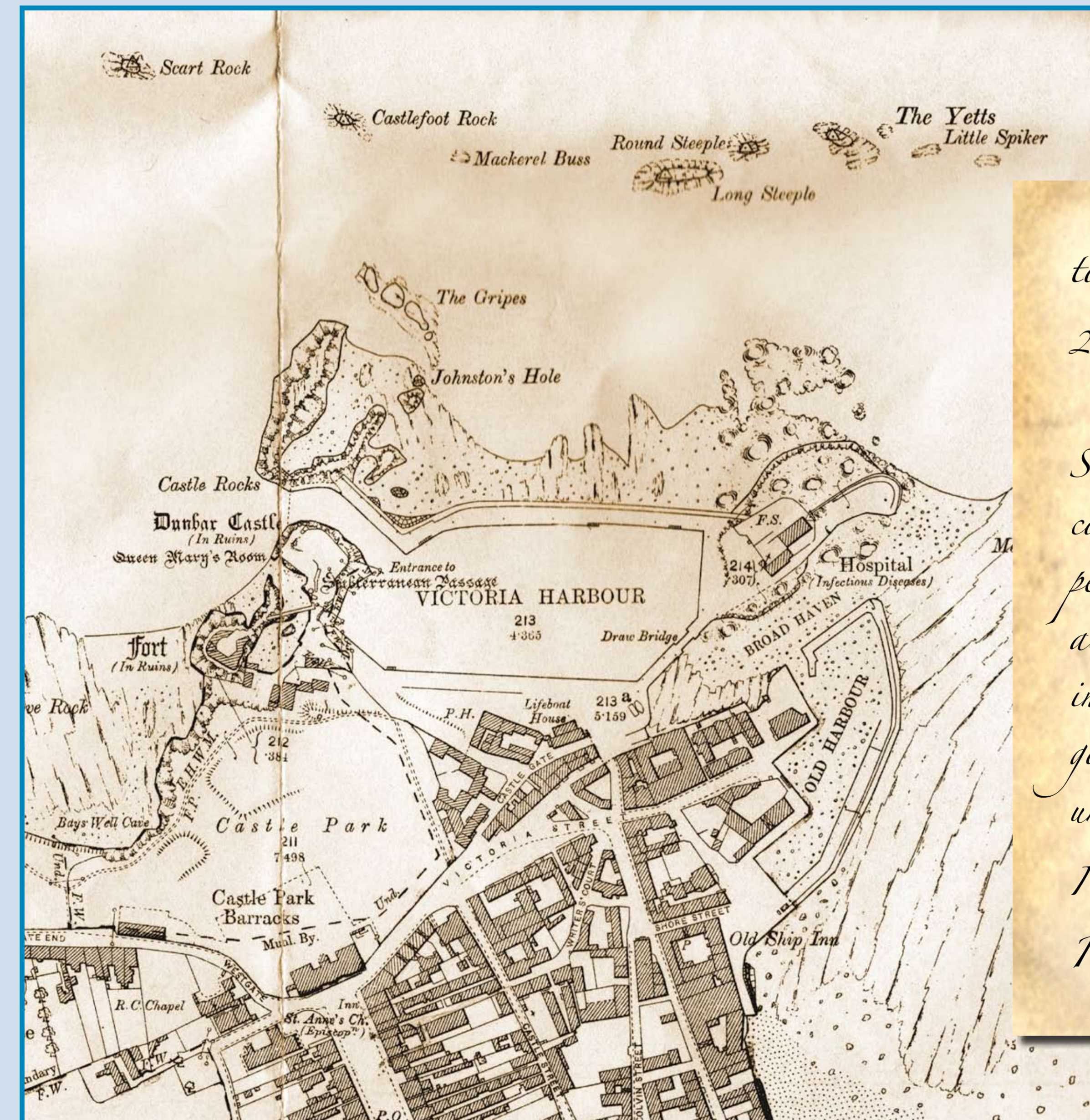


Victoria New Harbour

One stormy day, Dunbar Town Council and some civil engineers met local fisherman to decide the most suitable place for a new harbour entrance. They stood on the castle to assess the wave problems. The harbour was completed in 1844.

David Stevenson (uncle to Robert Louis Stevenson) of the 'Lighthouse Stevenson' family was appointed engineer. A large breach had to be made through the Castle remains to create the dog-leg entrance.

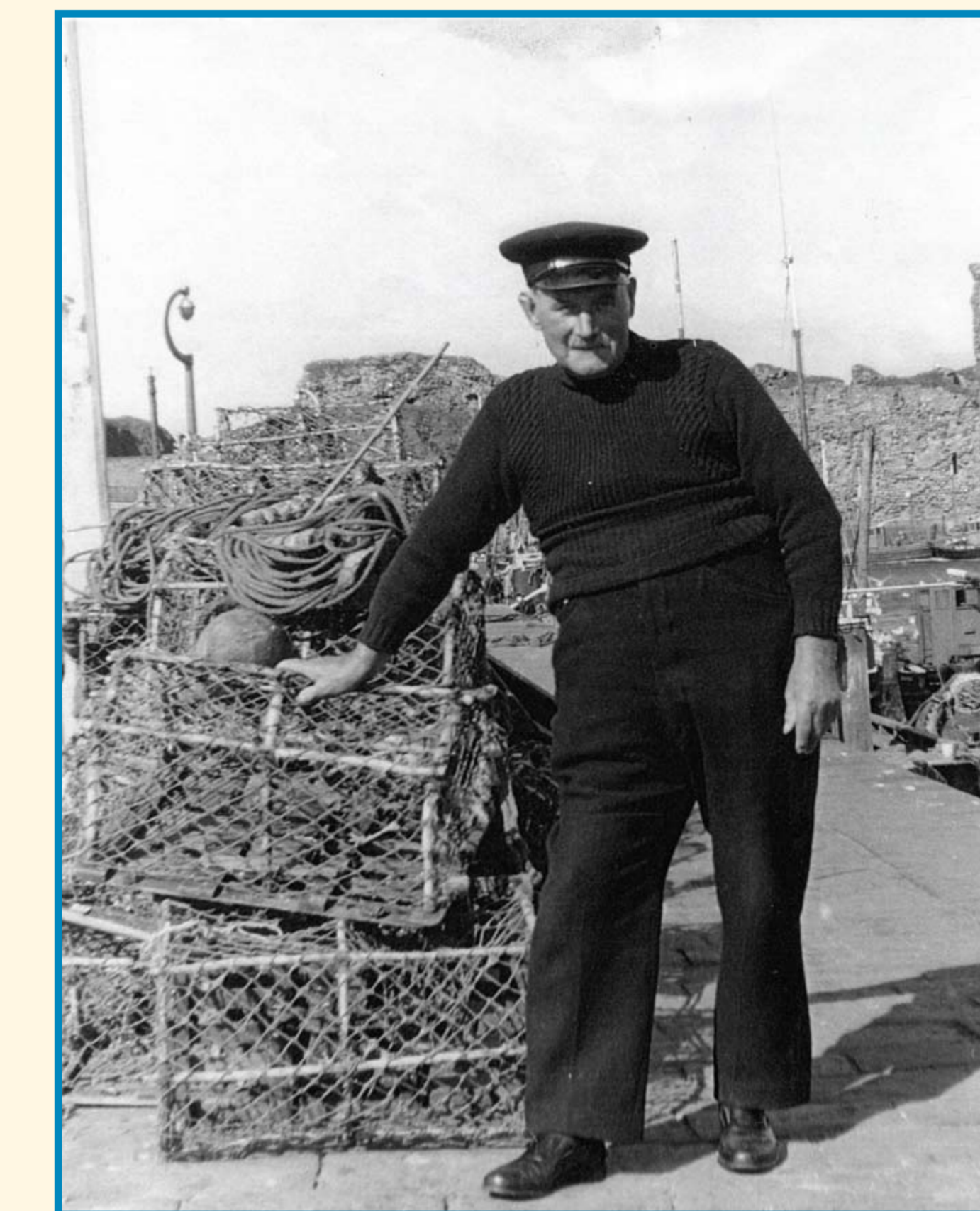
Further improvements had to be made in 1858 after a storm, which also helped to accommodate the growing herring fleet. Each year 700-800 fishing boats would come to the summer herring fishing off Dunbar. Their catches were gutted and packed in barrels, then sent to Europe, Ireland or the West Indies. In the winter months local fishermen caught white fish, crabs and lobsters.



*to The Provost of Dunbar
22 September 1841.*

Sir, I have great satisfaction in conveying Her Majesty's Gracious permission to name the projected Harbour at Dunbar 'Victoria Harbour' and in expressing Her Majesty's sincere good wishes for the success of this useful undertaking.

*I am, Sir, Your obedient Servant,
Robert Peel.*



Andrew Robertson, mid-1950s

A Harbourmaster's job

The harbourmaster was responsible for the day-to-day running of the harbour. His duties in 1906 mentioned "... collecting dues and overseeing berthing, ...responsible for lights and extinguishing all lamps on Victoria and Old Harbour heads and winding up Barometer at Old Harbour."

Nowadays he is responsible for much more. He is a knowledgeable and experienced professional, taking care of safety, environment, security and vessel traffic in the harbour, as well as dispensing sound advice to harbour-users.



Harbour history

- 1844**
Plans had been drawn and the New Victoria Harbour opened. A time capsule was laid with the foundation stone.
- 1850s**
The height of the herring industry. Improvements were made to the harbour.
- 1917**
A tidal gauge was established in Dunbar under what is now the Harbourmaster's office. Tides were measured here and in Newlyn, near Penzance.
- 1960s - 70s**
Victoria Harbour is one of the attractions that makes Dunbar a popular tourist destination.
- 1993**
The Offshore Lifeboat was moored at Skateraw Harbour. It is sometimes moored here and we expect her permanent return in the future.
- Present day**
Dunbar supports 30 fishing vessels, mainly for prawns, crabs and lobsters, as well as many resident and visiting leisure craft and other users.

Dunbar Castle

Do you wonder what this ruinous castle used to look like? Although there are descriptions and artists' depictions, the truth is we can't be completely certain. It has been attacked, damaged and rebuilt so many times that its appearance will have changed drastically over the centuries.

We do know it has always been defensive - 'Dunbar' means the Fort of the headland, or point. The castle has been a fort for more than 2,000 years - probably since Roman times.

The castle structure

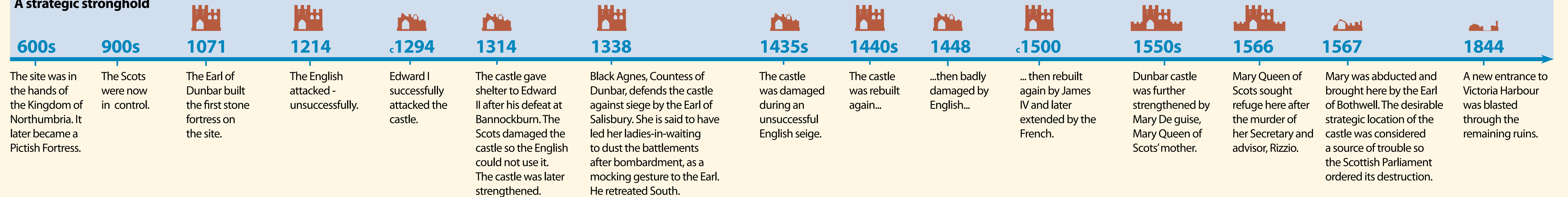
This view from the seaward side shows some of the castle's remaining structure. Living quarters would have been in the centre and the most fortified parts would have been to the landward side - look for 'arrow holes' - they are actually for guns! The seaward castle towers would have provided access to the sea and there is a large natural cavern which may have formed part of the castle dungeons.



Arrow hole



A strategic stronghold



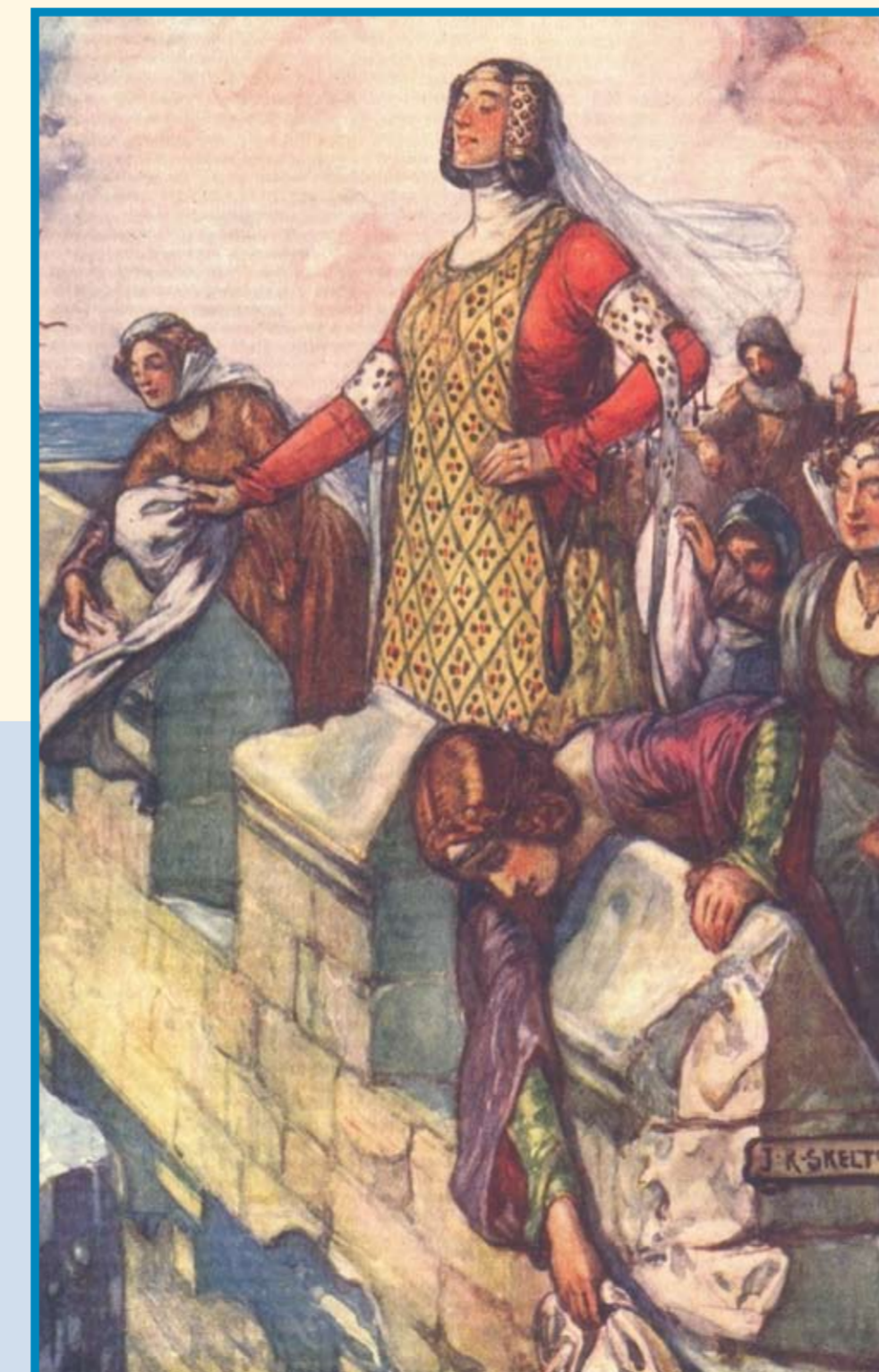
A romantic ruin

There are no known images of the castle intact, but many drawings and paintings have been made of its romantic ruins.

This one, by J. Carson gives some idea of how imposing the walls were and shows how the area looked before Victoria Harbour was built.



Image: East Lothian Council



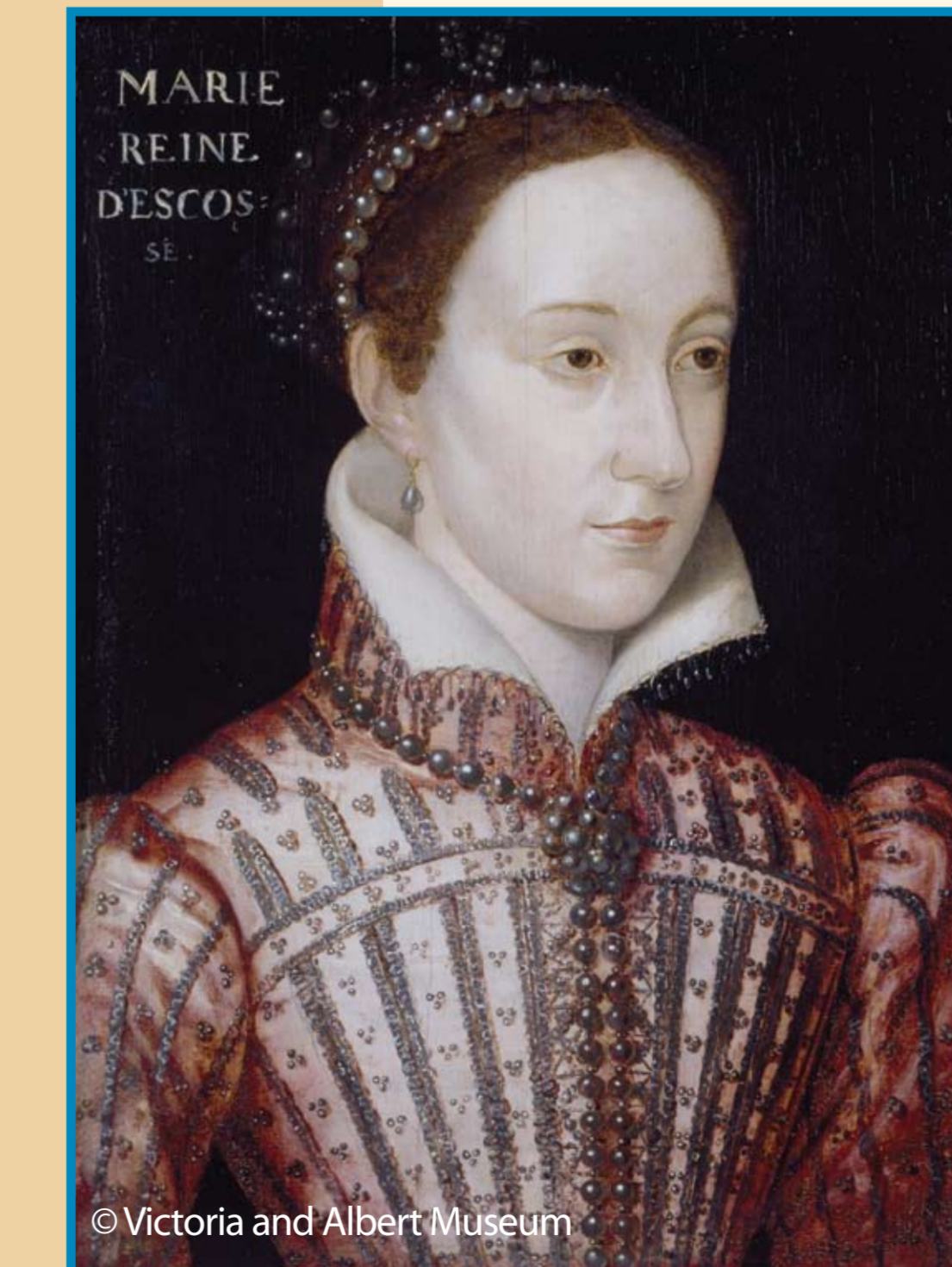
'Black Agnes' in H E Marshall's children's book 'Scotland's Story', (1906).

The Queen of Scots connection

Mary, Queen of Scots, came here during some of the most turbulent times of her life.

Two days after her husband Lord Darnley and other Lords' successful plot to murder Rizzio in 1566, she escaped to Dunbar, riding for five hours while pregnant with Darnley's son, (who became James VI of Scotland). Mary rallied her supporters at Dunbar and return triumphantly to Edinburgh a week later, when those who carried out the murder fled to England. Mary returned to Dunbar Castle later that year.

Dunbar Castle is also the place where the Earl of Bothwell brought Mary when he allegedly abducted her in 1567. Mary and Bothwell were married soon after at Holyroodhouse in Edinburgh.



© Victoria and Albert Museum



A 21st century castle

The sculptural remains of the castle have become a tourist attraction, but are inevitably being eroded by the sea.

During the millennium celebrations a national beacon was sited on the castle. Local resident Colin Campbell shot a flaming arrow into the beacon to set it alight.