architect (1831-1902): co-author, with Thomas Ross, of *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1887-92) and *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1896-7).⁴

David MacGibbon was born in Edinburgh on 2 April 1831, the son of Charles MacGibbon and his wife Rachel Ritchie, both members of prominent Edinburgh building families. The MacGibbon business had been founded by the young David's grandfather, David, in the later 18th century and as David MacGibbon & Son had grown immensely, undertaking major contracts as far afield as Ireland. His uncle, John Stevenson MacGibbon, was in charge of the Irish contracts and stayed in Ireland to build on his own account before retiring to Edinburgh.

Educated at boarding schools in Lanarkshire and the Royal High School, Edinburgh, David MacGibbon enrolled in the Arts Faculty at the University of Edinburgh in 1846, leaving without graduating in 1849. He was articled to John Lessels and in 1851 he made a study tour of north-eastern England before entering the Stratton Street office of William Burn in London. A period of travelling and sketching in western Europe, partly in the company of Richard Norman Shaw, helped to shape his own architectural style and provided material for his later book, *The Architecture of Provence and the Riviera* (Edinburgh, 1888).

In late 1856 he returned to set up in practice in Edinburgh, at first in association with his father who had been Master of the Merchant Company. Within four years MacGibbon had replaced David Rhind as architect to the Company, a role which generated much work through a continuous programme of repair and improvement to the Company's schools. In order to cope with his much-enlarged practice MacGibbon engaged Thomas Ross (q.v.) as his assistant in 1862, taking him into partnership ten years later.

In addition to the Merchant Company schools and numerous National Bank of Scotland buildings, the MacGibbon & Ross partnership specialised in housing, hotels and country houses, constructing additions to properties such as Carberry Tower (Midlothian) and Crosbie Castle (Ayrshire). In Edinburgh, the offices of the Parochial Board in Castle Terrace were theirs, as was the Caledonian Insurance Company in George Street, now the George Hotel, two theatres, the Alhambra and the new Theatre Royal, Morningside Free Church and additions to the Royal Maternity and Simpson Memorial Hospital. Their style was generally Scots Baronial, based on their studies of medieval and early modern architecture.

Since the mid-1860s both men had been sketching in the course of their travels, and when, in 1880, MacGibbon was elected president of the Edinburgh Architectural Association, he delivered presidential lectures on early Scottish art and architecture which were followed up by papers on Scottish Castles and Houses in 1883-4. Out of these well received papers *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* and *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland* projects were born. The resultant books, with introductory essays, detailed descriptions, accurate survey drawings (supplemented by other contributors and by illustrations of earlier origin such as those by James Skene of Rubislaw) were, and have remained, acknowledged masterpieces.

The approach adopted was more archaeological than had hitherto been adopted and established important new findings about the building methods and masons employed.

Although MacGibbon was a photographer, both men chose to measure and draw their subjects. Whilst some of the visits continued to be made while travelling on other business, most were undertaken at weekends by train and bicycle, usually setting out on a Friday evening equipped with weekend bags, drawing boards and provisions brought to Waverley Station, Edinburgh, by their daughters. Sometimes the partners travelled together, sometimes separately, depending on what had to be done.

Progress on these and other projects was, however, set back by a personal tragedy in July 1884 when the MacGibbon family was on holiday at Kingussie. A bank of the River Spey collapsed, burying their 12-year-old elder son, William Peter, and his sister Rachel. The boy was killed and, although Rachel was dug out alive, her lungs were affected by sand and she was permanently deafened. The family moved to the French Riviera to aid her recovery, leaving Thomas Ross in sole charge of the office for extended periods, during which he progressed the surveys for the publications on his own. Meanwhile, MacGibbon put his time with his family on the Riviera in 1884-5 and 1886 to good use, and the end result, *The Architecture of Provence and the Riviera*, was published in 1888, between volumes 1 and 2 of *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*. A decade later, MacGibbon again turned his attention to the continent, combining his sketches with those which his surviving son, Alfred Lightly ('Fred'), had made in northern France and Belgium between 1895 and 1897. However, although trial proofs were made, this book never appeared.

David MacGibbon's last major publication came in 1899 with the Ayrshire and Galloway Archaeological Association's 'The Five Great Churches of Galloway', a by-product of *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland*. However, when the University of St Andrews conferred the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws on him in April 1899 he was too ill to attend. By March 1901 he was no longer able to attend the Merchant Company meetings and had to resign as their architect. Aged 70, David MacGibbon died at home, 23 Learmonth Terrace, Edinburgh, on 20 February 1902. He was survived by his second son Fred, three un-married daughters, Isabella, Jessie and Rachel, and his wife Jessie (d. 1926), whom, as Jessie Vannan Rintoul, daughter of a wealthy Glasgow merchant Peter Rintoul of Bothwell Bank, he had married on 18 July 1865. His moveable estate was £22,688, a substantial sum, though less than what he had inherited from his own father.

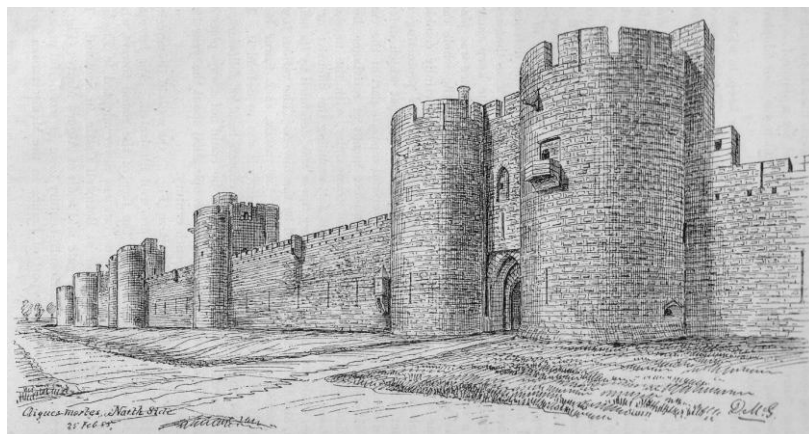


Figure 2. Aigues Mortes: perspective sketch of north side by David MacGibbon, dated 25 February 1885 (from MacGibbon and Ross, *Castellated and Domestic Architecture*, volume 1 (1887), page 32).

Thomas Ross, architect (1839-1930): co-author, with David MacGibbon, of *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1887-92) and *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland* (Edinburgh, 1896-7).⁵

The son of a Perthshire tenant farmer, Thomas Ross was born at Wardheads Farm, near Errol on the Carse of Gowrie, on 10 November 1839. Educated locally at Errol Parish School and Kinnoull Academy, Perth, he began his architectural training in Glasgow in about 1855 when he was articled to Alexander Kirkland. By 1861 he had moved to the office of Charles Wilson from which he won a measured drawing prize with drawings of Glasgow Cathedral.

The association with David MacGibbon (q.v.) and Edinburgh, which was to shape the rest of his life, began in 1862 when MacGibbon engaged him as an assistant, taking him into partnership ten years later, in October 1872. Together, as described above under MacGibbon, the MacGibbon & Ross practice worked on the Merchant Company schools, the National Bank of Scotland buildings and many other commissions, private and commercial, especially in Edinburgh and eastern Scotland.

Also as described above, since the mid-1860s both men had been sketching in the course of their business travels, and the idea for *The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland* and *The Ecclesiastical Architecture of Scotland* publication projects finally emerged out of lectures delivered by MacGibbon in 1880 and 1883-4. Ross's scholarly and archaeological approach was an especially significant contribution to the whole exercise and to the lasting value of the published work. A Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, he took a keen interest in excavations such as those at the forts of Dunadd, Newstead, Castle Cary and Rough Castle, and became the Society's Rhind lecturer in 1899 (on ecclesiastical architecture) and 1902 (secular architecture).

Following the publication of the two sets of volumes, other appropriate honours flowed in his direction. The University of Edinburgh conferred on him the honorary degree of Doctor of Laws in 1910, and in 1918 the Royal Scottish Academy elected him Honorary Academician and Professor of Antiquities. With Sir Robert Lorimer, Ross was also responsible for the implementation and editorship of the National Art Survey of Scotland. In 1908 Ross became one of the founding Commissioners of the RCAHMS, throwing himself into its activities with energy and enthusiasm and writing reports as if he were an employee. Indeed, in 1915, it was while working for the Commission, making sketches of Rossend Castle at Burntisland, Fife, in a prohibited area overlooking the naval anchorage in the Firth of Forth, that Ross was arrested as a suspected spy. In fining him five shillings, the sheriff at Cupar Sheriff Court observed that 'one never knew when sketches might be of value' to the enemy.

After MacGibbon's death in 1902 the MacGibbon & Ross practice nominally continued with Fred MacGibbon as a partner, but Ross concentrated more and more on restoration, recording and advisory work. As a result of the books, commissions

flowed in for restoration work, but few were actually realised, the biggest single disappointment being the Office of Works' refusal to sanction the restoration of the nave of Holyrood Abbey for which funds had been bequeathed by the Earl of Leven and Melville. Ross's last significant commission was the reconstruction of 3–11 Abbey Strand, Canongate, Edinburgh, where in 1916 he restored the original roofline. Thereafter, he undertook only small jobs from his home at 14 Saxe-Coburg Place, Edinburgh.

Aged 91, Thomas Ross died on 4 December 1930, when his moveable estate amounted to £7,639. In July 1927, he had been pre-deceased by his wife, Mary (née MacLaren). Their two daughters, Elizabeth Hume and Johanna Caird Ross, never married and retained the family home in Saxe-Coburg Place until their deaths. His architect son, James MacLaren Ross (1878-1944), destroyed most of the practice papers but those relating to the books and to RCAHMS business were given to the National Library of Scotland. Some Edinburgh drawings were also given to Edinburgh Central Library, and during his lifetime, Ross himself had given some of his drawings to the University of Aberdeen as a result of his interest in the work of Douglas Simpson (q.v.).

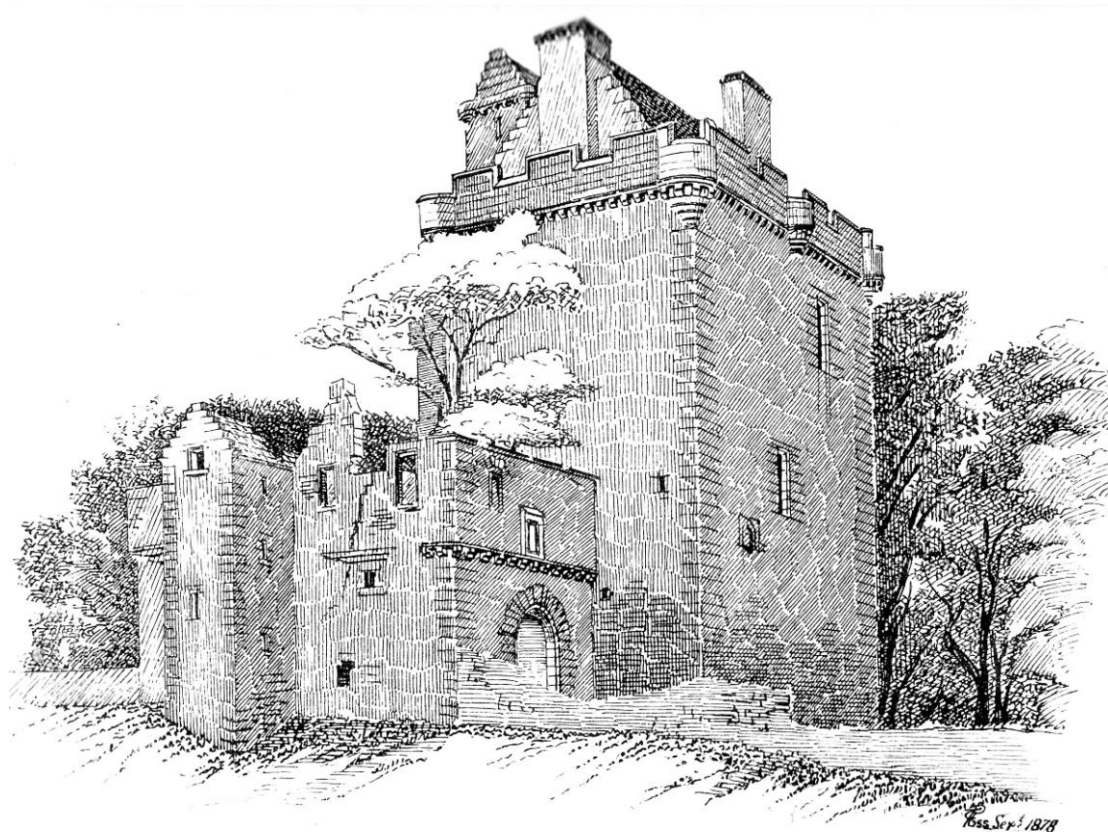


Figure 3. Balvaird Castle: perspective sketch from north-east by Thomas Ross, dated September 1878 (from MacGibbon and Ross, *Castellated and Domestic Architecture*, volume 1 (1887), page 341).

William Mackay Mackenzie, historian (1871-1952): author of *The Mediaeval Castle in Scotland* (London, 1927), Secretary of RCAHMS (now Historic Environment Scotland), 1913-35, and RCAHMS Commissioner, 1943-52.⁶

Born in Cromarty on 20 November 1871, William Mackay Mackenzie was the eldest son of Mr and Mrs Alexander Holm Mackenzie, the local Registrar and Clerk to the Justices. He went from Cromarty School to Edinburgh University where he graduated with honours in Classics. Student president of the university's Liberal Association, Mackenzie was encouraged to take up a political career or to enter the ministry. However, he had other, more scholarly ambitions and from 1896 to 1913 he was a history master at Glasgow Academy, during which time he wrote a number of books. Appropriately, his first was on Hugh Miller, celebrated son of Cromarty; others were on major topics of medieval Scottish history, including an edition of Barbour's *Bruce*, an account of the Battle of Bannockburn, and a useful general *Outline of Scottish History ... to the Disruption*. His versatile skill in handling medieval literary texts and in relating history to antiquities eventually brought him to the notice of the wider academic community.

The major turning point in his career came at the age of 41 with his appointment in 1913 to the Secretaryship of RCAHMS in succession to Alexander Curle. During World War I, when the Commission's work was suspended, Mackenzie joined the editorial staff of the War Trade Intelligence Department, where his knowledge of languages stood him in good stead. Resuming after the war, Mackenzie was responsible for a series of larger format RCAHMS county or regional *Inventories of Monuments* to which he contributed the introductions and much other material. The *Inventories* in question were those of Berwickshire (revised edition), Dumfriesshire, East Lothian, Midlothian, West Lothian, the Outer Hebrides (including Skye and the Small Isles), and Fife (including Kinross-shire and Clackmannanshire). Unfortunately, however, Mackenzie's survey of the early history of the South of Scotland, which was designed as a wider introduction to the East Lothian volume, never passed beyond the galley-proof stage. Linking the monuments to a full account of family and territorial history, it was considered to have gone too far beyond the remit of RCAHMS of the day.

His abilities in relating fieldwork to documentary research was most notably shown in his first set of Rhind Lectures for the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1925-6, published in 1927 as *The Mediaeval Castle in Scotland*. In 1945 he was invited to give a second set of Rhind Lectures - a most unusual honour - and these were published in 1949 as *The Scottish Burghs*. As was said in his obituary in *The Glasgow Herald* of 5 August 1952, 'no writer of our time was more skilful or more resolute to winnow truth from legend'. Another commentator paid tribute to the fact that 'few scholars have worked on so broad a front or have applied so keenly critical a mind to the problems of Scots history and literature, among them the much fought-over battles of Bannockburn and Flodden.'

Mackenzie retired from RCAHMS in 1935, the year after Sir George Macdonald had taken over the Chairmanship from Sir Herbert Maxwell. The two events were connected. Indeed, legend has it that Mackay Mackenzie was so fearful of the fierce and redoubtable Sir George that he was known to have hidden in a cupboard whenever a visit to the Secretary's office was imminent. But Mackenzie's scholarship

was not to be so easily bullied into obscurity. During World War II he was given charge of the Department of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh, and in 1942 was appointed Professor of Antiquities to the Royal Scottish Academy, thereby becoming an Honorary Academician. By a supreme irony, this appointment was in succession to Sir George Macdonald who had died in 1940. In 1943, Mackenzie was even welcomed back into the ranks of RCAHMS as a Commissioner, and in 1949 he received an honorary degree of Doctor of Laws from Edinburgh University.

In retirement after World War II, Mackenzie returned with his wife, Isabella Jane (née MacKenzie of Stornoway, whom he married in 1901), to the family home at 4 Barkly Street, Cromarty. Approaching 80, he died in the Royal Northern Infirmary, Inverness, on 4 August 1952, and is buried in the cemetery of the Gaelic Chapel on the hill above his beloved Cromarty.

Childless himself, William had five younger brothers and one sister. Of these, the second and third brothers were also persons of literary distinction. Donald Alexander Mackenzie (1873-1936), author, poet and folk-lore authority, published some 50 books, far more than William, while the third brother, George, became editor of the *Northern Chronicle* newspaper in Inverness.

William Douglas Simpson, historian and librarian (1896-1968): author of *The Castle of Kildrummy: its place in Scottish history and architecture* (Aberdeen, 1923) and numerous books and papers on British and Scandinavian castles, churches and related themes, and long-serving Aberdeen University Librarian.⁷

The younger son of Henry Fyfe Morland Simpson (d.1920), Rector of Aberdeen Grammar School, and his German wife, Jenny Fridericke, née Dohm (d.1949), William Douglas Simpson was born at 80 Hamilton Place, Aberdeen, on 2 August 1896. From Aberdeen Grammar School he went on to Aberdeen University, but his studies were interrupted by war service which, following a discharge from the army on medical grounds, he spent on coast-watching and Ministry of National Service duties. His elder brother was killed in World War I.

Douglas Simpson graduated in 1919 with First Class Honours in History, taking the Caithness Prize for the highest place in the examination and the Forbes Gold Medal as the student considered by the examiners to be the most proficient. He opted to remain in Aberdeen University where he was first appointed assistant to Sanford Terry, Professor of History, and then from 1920 lectured in British History.

Simpson's interest in castles, particularly of North-eastern Scotland, had already been developing whilst he was a schoolboy, his first dated publication being a precocious piece on Hallforest Castle in the *Aberdeen Grammar School Magazine*, volume 16 (1912-13), 104-6. Between 1919 and 1926 some 60 further published works - books, papers, reviews - flowed prolifically from his pen, the single most important being the *The Castle of Kildrummy: its place in Scottish history and architecture* (Aberdeen, 1923), for which the university awarded him a D.Litt. This subject, which remained a core interest, was widened later into a regional study of the *The Province of Mar* (Aberdeen, 1943), the subject of his 1941 Rhind Lectures in Archaeology to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, and *The Earldom of Mar* (Aberdeen 1949).

In 1926 Simpson was appointed Aberdeen University Librarian, a post which he held for the rest of his working life until 1966. Among the testimonials supporting his application for the post was one from Baden Powell, founder of the Boy Scout Movement, in which Simpson likewise retained a life-long interest, eventually receiving the Silver Wolf, the highest award in scouting, for 60 years of service. He took scouts to see local castles and used them as labourers on his excavations, many of them later recalling ‘Fossil’ Simpson with affection.

Simpson’s castle studies did not remain confined to his North-eastern heartland and soon came to extend over the rest of Britain, Norway and the European continent as far as East Prussia, a region with which he retained maternal family links. Castles also formed part of much wider interests in archaeology and history which embraced early Christianity and ecclesiastical monuments. The span of his interests is well reflected in his best-known work for the general reader, *The Ancient Stones of Scotland* published in 1965, towards the end of his life. A bibliography of his prodigious output on all subjects lists over 400 items, and beyond them lay the considerable influence which he generated through a powerful and successful lecturing style.

He was honoured with an OBE in 1954 and a CBE in 1962. In 1960 he received an Honorary LLD from Aberdeen University and, in recognition of his services to Norwegian architecture and antiquities, became a Commander of the Royal Order of St Olav. He served as Chairman of the Ancient Monuments Board for Scotland, as a Commissioner on RCAHMS, and as President of the Scottish History Society.

A devout Episcopalian, Douglas Simpson was lay reader at St James Church, Holburn Junction, Aberdeen, and on 12 August 1935, in the Cathedral Church of St Paul, Dundee, he married Ellen Dorothy Mason (1901-84), a Dundee bank clerk whom he had first met in 1933. They had one daughter, Ann, who became a linguist. Successive family homes were in Old Aberdeen, including, latterly, the Wallace Tower in Tillydrone, an early 17th-century urban tower which had been removed from a threatened city centre site and re-erected in Seaton Park in 1964-5. Aged 72, Simpson died whilst at work in King’s College Library, Aberdeen, on 9 October 1968, and is buried in Springbank Cemetery, Aberdeen.

Stewart Hunter Cruden, architect (1915-2002): author of *The Scottish Castle* (Edinburgh, 1960 and later editions) and Principal Inspector of Ancient Monuments, Office of Works, Edinburgh (now Historic Environment Scotland), 1946-80.⁸

Born in Edinburgh on 22 January 1915, Stewart Hunter Cruden was the son of Alexander and Mabel Cruden. He was educated at the Royal High School, Edinburgh, and, like his father, trained as an architect at the Edinburgh College of Art while feeding an appetite for historic architecture by attending lectures on archaeology and Scottish history at Edinburgh University. In due course, also following in his father’s footsteps, he joined the Drawing Office of the Ancient Monuments Branch of the Ministry of Works.

By the time he qualified as an architect, however, his career in government service was interrupted by World War II. For Stewart Cruden this proved to be a particularly eventful and dangerous experience, culminating in the ordeal of three-and-a-half years

as a Japanese prisoner-of-war. Having joined the Royal Navy, by 1941 he was commissioned as sub-lieutenant and posted to the destroyer, HMS *Electra*, which was among those sunk at the Battle of the Java Sea on 27 February 1942. Stewart was among 19 men who clung to a life-raft for four days before being picked up by Japanese, by which time only five of them remained alive. During his subsequent captivity he is said to have run courses for his fellow-prisoners on the history of European architecture, using the sand as his blackboard and a stick for chalk. After the end of hostilities, he stayed on to help the Dutch peace-keeping force, in recognition of which he was created a Knight of the Order of Orange-Nassau.

Demobilised in 1946, Cruden returned to the Edinburgh Office of Works where he took up the position of Inspector of Ancient Monuments in succession to Dr James Richardson. Commanding a growing team of inspectors with ever-widening responsibilities, he remained in what became the post as Principal Inspector until his retirement in 1980. He received an OBE in 1972, but it is a measure of the special esteem and loyalty that he engendered in his colleagues and associates over this period that a festschrift was dedicated to him. The 19 essays in *Studies in Scottish Antiquity presented to Stewart Cruden*, edited by David J Breeze (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1984) constitute a warm and wide-ranging tribute, reflecting the broad spectrum of Cruden's official responsibilities and his personal interests, which were broadly synonymous.

Perhaps it is an indirect measure of his dominance of this subject-area that the festschrift presented to a leading expert in Scottish castle studies contained no offering relating to medieval stone castles. One of the contributions, though, that by David Walker on MacGibbon & Ross, reveals a telling glimpse into the inspiration which Stewart himself drew from a portrait of Thomas Ross which accompanied him through many changes of office location. Ross, like MacGibbon and later scholars such as Douglas Simpson, were clearly formative influences on Cruden whose own major work, *The Scottish Castle*, like theirs, eschewed narrow definitions and was unashamedly broad in its approach, in his case embracing brochs and 18th-century bastioned forts. A product of its time, it also took what would now be regarded as a questionably functional view of its subject: 'A castle is a functional structure. Its form varies with the changing demands of military or domestic requirements, with the terrain, with the nature of the challenge it is intended to meet, and with the notions and material resources of the builder'.

Although Cruden's principal interests remained rooted in medieval architecture, they extended well beyond castles to ecclesiastical buildings and Pictish monuments, subjects on which he also published books. Developing teaching skills learnt as a prisoner-of-war, Cruden also became an inspiring lecturer, principally through the extra-mural classes on architecture which he ran for many years in Edinburgh University. His interests also extended well beyond architecture to golf, swimming, music and membership of the Scottish Arts Club.

In 1951 Stewart Cruden married Elizabeth Wright, and they had three sons, Bryan, Gordon and Douglas. Elizabeth died in 1995, and Stewart himself died in Edinburgh on 30 October 2002, aged 87, survived by his sons and grandchildren.

Notes and references

1. Of the sources used in the original compilation, special mention should be made of the *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004, and <https://www.oxforddnb.com/>) which contains accounts of two of the present subjects, Billings and Simpson. The *Dictionary of Scottish Architects*, an on-line resource at <https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/r/dsa/dsa/home>, which was founded on the encyclopaedic knowledge of Professor David M Walker, also includes Billings and has been the primary source for MacGibbon and Ross.
2. What was intended as an interim, stop-gap version of the 2005 essay was published five years later as Geoffrey Stell, 'Scottish castellology and castellologists: a brief historical introduction', *Castellologica Bohemica*, 12 (2010), 79-88, while other contributions on this theme have included Richard Oram, 'Castles, concepts and contexts: castle studies in Scotland in retrospect and prospect', *Château Gaillard*, 23 (2008), 349-59, and Janet Brennan-Inglis, *A Passion for Castles: the story of MacGibbon and Ross and the castles they surveyed* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2022). See also, Geoffrey Stell, 'Obituary: John Dunbar, 1 March 1930-6 May 2018', *Proc. Soc. Antiq. Scot.*, 147 (2018), 9-16.
3. Annette Peach, 'Billings, Robert William (1813-1874)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004 and later editions); [David M Walker] Historic Environment Scotland, Dictionary of Scottish Architects: https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/r/dsa/dsa/architects?p8_id=200107; and see also, <https://artuk.org/discover/artists/billings-robert-william-18131874>. For his collaborator on the historical background, see Michael Fry, 'Burton, John Hill (1809-81)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004 and later editions); and Craig Beveridge, *Recovering Scottish History: John Hill Burton and Scottish National Identity in the Nineteenth Century* (Edinburgh, 2022). Burton contributed to at least 86 of the accompanying texts, 22 of which were relatively substantial discrete 'historical sketches'.
4. David M Walker, 'The Architecture of MacGibbon & Ross: The Background to the Books', David J Breeze (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Antiquity presented to Stewart Cruden* (Edinburgh, 1984), 391-449; [David M Walker] Historic Environment Scotland, Dictionary of Scottish Architects: https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/r/dsa/dsa/architects?p8_id=201785; Historic Environment Scotland: RIAS Drawings Collection 551 223/13 and Records of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland 551 249/463; National Library of Scotland, Archives and Manuscripts, MSS 686-729: drawings and notes mainly by Thomas Ross with some by David MacGibbon. See also, Janet Brennan-Inglis, *A Passion for Castles: the story of MacGibbon and Ross and the castles they surveyed* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2022), 15-25.
5. David M, Walker, 'The Architecture of MacGibbon & Ross: The Background to the Books' in David J Breeze (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Antiquity, Essays Presented to Stewart Cruden* (Edinburgh, 1984), 391-449; [David M Walker] Historic Environment Scotland, Dictionary of Scottish Architects:

https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/f?p=1999:8:14920790746938:::P8_ID:201067 ; Historic Environment Scotland: Thomas Ross Collection 551 327; National Library of Scotland, Archives and Manuscripts, MSS 686-729, drawings and notes mainly by Thomas Ross with some by David MacGibbon. See also, Janet Brennan-Inglis, *A Passion for Castles: the story of MacGibbon and Ross and the castles they surveyed* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 2022), 27-38.

6. Jane Durham, 'Famous People' in Donald Omand (ed.), *The Ross and Cromarty Book* (Golspie, 1984), 230-40 at 239; John G Dunbar, 'The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, The First Eighty Years', *Transactions of the Ancient Monuments Society*, volume 36 (1992), 13-77, at 20-31; and Geoffrey Stell, 'Cromarty's History Man: Dr William Mackay Mackenzie, 1871-1952', unpublished paper presented to the Cromarty History Society, 24 November 1998. A portrait in oils of William Mackay Mackenzie by David Simpson Foggie, 1914, with drawings of Hoddum Castle, Dumfriesshire, in the background is viewable at <https://www.nationalgalleries.org/art-and-artists/3134> (National Galleries of Scotland, PG 2312) and is described in Geoffrey Stell, 'New light on an old portrait', *The Castle Studies Group Bulletin*, 44 (April 2026), 5-6.

7. Ian B D Bryce, 'Dr. W. Douglas Simpson, "Last of the Polymaths"', *Leopard Magazine*, No. 36 (February 1978), 14-16; A T Hall, 'A Bibliography of W. Douglas Simpson 1896-1968' in W Douglas Simpson, *Dunollie, Oban, Argyll* (Aberdeen, 1991), 1-32; A T Hall, 'Simpson, William Douglas (1896-1968)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004); University Library, University of Aberdeen: Personal Papers 'Simpson, William Douglas, historian and archaeologist, papers including collection of archaeological, monumental and architectural plans, 19th century-20th century' (MSS 2729, 2818, 3759); and Printed Collections 'Dr William Douglas Simpson'. A characterful image of Douglas Simpson illustrating a talk at Castle Fraser, Aberdeenshire, in 1956 is viewable at <https://www.trove.scot/archive/761087> (Historic Environment Scotland, ref. SC 802341).

8. 'A bibliography of Stewart Cruden's publications', David J Breeze (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Antiquity presented to Stewart Cruden* (Edinburgh, 1984), 488-9; Obituary notices: *The Scotsman*, November 2002 (Iain MacIvor) and *The Times*, 26 November 2002 (un-named); [David M Walker] Historic Environment Scotland, Dictionary of Scottish Architects: https://www.scottisharchitects.org.uk/apex/r/dsa/dsa/architects?p8_id=400049 ; and Historic Environment Scotland, Stewart H Cruden Collection, 551 699 (<https://www.trove.scot/archive/2103313>). A choice image of Stewart Cruden at Melrose Abbey in May 1979 serves as a frontispiece to David J Breeze (ed.), *Studies in Scottish Antiquity presented to Stewart Cruden* (John Donald, Edinburgh, 1984).