

**Stable Building and Coach House at Cambo Estate  
Statement of Significance**



## Introduction

The stable building at Cambo is one of a number of buildings ancillary to Cambo House that contribute to the collective architectural and historic importance of the policies and estate. The stable is category B-listed and is within the Cambo designed landscape included in the Inventory of Gardens and Designed Landscapes. The original stable building was designed by George Paterson in the 1760s and the first floor added in 1870; the additional coach houses and the large walled garden which the stables adjoin is attributed to Robert Balfour, circa 1800; the north courtyard and the detached cartshed building known as the Coach House are likely to be early 19th century.

The Cambo designed landscape largely derives from the initiative of Thomas Erskine, 9th Earl of Kellie (from 1799) who returned to Cambo in the 1790s after a successful career as a merchant and diplomat in Sweden, where he had also been influential in encouraging agricultural improvements. From the 1790s until his death in 1828 he extended the old Cambo House, laid out the policies in the fashionable informal Picturesque style, and introduced new 'improved' methods of enclosed farming. Cambo had been in the Erskine family since 1668 but for twenty four years from 1759 to 1783 was owned by Francis Charteris who assumed the title of 7th Earl of Wemyss in 1787 following the death of his Jacobite sympathiser brother Lord Elcho, and it is from Charteris' ownership that the original

1. West elevation and stable block, 2011
2. Thomas Erskine, 9th Earl of Kellie



## Description of Stable Buildings

The original stable building was a single storey, U-plan, 6-bay lime-hartled structure with slightly advanced 2-storey pyramidal pavilions with ashlar rusticated quoins. Two keystone round-headed doors with fanlights flanked by 12-pane sash and case windows mark the entrances to the stables, and there are keystone coach arches at the pavilions (one blocked, both masked by later additions). The central 6-bay block has been raised by a full storey. The stable was built on a north-south axis off the main drive to Cambo House on a bluff overlooking the Cambo burn (the current walled garden) adjoining at the south-east angle an area known as the old garden.

This area includes a cottage with a lower storey which probably predates the stables. The cottage has been raised and extended to abut the stable building. A further U-plan court has been created to the north by the addition on an ad hoc basis of single storey structures in a vernacular manner, which like the main building retains some of the unifying lime-hart coach houses with rusticated quoins have been added to the pavilions at the front of the building, masking the original arched entrances.

These additions never appear to have been hartled. The whole stables and cottage complex is currently roofed with Scotch slates laid to diminishing courses, although there is evidence that clay pantiles may previously have been used on the rear wings (the slates fall short of the closed skew on the rear walls of the pavilions). The walls of the later walled garden to the east abut the rear wings and enclose the U-plan to form a courtyard. There is evidence that under the accumulated soil there are shivers and cobbles; the courtyard to the front (west) elevation is settled.

Internally the stables retain twelve stalls, divided by timber trevises (one is missing) and iron columns linked by timber arches to form a colonnade. There are two rounded timber hay/ fodder chute cupboards, and the tackroom in the original north coach house retains tack brackets and fittings, and a fireplace with iron grate. The original south coach house has been divided to form loose boxes. The majority of the floors are laid with flagstones

1. View from the old garden
2. The Dovecot
3. The north range
4. The Cottage
5. Rear courtyard view of the Bothy
6. View of the villa porca



1. Coach house
2. Francis Charteris, 7th Earl of Wemyss

## Coach House

The detached building to the south of the stables close to the burn is known as the coach house, but is of classic cart shed and granary type design and construction. Rubble built, and in some places resembling the tooled and coursed squared rubble of the c1800 coach houses, there is a piended roof with Scotch slate laid to diminishing courses. The two segmental arched openings for vehicles are flanked by the doors and windows of a stable at either end of the building, and there are openings to the upper hayloft floor.



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## Francis Charteris, 7th Earl of Wemyss, and his architects

Francis Charteris, known as the golfing Earl, changed his birth surname of Wemyss to Charteris in 1732 on inheriting a fortune from his maternal grandfather, Colonel Francis Charteris, a noted if not notorious rake, gambler, and founder member of the Hellfire Club; he is caricatured in Hogarth's satirical painting *A Harlot's Progress* as one who escaped the full force of the law because of his social position.

Part of Francis' inheritance was his grandfather's estate of Amisfield near Haddington, where in 1755 he built a new house in the Palladian style designed by Isaac Ware (demolished 1928). Ware was an influential London architect and architectural theorist, and member of Lord Burlington's circle. His publications include a translation of Palladio's *Four Books of Architecture* (1738), and *A Complete Body of Architecture Adorned with Plans and Elevations from Original Designs* (1756-7), which includes plates of the principal elevation and plan of Amisfield.

When he purchased Cambo in 1759 therefore, Charteris was well used to working on a big building project with a famous architect, and it is tempting to look for Ware's influence on the stable building. But it was an Edinburgh architect and laird of Connoquhie in Fife, George Paterson who in the 1760s designed the original stable building. While Ware was concerned with the principles of Palladianism and grand country houses, Paterson was a 'jobbing' architect and although he undertook alterations to Amisfield House in 1766, any influence of Ware on the Cambo stables appear only to extend to the classical principle of symmetry and pared down neo-classical detail.

Paterson was nevertheless a significant architect, and worked on such high status buildings as Dunfermline Abbey, St Salvator's Chapel St Andrews, Bothwell Castle, Mount Stuart in Bute, Dalhousie Castle, and Scone Palace, in addition to superintending the construction of St Cecilia's Hall in Edinburgh in 1761-3 for its architect Robert Mylne. In 1790, seven years after Charteris sold Cambo back to the Erskines and now the de jure 7th Earl of Wemyss, he commissioned Robert Adam to design a new Gosford House, near the links overlooking the Forth in East Lothian. Concurrently, John Paterson who was probably the son of George, was helping to manage Adam's practice in Edinburgh, and after that architect's death in 1792 worked on many large Scottish country houses continuing the Adam brothers' late castellated style.



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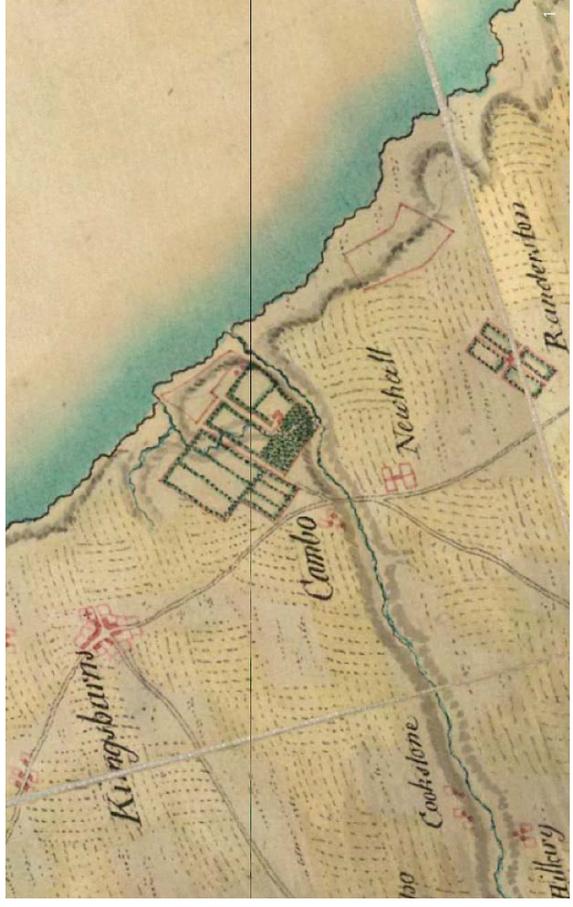
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## Chronology and evidence of the development of the stable buildings

The estate records of Cambo are incomplete because of the fire which largely destroyed the old house in 1878. This chronology has therefore been largely compiled from other archives. Some estate plans mentioned in the Inventory have been mislaid since it was compiled in 1996.

The Roy map of 1747-55 is the earliest to show Cambo in any detail. It is not to scale or comprehensive, but when compared to the Map of the Counties of Fife and Kinross (T Sharp, C Greenwood and W Fowler, 1828) and the OS first edition (surveyed in 1854) there are some marked differences. The rectangular parks and dense woodland adjoining the house, delineated by stone walls and tree planting have given way to an informally planned open parkland, a wooded den with decorative cast-iron bridges, and a large walled garden straddling the Cambo burn, all in the manner of the late 18th century Picturesque landscape style. The Roy map shows some evidence of what may be the old garden and cottage on the west of the burn in the corner of the woodland which was incorporated into the stables. The OS map shows the stables complex in its present form, the kennels (only one wall survives), and the coach house.

1. Roy map, 1747-55
2. Map of counties of Fife & Kinross, 1828
3. OS first edition, 1854



## Chronology and evidence of the development of the stable buildings

There is documentary evidence for the original stable building in Francis Charteris' Cash Books in the Gosford House archives. Various entries between 1764 and 1766 refer to George Paterson, who appears to have been the contractor as well as the architect, being paid a total of £530 for 'the new offices at Cambo'. There are various other entries which refer to payments for the carriage of building materials, and for 'revises to Cambo stables'. James Begby of North Berwick was paid £13 and 13 shillings for 'thirteen thousand clinkers for Cambo stables', presumably hard stone for surfacing, and in January 1766 a new coach and harness was purchased in London for £113, perhaps for the new facilities at Cambo. The full storey addition to the central 6-bay block was apparently added in 1870. A dated Erskine family photograph shows the harling fresh and new compared to the ground floor, and there are as yet no roof vents.

1. Family archive photo, 1870



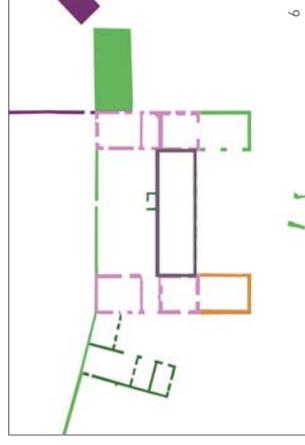
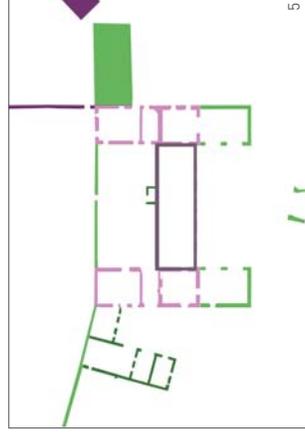
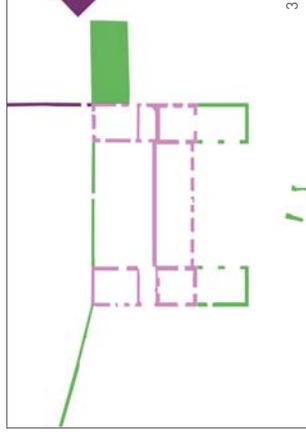
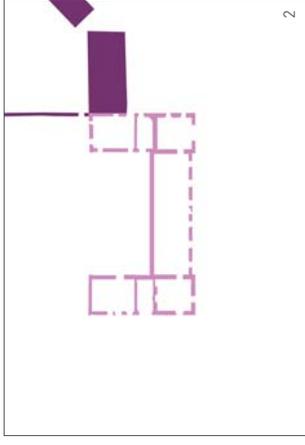
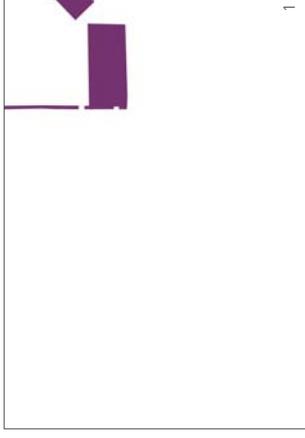
## Chronology and evidence of the development of the stable buildings

Robert Balfour is attributed with the coach house additions of circa 1800 because he had designed additions and alterations to Cambo House for Thomas Erskine in 1795. It is likely that additional stabling and coach houses would be required to service the extended house. (University of St Andrews Special Collections, Erskine of Cambo ms 97, B45, contract for additions to house). The work on the house was in co-operation with John Corstorphine of Kingsbarns, an architect/builder/wright with whom Balfour was also to work at Craig and Kingsbarns churches.

Both men were likely to have been responsible for the other additions to the stable, the walled garden, and the detached coach house. The addition to Cambo House is Balfour's earliest recorded work, the first of much in St Andrews and East Fife. He initiated the fashion for neo-classical town houses in St Andrews in the manner of the Edinburgh New Town, designed new manses and was responsible for designing or altering classical country houses such as Straththyrum, Pitmilny and Gilston. He was also a timber merchant in St Andrews, probably in conjunction with Erskine who continued his business interests in Sweden after returning to Cambo.

The walled garden and the coach house building appear on the 1828 map and the OS map surveyed in 1854. The garden was clearly well established by 1834 when an account of a visit by William Smith, gardener at the Priory in St Andrews refers to the cast-iron bridges, hot houses with grapes, peaches and nectarines, and melon pits. (Loudon's Gardener's Magazine, November 1834).

1. 1747
2. 1760
3. 1800s
4. 1828
5. Pre 1870
6. Post 1870

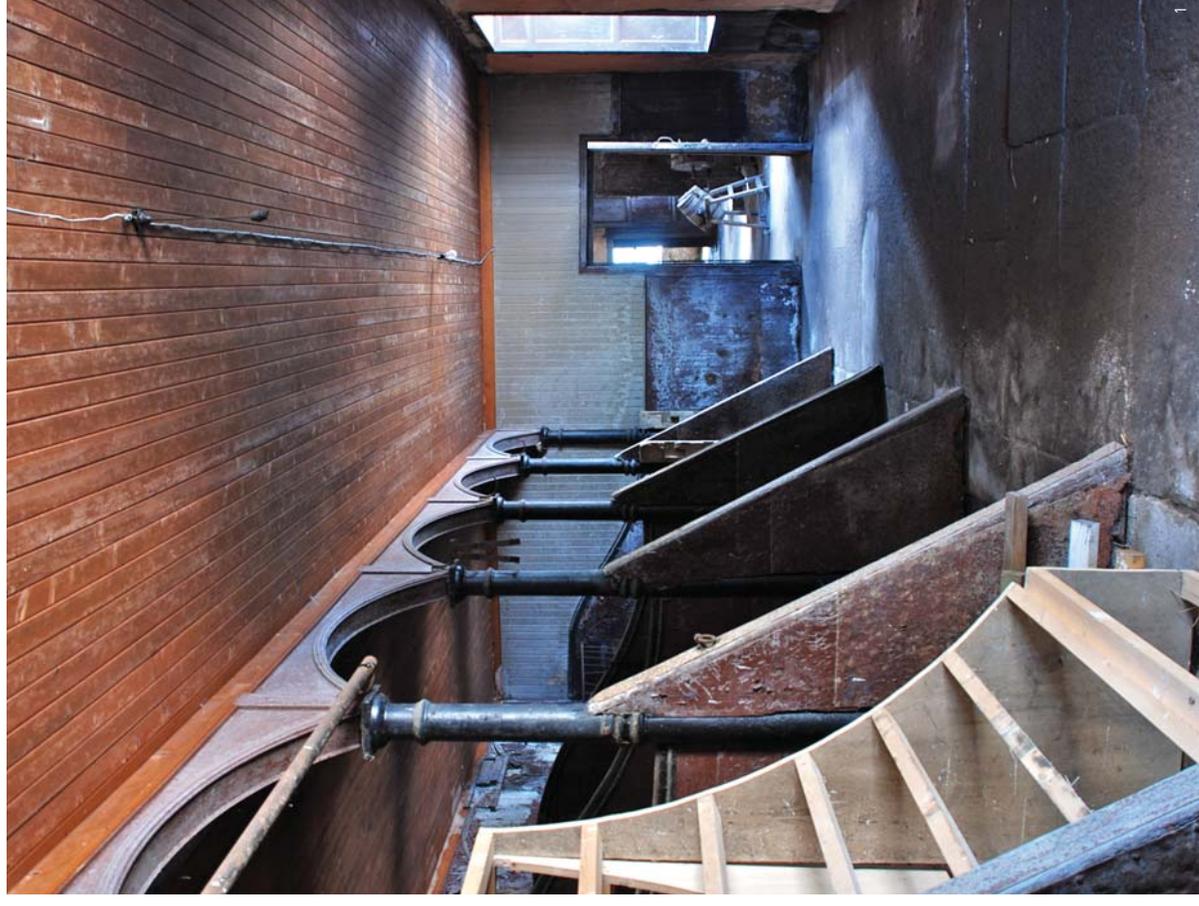


## Assessment of Significance

The original design of the stable building might be described as Italianate, the kind of structure which appears in the 17th century landscape paintings of Claude Lorraine and **Nicholas and Gaspard Poussin**, which influenced the emergence of Picturesque landscape design in Britain during the 18th century. When it was built at Cambo in the 1760s the policies had yet to be redesigned on Picturesque lines. It is not known if Charteris had such plans for Cambo but the building and its setting, conspicuous and picturesque in the landscape enhancing the approach to the house (which he may have been planning to rebuild on Palladian lines like Amisfield) might be seen as the beginning of an ambitious and fashionable scheme. Charteris' background, work at Amisfield and later work at Gosford show him as a typical aristocratic patron of fashionable architects and design. This in itself gives the stable building significance, even though its original form has been somewhat compromised by later additions, and that its original architect George Paterson and Robert Balfour were not architects of national standing.

The central stalls section survives apparently unaltered since the 1760s. Elsewhere there has been no apparent alteration since the addition of the coach houses in circa 1800 except for the dormers added to the north coach house and one of the arches infilled after 1870 (arch since reopened). Such survival is remarkable, and adds to the significance of the building.

1. North stalls looking south



1. Stables, showing infilled arch and dormers

### Assessment of Significance

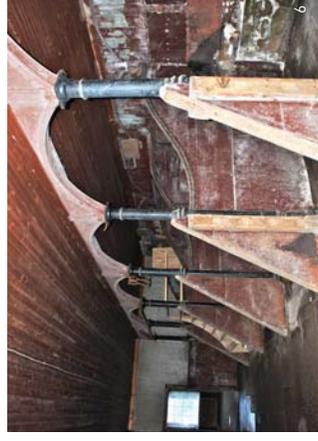


## Assessment of Significance

Stable blocks are an essential component of the set of ancillary buildings which complement a country house and its policies. There is a comparable mid 18th century B-listed stable block at Pitlour in Fife set in a Picturesque landscape, but both the stable and landscape differ in design from Cambo. Later examples exist at Balcarres, Balcaskie, Strathyrum and elsewhere. A smaller stable exists at Melville House (1690s) in one of the wings which we presume to be original but this should be read as part of the composition of the house rather than a separate building in the landscape. On a national level examples of a similar age are likely to survive, but we have not undertaken a comparative study for this exercise.

The stables are significant therefore because of the aristocratic patronage and association with nationally significant architects; because of the survival practically intact of the two periods of construction, internally and externally; because they are rare on a regional and probably national basis; because other than the dovecote the stable building is the oldest on the estate which other than the years 1759-83 has been in the Erskine family ownership since 1668; and because the stables, together with the walled garden, cast-iron bridges, dovecote, mausoleum, dairy, model farms and lodges make a major contribution to the collective architectural and historic importance of Cambo House and its policies.

1. The 'villa porca'
2. The hayloft
3. Saddle holders
4. Tack room
5. South stalls
6. North stalls



## Assessment of Significance

### Effect of proposed works on the character of the building

The approach to the adaptive re-use of the stables complex has been one of minimal intervention and conservation as will be seen from the proposal drawings. The addition to the rear is necessary to achieve stair and lift access to the first floor without compromising the interior. This will be designed to be as discrete and inconspicuous as possible. Elsewhere repairs will be undertaken using appropriate traditional materials and methods, and the introduction of modern services will be as inconspicuous and respecting of original fabric as possible. The coach house will be similarly repaired and the existing internal spaces retained, although will have modern internal finishes.

### Benefits of proposed scheme

The benefits of repairing the buildings and bringing them back into use will prolong their life and contribute to the ongoing and evolving life of the estate. It will enable the volunteer programme to develop with more satisfactory accommodation, provide improved facilities for visitors, and free up space in Cambo House for other perhaps more suitable uses. The Royal Commission are in the process of recording the stable building and others on the estate as a result of the current proposals.

1. Lady and horse at stables, date unknown
2. Pony and cart at stables, date unknown



## Assessment of Significance

### Current work at Amisfield

Although Francis Charteris's Amisfield House was demolished in 1928, the structure of the walled garden and coach house has survived. Haddington has encroached upon part of the estate, but the walled garden has now been cleared of trees and a formal planting plan reinstated by the Amisfield Preservation Trust, with similar educational and horticultural interests to the Cambo Institute. East Lothian Council has commissioned a feasibility study into the possibility of restoring the stable block and have asked for the views of local residents on possible new uses for the building. It served as a golf club house until 2005, when a new club house was built on the site of Amisfield House.

Compiled by Robin Evetts

### Sources:

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- National Library of Scotland website
- Amisfield website



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