

Doocots of East Lothian

A Topographical study

Based on a survey report presented by Mr Joseph Whitaker to the East Lothian Field Naturalists society in 1939

The genesis for this book was research into the missing history and landscape from the Siege of Haddington. During my research, I read a report on the state of the historic doocots "Dovecots" of East Lothian. The report was in the form of a survey for the East Lothian Antiquarian and Field Historians Society by a Mr Joseph Whitaker, who was a well-known Naturalist to the society. It is also an analysis of how the right to roam within Scottish law is interacting with land ownership.

The survey gave the state of each 16th, 17th and 18th-century doocot within East Lothian at that point in time in 1937.

Using Mr Whitaker's survey is a jumping-off point, I examined historical records for further updates on the doocots, in finding that there was no follow-up survey, I began to wonder why? Was it due to the fact, that as a relatively unimportant historical feature, that the doocots were, too day to day humdrum to be important enough for historical preservation?

In reading this report, I felt a deep understanding for Mr Whitaker's work, for as an artist, I feel that the less dramatic and eye-catching historical buildings and landscape are being left to rot or are being replaced.

In line with my missing history work, I undertook this project to photograph a topographical analysis of the buildings listed in the survey to see how these buildings had coped since 1937.

Amisfield

Tower

Capacity 1100 pigeons

Thee nesting-places are being 16 inches deep, while the entrance holes are eight inches high and six inches wide.

Now under the care of a local charity, the doocot is used for storage of materials. The hope to clear it and with funding, rebuild the doocot into a viewing area at the top.



Athelstaneford

Lectern

Capacity 600 pigeons

Part of the cote fell down in 1920 and at the time of writing in 1937, it was in "a tottering state"

It was rescued in the 1970s and it now houses a small museum dedicated to the St. Andrews Cross.

The nesting spaces, are twelve inches long, and nine inches high.

Rebuilt and opened in 1996, this doocot, now resting at the very edge of the graveyard is now part of the Saltire trail. It houses a small audio visual display telling the tale of the Saltire and its part in Scottish history.



Belton (Dunbar).

Lectern

Capacity 687/560 pigeons (double chamber)

The ground plan shows that originally the building was two-chambered.

The first chamber was already repurposed by 1937 and the other contains 560 nests, but if allowance be made for a number that have been removed from the south wall of the second chamber, there would be total accommodation for 687 nests. Replicated over the two chambers the original capacity would be 1374 nesting-places.

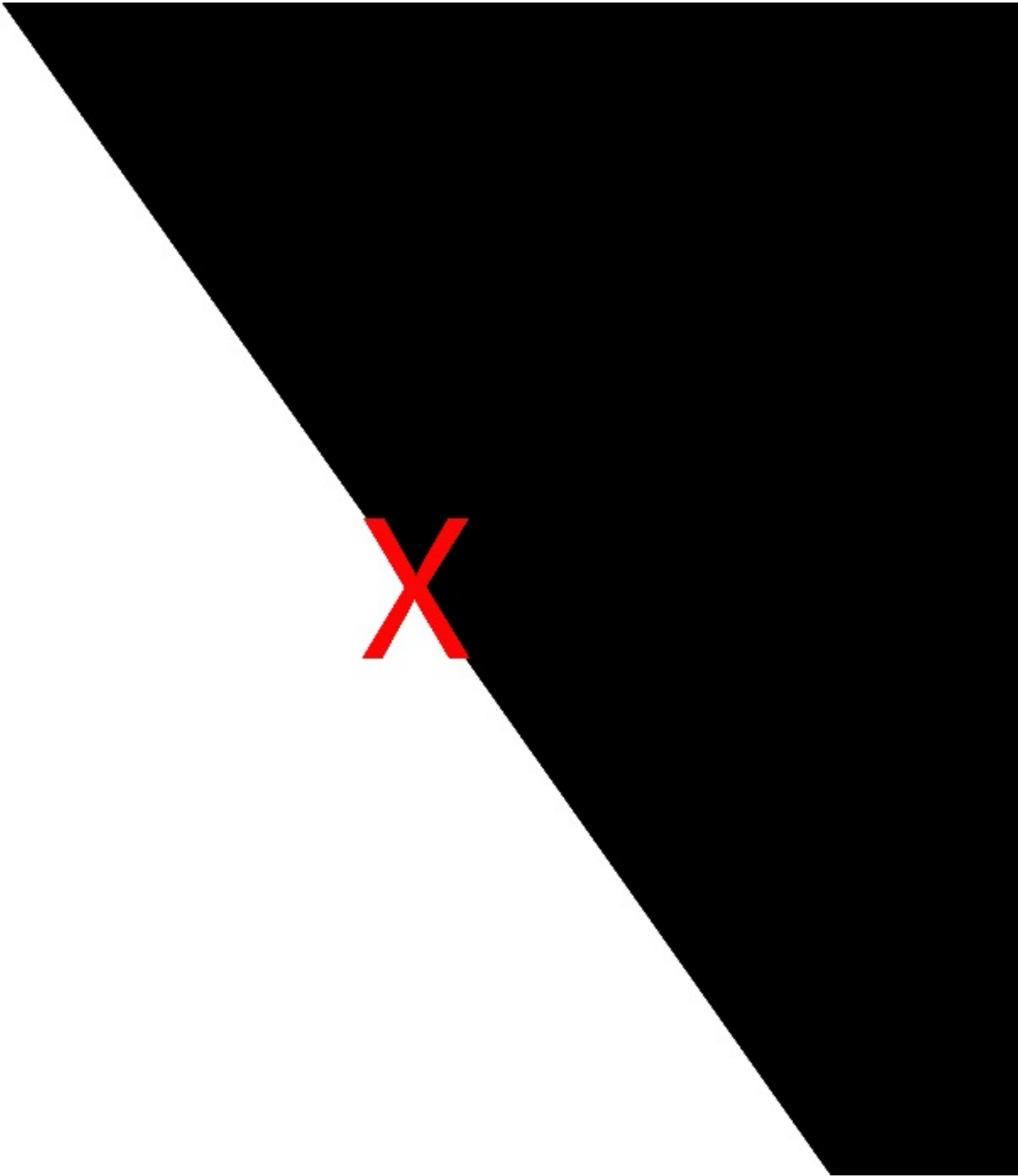
Now stands within the area of Dairy cottage.

Bielside (Dunbar).

Tower

Capacity 513 pigeons

Though this cote no longer exists, having been pulled down in the summer of 1931,



Chesterhall (Dunbar
Tower
Capacity unknown

A tower structure with a slated roof which sloped on four sides,
stading 20 feet by 14 feet and 19 and a half feet high

Part of set of sloped roof buildings, the farmhouses have been left
to fall into a ruinous state. The doocot was torn down around 1950.



Crocegate (Haddington).

Lectern

Capacity unknown.

This cote stands in the midst of a large garden, belonging to Crocegate House, the doocot no longer serves its original purpose,

It sits facing the Butts, there is a square lectern type dovecot; it is 12 1/2ft square with a front wall 13ft high and a back wall 23ft high.



Friars Croft

Lectern

Capacity 250 pigeons

An oddly shaped dopocot, sitting at the west end of Dunbar. It is all that remains of a building belonging to the Red or Trinity Friars. The dooct sits at the crossing of the choir and nave. The nests are nin inches square.

It now sits on a small green, surrounded by houses and supermarkets. It appears in good condition but is not in use in any form.



Crocegate (Haddington).

Lectern

Capacity unknown.

This cote stands in the midst of a large garden, belonging to Crocegate House, the doocot no longer serves its original purpose,

Haddington.

Tower

Capacity 579 pigeons

In the north-east corner of Lady Kitty's Garden at Haddington, opposite Nungate Bridge and bard by St. Mary's Church and the river Tyne, stands a circular tower, massively built and with battlemented top. The upper portion is a cote containing 579 nests, each of which is 13 inches long.



Hamilton House (Haddington).

Lectern

Capacity unknown.

The Apple House, dates from the 17th century or early 18th century and was formerly a two-storey building with a pigeon loft incorporated into the upper storey.

|The building was restored by the Hamilton family in 1975 as a memorial to the late Duke, at which time the top storey of the building was removed.

The Gardens Nowadays, this upper part of the structure has been removed. it is called the apple house, and is used for garden events and as a small wedding venue.



Heugh
Tower
Capacity 532 pigeons

This tower doocot has wall which are three feet thick and stands approximately 25 feet high.

Birds entered through one of 16 entrance holes.

They nested 532 birds in holes, 13 inches deep and 9 and a half inches high.

Sitting in a field to the East side of North Berwick Law and at the edge of Heugh Farm, this doocot is not longer in use.



Inglehold (or Abbey)

Lectern

Capacity 1320 pigeons

This doocot originally sat within the grounds of the Abbey, the walls are three feet 10 inches thick.

The entrance hold extended across the roof and numbered 12, there are 1320 roosting spaces.

This doocot now sits wedged in a small greenspace between two housing schemes and appears to be unattended.



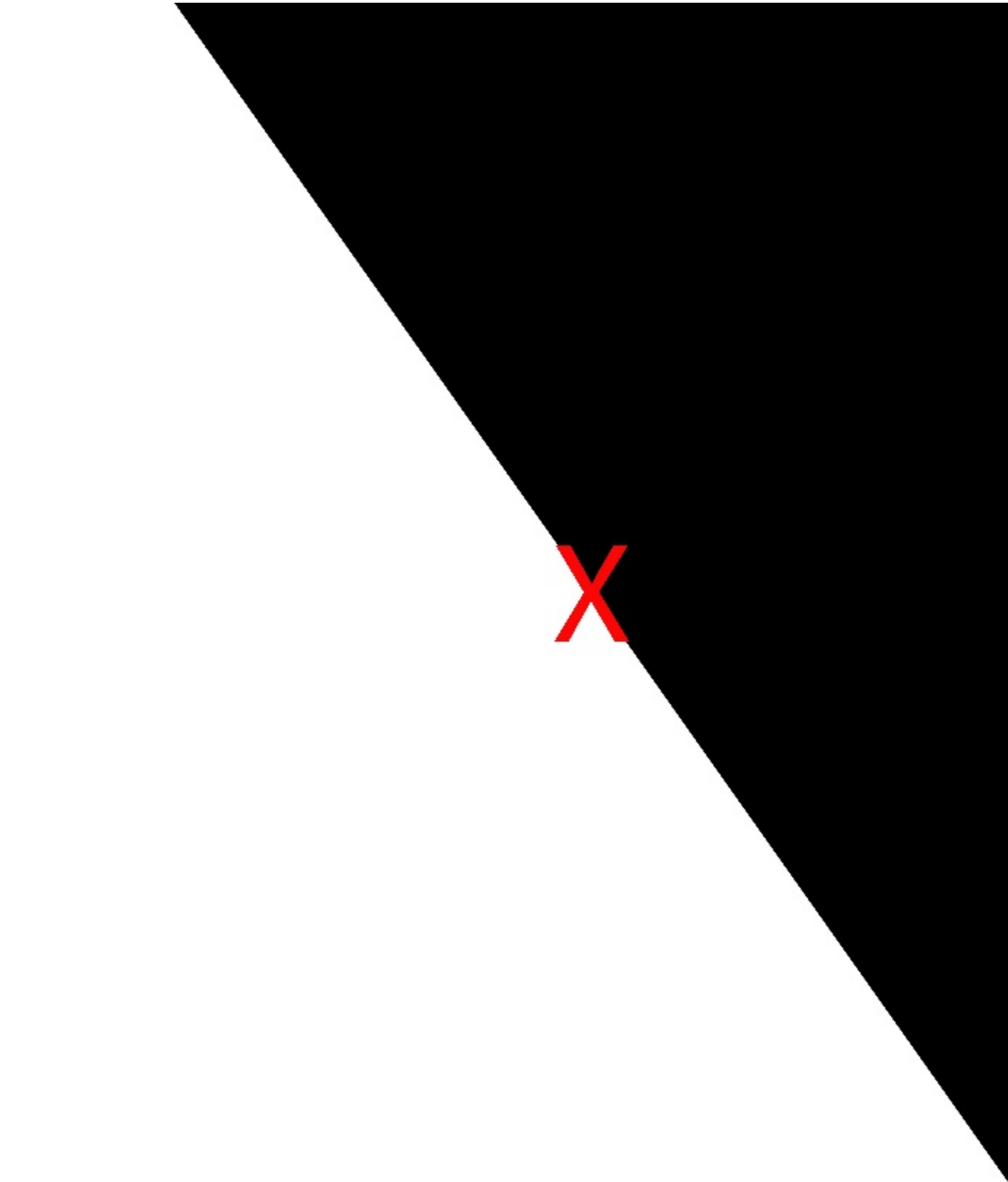
Kilspindie

Lectern

Capacity 818 pigeons

This doocots is part of the Kilspindie garden on the north side of market street. The structure is 15 and a half feet by 18 feet and stands 18 feet high, with a sloped roof. This doocot is well preserved.

This doocot was demolished in 1955, a small stone marker has been placed on the rear wall of the Tesco store to mark the rough position of the doocot.



Lodge

Lectern

Capacity 134 pigeons

in 1939 this small doocot, which was according to Mr Whitaker, quite unique, was almost complete, the only change being a newer slated roof on the doocot.

It would have roosted 134 birds in perches 13 inches long and 7 inches high.

This doocot remains in place, although unused, it appears in good condition.



Luffness.

Beehive

Capacity 500 pigeons

This sixteenth century cote has a most charming site. It stands in the grounds of Luffness House, It much resembles the cote at Dirleton, though its dimensions are smaller. Circular in shape, The nesting places, numbering 500, are 14 inches long and 7! inches high.

Still sitting on the grounds of Luffness house, which is now closed to the public, behind two fences with a warning that trespassers would be prosecuted so I was unable to verify the state of the doocot as I was not given permission to visit and photograph it.

A large black triangle is positioned on the right side of the page, pointing towards the top-left corner. A red 'X' is centered within the triangle.

X

Northfield Prestonpans).

Beehive

Capacity 600 pigeons

A circular doocot of large proportions, the round structure has wall three feet thick and a cone roof covered in stone. The doocots circumference is 60 feet when measured four feet from the ground. The nests are arranged round the walls, and are 9 inches square and 12 inches deep.



Preston Mains.

Tower

Capacity 512 pigeons

A peculiarity of this high and strongly built cote is that it is conjoined with two single-room cottages, one on each side. The structure measures 20 feet square. The nest are 10 and a half inches deep, 10 and a half inches high and nine inches wide.

This doocot has now been repaired, and repurposed as part of the Battle of Prestonpans historical society and has become a small museum dedicated to Col. Gardiner who lived there at the time of the battle.



Preston Tower.

Lectern

Capacity 1000 pigeons

Situated at the far end of a market garden and about a hundred yards from Preston Tower, this seventeenth century cote is square-shaped, 16 feet 6 inches each way, and at the back is 30 feet high. At the top of the roof are three stone balls by way of decorative effect. The stone-built nests are one foot deep, twelve inches high and nine inches wide.

Today the doocot has a number of feral birds roosting in it. It stands in a local park/garden and is unattended.



Prestonpans (Brewery Cotes).

Lectern

Capacity unknown

At the point of the 1937 survey In the yard of a brewery at Prestonpans and close to the Firth of Forth stand two cotes, similar in shape and size, and only 30 yards apart. Both are very old, and it has been suggested that they may have belonged to the abbeys of Holyrood and Newbattle, which held lands in this district.

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These doocots no longer stand at this location. There is no sign of remnants of either structure

X

Redhouse.

Lectern

Capacity 798 pigeons

Built of red sandstone, it adjoins the ruined mansion of Redhouse The dovecot was probably erected at the same time as the tower at this location.

The cote has two compartments divided by a wall with a door in it. Each section has 399 nesting places, making a total of 798 nesting spaces.

Apart from a historic scotland plaque, this doocot appears unattended.



Saltcoats.

Lectern

Capacity 288 pigeons

Stands close to the ruined castle and is probably as old. It is much decayed, roofless, and minus the north wall. The cote is rectangular, measuring 17 feet from north to south and 15 feet from east to west.

This structure is now no longer recognisable.

A large black triangle is positioned on a white background. The triangle's hypotenuse runs from the top-left towards the bottom-right. A red 'X' is centered on this hypotenuse.

X

Tranent (Church Wall).

Lectern

Capacity circa 2000

Standing just outside the wall of the churchyard, this cote is a conspicuous landmark. The back wall is 30 feet high as against 20 feet-the measurement of the front wall. The crow-stepped gables display cracks, probably due to undermining. The number of nests probably is in the region of 2000. The nests are about a foot deep and nine inches square.

This structure has fallen into further disrepair and now has trees and plants growing through it.



