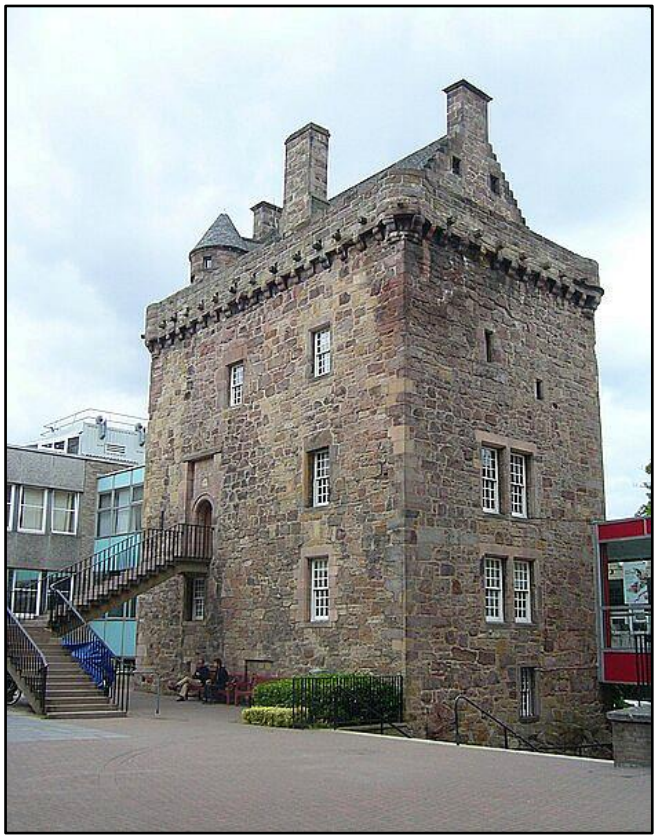

Merchiston Castle, is a splendid example of Scottish Baronial architecture. Dating back to the 15th century, it stands as a testament to the enduring allure of ancient Scottish castles. The tower was probably built as a country house, but its strategic position and the turbulent political situation required it to be heavily fortified – with some walls as much as 6 feet thick – it was frequently under siege. During restoration in the 1960s, a 26-pound cannonball was found embedded in the Tower, thought to date from the 1572 struggle between Mary, Queen of Scots, and supporters of her son, James VI.

The Tower is an elaborate example of a medieval tower house, built on a familiar "L" plan with a wing projecting to the north. Among several remarkable features is the unusual elaboration of the main entrance, which is at the 2nd floor level in the south front. The tall shallow recess in which the doorway is set undoubtedly housed a drawbridge.

John Napier and logarithms

Born 1550, Merchiston Castle, near Edinburgh, —died 1617, also at Merchiston Castle). John was a Scottish mathematician and theological writer who famously originated the concept of logarithms as a mathematical device to aid in calculations and so contributed significantly to the development of modern mathematics.

John lived amidst a backdrop of uncertain and dangerous times, (The Reformation; Henry VIII's Rough Wooing, the Spanish Blanks Conspiracy, involving Scottish nobles conspiring to support an invasion of thirty-thousand Spanish troops landing on the west coast of Scotland, all contributed to a continued sense of suspicion and tension) John Napier was born in the medieval tower house of Merchiston Castle into a family of wealth and privilege. Members of the Napier family held important positions of influence within Edinburgh, including The Governor of Edinburgh Castle and the Lord Provost.

"Logarithm" is a word made up by John Napier, from the Greek '*logos*' meaning "ratio" and '*arithmos*' meaning "number", … which together makes "ratio-number".

In the field of mathematics, Napier's discovery was momentous. Previously navigators on great oceanic voyages had to perform enormous, cumbersome, error-prone calculations to find out exactly where they were. His invention of logarithms released the navigators, from the complexities along with architects, merchants, bankers and most of all astronomers – changing their lives completely. His logarithmic tables (of his ratio-numbers) had cleverly converted difficult, tedious multiplications into simple sums.

From: https://assets.amuniversal.com/d79826b0a50a01381147005056a9545d1

Briefly, A logarithm gives the answer to the question **"How many of *one number* multiplied together make *another number*?"**

Napier is also noteworthy for introducing the full stop (.) as the delimiter for the fractional part in the decimal system.

Two examples of Sixteenth Century Problem Solving

One amusing tale about Napier's pet (black cockerel) was how he used it to trap a thief in the household. He told his servants the bird could tell honesty from dishonesty and would crow whenever a thief stroked its neck. Having sprinkled soot all over the cockerel and tied it up in a dark room, he instructed all his servants to go in and stroke the bird. The thief was soon court, for being afraid to stroke it, was the only one to come out with clean, but guilty hands.

Another novel, ingenious approach to problem solving involved resolving a conflict with his peers. An argument with the Laird of Roslin, whose pigeons were landing on John Napier's Merchiston lands and eating the grain was soon solved. Napier caused Roslin's pigeons, the very next day, to reel about on the ground, unable to fly away. He had soaked peas in wine and spread them all over the field. The pigeons loved the peas, but drunken pigeons cannot fly.

Religious Apocalypse – the end of the world

Napier constructed a detailed timeline towards the day God will serve his judgment, leading to the destruction of our world and the creation of a new heaven and earth.

However, John's religious studies turned out not to be as successful as his great mathematical works. Napier believed the world would only endure for a total of six thousand years, in three cycles of two thousand years and predicted the end would come in 1688.

John has not been alone, in incorrectly asserting the apocalypse was nigh:

Wikipedia tabulates two hundred and two erudite (but widely inaccurate) historical predictions of the extinction of humanity, a collapse of civilization, or the destruction of our planet.