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When one looks at a sight such as this, a few questions come to mind, what happened? What is the story? The image above demands an explanation, a deep desire to know the story of the underground vault with a hole in the wall. History is about discovering the mystery of images unknown. People travel to distant locations and to visit places off the beaten path, and stumble on shocking images, which invokes several questions, but oftentimes, very little information is offered to explain what tragic event took place.

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<sup>1</sup> Moczygamba, Charron. October 2023.



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Located in Aberdeenshire, Scotland, lies a relic castle called Dunnottar. Dunnottar Castle is surrounded on all three sides by the North Sea, with limited access to a narrow isthmus land bridge. The formidable castle stood steadfast against enemies from both sea and land. Historians have traced the castle's earliest existence between 681- 694 AD, based on Annals of Ulster recordings of a siege that had taken place at the castle, but the construction of the castle has been lost to history.

The image of the Vault tells of a tragic event that had taken place during the height of the Scottish resistance against the English Crown. In 1648 English King Charles I was arrested, tried, and convicted for treason. After the beheading of King Charles I on January 30, 1649, The Scots called for Charles I's son, Charles II, to take the throne. Charles II was residing in the Netherlands, soon arrived in Scotland shores in June 1650 with the promise to allow the Covenanters their religious freedom, but like his father the short, 'Truce' would not last. By June 8, 1650, Charles II was a guest at Dunnottar Castle under the invitation of the 7<sup>th</sup> Earl of Mariscal.

Oliver Cromwell's successes in quashing the first English Civil War in 1642, the Second English Civil War in 1648,<sup>3</sup> and ending the Irish Rebellion in 1650; was order by the Rump

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<sup>2</sup> Moczygamba, Charron, October 2023.

<sup>3</sup> English 2<sup>nd</sup> Civil was prompted by King Charles I's attempt to break the shackles of Crown's authority issued by Parliament after the conclusion of the 1<sup>st</sup> English Civil War. Parliament passed laws, and established a new Constitution which blocked the king's authority to raise taxes and dissolve Parliament. King Charles could not consent to the restraints of Parliament. As a result, Charles planned a secret deal

Parliament <sup>4</sup> to end the Scottish rebellion, English 3<sup>rd</sup> Civil War in 1650-1651 prompted by the Crowning of Charles II in Scotland.<sup>5</sup>

Cromwell's army marched into Edinburgh, Scotland and occupied the Port of Leith. He encountered little opposition along the way. The third English Civil War took place in the Battle of Dunbar on September 2, 1651. After the Scottish defeat, Cromwell and his army marched to Edinburgh and laid siege to the castle for three months.<sup>6</sup> By Christmas of 1651, Cromwell had taken control of Edinburgh Castle when Colonel Walter Dundas, commander of the Castle's Garrison, surrendered.

The successful invasion of Cromwell's Parliamentary Army prompted Earl Marischal<sup>7</sup> to hide the Scottish Crown Jewels, known as the Honors of Scotland. The Crown Jewels had been secretly removed from Edinburgh Castle to Scone Abbey in Perthshire. The Crown Jewels were used in Charles II <sup>8</sup> private coronation in January of 1651. After the Crowning of Charles II, the Jewels were taken to Dunnottar Castle along with the King's official papers. The Earl was tasked with protecting the Honors of Scotland from Cromwell's invading forces. The Earl's refusal to hand over the Honors of Scotland prompted Cromwell to arrest the Earl. The Earl was taken to the Tower of London in 1651, but he remained steadfast in his refusal to surrender the Crown Jewels of Scotland into Cromwell's hands.

Inside the walls of the well-fortified castle was the Scottish Crown Jewels, and Cromwell was determined to destroy the Scottish Symbol of Monarchical rule. In September of 1651 to May 26, 1652, Cromwell laid siege to Dunnottar Castle. The duty of protector of the Honors of Scotland fell to George Ogilvy and his 69 men who fought to resist Cromwell's siege on the castle. For eight months Cromwell laid siege to Dunnottar Castle. Despite his best effort, the Jewels were saved by two brave women, Mrs. Grainger and her maid, Anna Lindsey who managed to smuggle the Crown Jewels out of the castle. How the two women succeeded in saving the jewels is not fully known, but two plausible stories have been preserved in history. The first story claims that the two women concealed the Crown Jewels in a bundle of flax and snuck the treasure out of the castle walls. The second story claims the jewels were removed from the castle when Mrs. Grainger lowered the Jewels through a window. Anne Lindsey, disguised as an old fisherwoman, was below gathering seaweed on the shore. She quickly grabbed the Regalia and

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with Scotland, claiming that if they aided him in overthrowing the English Parliament, he would make all of England and Scotland Presbyterian. The Scottish agreed and threw their support behind King Charles I. Cromwell quickly annihilated the Scottish Army in August of 1648 in the Battle of Worcester. Charles's secret deal with Scotland was unfoiled and Charles was dragged before Parliament in a mock trial and sentenced to death on January 30, 1649.

<sup>4</sup> The Rump Parliament was established after the end of the Long Parliament. The success of the Parliament Army, promoted the purging of parliament, removing all Ministers of Parliament (MP) who failed to support Cromwell. The original 'Long Parliament' was substantially reduced and became known as the Rump Parliament filled with ministers loyal to Cromwell.

<sup>5</sup> Bio Graphics, "Oliver Cromwell: The Man Who Killed a King," Accessed December 21, 2023, YouTube (22:52), <https://video.search.yahoo.com/search/video?fr=mcafee&ei=UTF-8&p=Why+did+Oliver+Cromwell+destroy+the+English+Crown+Jewels&type=E210US739G0#id=2&vid=073f9ba827d6e2098ad5c870f846ee27&action=click>.

<sup>6</sup> Edinburgh Castle served as the Scottish stronghold during Oliver Cromwell's invasion of Scotland.

<sup>7</sup> The Earl of Marischal family the Keith Family.

<sup>8</sup> Charles II had promised to fulfill his father's pact to make England and Scotland Presbyterian. This was enough to convince the Scottish people to support his claim to the throne. Unfortunately, Charles II was secretly Catholic and once he gained the throne, his promise proved false, and he sought to push his Catholic religious views on the Scottish people, who refer to King Charles as the 'Two faced Monarch.'

hid the Crown, Scepter, and Sword within her huge basket under her coverings. She quietly escaped under the nose of Oliver Cromwell and saved the Crown Jewels of Scotland by hiding them in the Kinneff church in a nearby village to be buried under the floor stones. Although the jewels were saved, the eighth month siege took its toll on the castle's fortification. By May 26, 1652, the castle was forced to surrender. Ogilvy and his wife were captured and tortured. Mrs. Ogilvy did not survive her treatment during her imprisonment. To ensure the care for the Honors of Scotland, every few months the minister and his wife would dig up the Crown Jewels and carefully dry the items before the fire and rebury the treasure again. The Honors of Scotland were hidden until 1660 when Charles II was restored to the throne.<sup>9</sup>

Dunnottar Castle stood in derelict form, but the castle was not lost to history, rather the castle remained as an active prison during the 17th century, housing religious prisoners, Presbyterians, and Covenanters, who resisted the king's claims that he was the Supreme Head of the Church. This period would become known as the 'Killing Time.' Presbyterian rebels were arrested and taken to Edinburgh prisons, but additional room was needed, and these prisoners were moved to Dunnottar Castle. A total of 200 people were forced to walk 111 miles: with only 122 men and 45 women surviving the journey.



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Once they arrived, they were thrown into the cellar, later to be known as the 'Whig's Vault.' The vault's location surrounded by the north seas made the cellar wet as the castle was no longer maintained. The prisoners had to wade in ankle deep water for six weeks from May 24 to the

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<sup>9</sup> History Victorium, "Dunnottar Castle History," Accessed December 21, 2023, YouTube (11:38), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IYxC58xKiJY>.

<sup>10</sup> Moczygemba, Charron. October 2023.



end of July in 1685. The men and women were denied sanitations, privacy, and all their food and water were provided to them at the mercy of the guards. Eventually about 40 prisoners were relocated to the Thieves Hole, below the cellar. Their fate became worse as excess water flowing in the Vault would drain into the lower chamber below. The story of the prisoners became a tragic marker in history. 25 men managed to escape, but 2 perished falling to their deaths on the rocks below. 15 prisoners were recaptured, and were tortured, but the remaining prisoners were forced to board a ship heading to the West Indies, but they did not make the journey. 70 of the prisoners died along the way and the remaining 87 prisoners arrived in New England.

The story of Dunnottar Castle does not end, but once again played an impactful role in Scottish History. During the Jacobite Rebellion in 1689, the Scottish supporters of the exiled King James and his claim to the throne would place Scotland in conflict with England again. A series of three rebellions would play out, known as the Jacobite Rebellion: 1689, 1715, and finally in 1746 Battle of Culloden. Scottish Highlanders would be forced to take sides in their loyalty to Stuart's claim to the English throne against those who support the English claim to the throne. Dunnottar Castle would be pulled into the second Jacobite rebellion when the 9<sup>th</sup> Earl of Marischal was arrested for Jacobitism and taken to Edinburgh Castle. His two sons would take up his banner and fight alongside the Jacobite cause in the Battle of Sheriffmuir on November 13, 1715. The English would win the battle and confiscate Dunnottar Castle under the Crown's authority. The castle was sold off to the York Building Company, who stripped the ancient castle bare of anything valuable. The hole that is seen in the Whig's Vault was probably victim to the intentional destruction of the castle. Keith's family had eventually regained ownership of Dunnottar, but little was done to restore the derelict castle. By 1925 efforts were made to begin to renovate the castle after centuries of neglect.

The once powerful castle now stands as a relic in history reflecting a period of great turbulence in Scotland, and the stories of the men and women who struggled to defy a king's rule of the religious and political affairs of the people. The story of the cellar with a hole is a story about people who saw life beyond the confines of their period and had hope for a time when they could no longer be constrained to the rigid authority of a king. The hole in the Vault can be viewed with a symbolic meaning of people daring to believe in a future where their children could attain true freedom against their oppressors. Their story needs to be told, and the sacrifices they made need to be remembered. Dunnottar Castle holds many stories within its ancient walls, and historians are seeking to bring these stories from the past to present them to the modern world. If you happen to visit Scotland and take time to tour Dunnottar Castle, when you see the Whig's Vault remember the tragic event that had taken place and the people who became martyrs for their religious and political beliefs.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Burnet, Andrew. *Dunnottar Castle*. China: Jarrold Publishing, 2022.