

## 4. COMPARISONS AND CONCLUSIONS

### *Form and fabric*

In terms of its architectural form, as almost every commentator has pointed out, Castle Tioram is one of a small group of enclosure castles of polygonal form which are found on the western seaboard of Scotland. These castles, in effect, Castle Tioram's immediate 'peer group', constitute a small sub-set of those identified by MacGibbon and Ross and listed in Table 1, a list which has been otherwise added to and amended as a result of subsequent research. In addition to Tioram, this group comprises Dunstaffnage Castle, Mingary Castle, Ardnamurchan, Duntrune Castle, opposite Crinan in Mid Argyll, and possibly also Dunoon, although the remains of this one-time royal stronghold in Cowal are so exiguous as to defy clear definition.<sup>189</sup> Likewise, the remains of irregular polygonal enclosures allow Dunvegan, Skye, and Castle Calvay, South Uist, to be provisionally included within this group, but, as discussed above (section 2.1), other one-time candidates such as Kisimul, Barra, and Breachacha, Coll, are now known to conform to later, that is, 15<sup>th</sup>-century, tower house and enclosure (aka barmkin) designs.

**Table 7 Western seaboard enclosure castles of polygonal form**

Site	Date/characteristics
Dunoon Castle, Cowal, Argyll	?13 <sup>th</sup> -century origin
Dunstaffnage Castle, Lorn, Argyll	13 <sup>th</sup> -century and later
Duntrune Castle, Mid Argyll	15 <sup>th</sup> -century and later; restored as dwelling
Mingary Castle, North Argyll	c.1300 or later; c.1700 barrack block
Castle Tioram, Inverness-shire	Mid-14 <sup>th</sup> -century enclosure and 'hall tower'
Dunvegan Castle, Skye, Inverness-shire	?13 <sup>th</sup> -century origin; c.1400 tower
Castle Calvay, South Uist, Inverness-shire	Uncertain date, ?late medieval

Dunstaffnage stands apart from the others in its grander scale, design and detailing, its irregular quadrangular circuit incorporating cylindrical towers, including a donjon. In terms of area, the smallest of the group, Duntrune, is about one third that of Dunstaffnage, while Tioram, the second largest, covers slightly less than two-thirds of Dunstaffnage's area. The closest correspondences in scale, overall plan and the nature of their wall-head defences are between Tioram and Mingary, both of which are of roughly pentagonal outline.

Given that the geometry of their layouts is largely determined by the nature of the sites, it is not surprising that castles of this outline, like those of rectilinear form, may have a wider date-range than was once thought, and cannot automatically be viewed as a 'period-type'. For reasons set out elsewhere in this report, Mingary possibly and Tioram probably belong to the 14<sup>th</sup> century, while Duntrune is confirmed as being of 15<sup>th</sup>-century date. The ways in which each of these castles subsequently developed are quite different, however. The 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century assemblages at Tioram, which provided accommodation on a fairly considerable domestic scale and reflect continuity of Clanranald family use, are without parallel at Mingary where Macian associations were less enduring and where the interior has come to be dominated by Campbell- or government-built barracks.<sup>190</sup> No precise Scottish parallels for the first hall tower within the enclosure at Tioram have yet been established but in scale and

proportion it appears to represent a hybridised version of the smaller halls and towers of the region such as those at Fincham and Glensanda.<sup>191</sup> The two most visually striking features of the later architecture at Tioram are the decorative rounds and the lofty stair-tower; the latter is an unusual survival within the region, while the former bears favourable comparison with all except the nationally remarkable stone carving at the mid-16<sup>th</sup> century Carnassarie Castle in Mid Argyll and the late 16<sup>th</sup>-century tower at Gylen on Kerrera.<sup>192</sup>

In terms of its overall physical form, fabric and salient details, Castle Tioram certainly cannot claim to possess a range of attributes which bear favourable physical comparison with all other polygonal or rectilinear enclosure castles of the western seaboard, the ranks of which include some of Scotland's premier castles such as Dunstaffnage, Sween and Rothesay. In general appearance and detail, many of Tioram's architectural qualities are much less obviously striking than these front-rank examples, and to the casual observer they also have less immediate impact than others within the region such as Duart and Mingary, to take two conspicuous examples flanking the Sound of Mull. Direct comparison with Mingary also highlights Tioram's comparative lack of significant diagnostic details associated with, say, its windows and wall-head defences, notwithstanding its immured crenelles and relatively late box-machicolations. Only perhaps in the form of the corbelled angle-rounds described in 3.1 does Castle Tioram possess individual features which approach the highest regional class. Likewise, the different stages of the architectural development at Tioram are reflected for the most part in residual trace elements which are much less clearly demarcated than most of its immediate compeers. Here again, subtlety rather than self-evident clarity is its hallmark.

Taking a broader comparative view, it is unsurprising to find that stone-built castles of enclosure with polygonal layouts, which generally follow the natural outlines of their sites, are found elsewhere in Britain. In Wales, 12<sup>th</sup>- and 13<sup>th</sup>-century castles of this form may be found at Coity (Bridgend, South Wales), Criccieth (Gwynedd) and Dolwyddelan (Gwynedd),<sup>193</sup> while in Ireland they may have an even wider date-range than those in western Scotland. The first English Lord of Ulster, John de Courcy (d. 1204), for example, erected castles with polygonal stone curtain walls at his chief centres of Carrickfergus, County Antrim, and Dundrum, County Down, both of which served as the inner wards or nuclei of castles to which great towers and outer enclosures were subsequently added.<sup>194</sup> The first (c.1200) phase of Adare Castle, County Limerick, likewise incorporated an inner enclosure of this form, apparently associated from the outset with an outer ward and hall block, while minor castles which appear to have consisted of polygonal enclosures and little else are currently being identified in areas which marked the frontiers of lordship and military tension in the 13<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>195</sup> At the other end of the chronological scale and deep in Gaelic west Ulster, a nine-sided polygonal enclosure surrounds a natural hill behind a substantial keep-gatehouse at Harry Avery's Castle, County Tyrone, a late 14<sup>th</sup>- or 15<sup>th</sup>-century structure named after Henry Aimredh O'Neill who died in 1385.<sup>196</sup>

Castles which include or consist mainly of so-called 'hall keeps' or 'hall houses' of two- or three-storeyed rectangular plan, comparable to the first 'hall tower' of Castle Tioram and Borge Castle, are probably more common in Ireland than they are in Scotland. They are particularly prevalent in the western half of the country where they have been attributed mainly to the 13<sup>th</sup> century and to a phase of Anglo-Norman

manorial settlement.<sup>197</sup> Especially in the east, though, as at Kindlestown, County Wicklow, Dunmoe, County Meath, and Delvin, County Westmeath,<sup>198</sup> late medieval, that is, 14<sup>th</sup>- and 15<sup>th</sup>-century, specimens of this type of structure are by no means unknown, and many of the sites show clear evidence of an enclosing element. Investigations into Irish 'hall houses' are acknowledged to be in a preliminary stage, however, so it is not unreasonable to suppose that future research, particularly if it adopts a less rigidly typological or taxonomic approach to their study and classification, will almost certainly identify hybrids comparable to Tioram's enclosed hall tower. In Ireland, as in Scotland until recent times, these studies have tended to assume that 'hall houses' are a separate and distinct period-type dateable mainly to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. In Ireland, as in Scotland, however, such assumptions are questionable, given that in matters of height, proportion and arrangement, the distinction between a hall and a tower is a fine matter of degree not of kind, as 'towers' of elongated rectangular plan such as Nendrum Castle, Mahee Island, County Down, clearly demonstrate.<sup>199</sup>

With the notable exception of a bronze hanging bowl which was found on the site and has been ascribed to the 7<sup>th</sup> century, visual evidence of early occupation or use of Eilean Tioram in a pre-castle phase has so far proved elusive. It is difficult to assess the comparative strength of its potential candidature for archaeological excavation, though there are indications that part of the north-west curtain-wall may overlie an earlier sub-structure and documentary reference to the island in the 1320s certainly shows that the site was accorded some importance in an immediate pre-castle phase. As Table 2 shows, useful findings have emerged from carefully targeted programmes of work, like that conducted at Dunollie. While, in the current state of knowledge, there is no reason to think that Tioram stands at the head of these rankings, the site probably has better than average archaeological potential among the castles of the region.

A somewhat 'middling or average' position on the comparative regional scale likewise suggests itself in relation to the ascertainable use or intended use of Tioram as a government military outpost from the 1690s to the 1740s. The fabric of the south range in particular shows slight evidence of works which may have been part of a barrack conversion programme, and it would seem entirely reasonable to suppose that if the 14<sup>th</sup> Chief of Clanranald did fire the castle in the autumn of 1715, as he has been alleged to have done, he did so in order to deny its possible use to Hanoverian troops. However, it is otherwise not clear how far the Board of Ordnance drawings of 1714 (copied in 1741) and 1748 were put into effect. Castle Tioram is said to have been used by the Jacobites as a store for arms and ammunition in the first (July-August) phase of the 1745 Rebellion, suggesting that it was then regarded as being reasonably secure. Afterwards, in 1749, it was one of four castles short-listed for conversion to barracks, but, of these, only Braemar and Corgarff on the route through the Eastern Highlands to the new Fort George at Ardersier went ahead. If Tioram remained in limited use between the '15 and the '45, all the indications are that it was not considered as important a strategic outpost of Fort William as others in the region. It did not feature in the records in the same way as, for example, Duart Castle on Mull or the two castles on the Treshnish Isles, and the architectural imprint of government use is considerably less than that at Mingary and Invergarry. It should, however, be borne in mind that only a relatively small number of private castles were actually commandeered in this way, and that, even to have been considered at all and to have

been the subject of surveys, Tioram was part of a small and very select group. Furthermore, the fact that the evidence for actual government use remains in doubt is reason for ensuring that the building fabric remains capable of being sensitively 're-read'.



Fig. 152  
Glensanda Castle, Morvern:  
general view from south

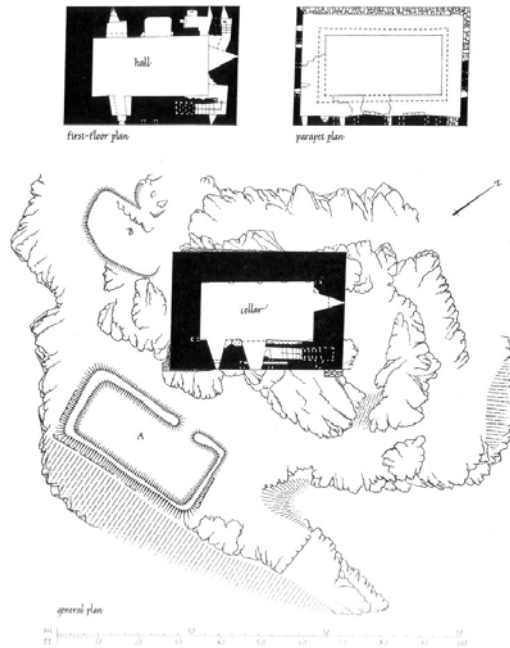


Fig. 153  
Glensanda Castle, Morvern:  
RCAHMS plans published 1980



Fig. 154  
Fincham Castle, Argyll:  
general view from south-east



Fig. 155  
Fincham Castle, Argyll:  
RCAHMS plans published 1992

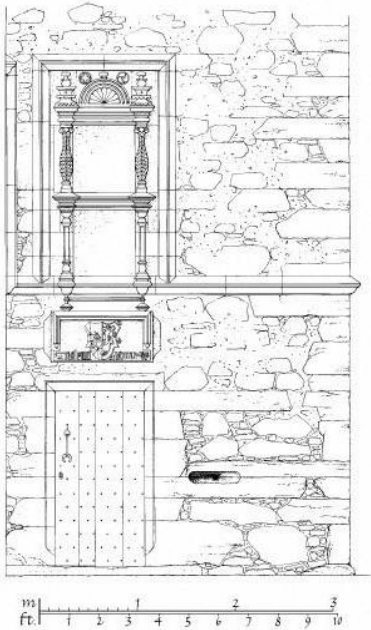


Fig. 156  
Carnassarie Castle, Argyll:  
RCAHMS drawing of doorway and  
carved details



Fig. 157  
Gylen Castle, Kerrera, Argyll:



Fig. 158  
Mingary Castle, Ardnamurchan:



Fig. 159  
Invergarry Castle, Inverness-shire:  
general view from ... showing  
collapsed stair turret



Fig. 160  
Rodel Church, Harris:  
general view from ...



Fig. 161  
Rodel Church, Harris:  
Alexander MacLeod tomb (1528)



Fig. 162  
Map showing Dunvegan and Rodel



Fig. 163  
Iona Abbey, Argyll:  
view by William Daniell (...)



Fig. 164  
Speciman late medieval graveslab  
of the Oronsay 'school' of  
monumental sculpture



Fig. 165  
Oronsay Priory, Argyll:  
general view from ...

### *Context*

Current scholarship rightly places much emphasis on the intimate relationship between castles and their landscapes. It is not common, indeed it is decidedly unusual, for the immediate hinterland of a Scottish castle not to include territories which might have been usable as cultivable demesne or table lands. Perhaps the most effective way of highlighting the exceptional nature of Castle Tioram's setting is simply to consider it in relation to the following quotation from two foremost English castle landscape authorities, Creighton and Higham (2003):<sup>200</sup>

*Major royal and urban castles apart, the overwhelming majority of British castles were centres of consumption and rural seats of lordship. Many castles also functioned as manorial centres. We often overlook the fact that most of these sites, whatever their defensive capabilities, had relatively mundane everyday lives as working farms closely linked to surrounding territories. British castles had a close association with the soil, and many were centred on prime agricultural areas. On a day-to-day basis, castle lords and their officials were concerned with the management of agricultural and other resources as well as with the collection of rents. It is thus unsurprising to find so many castles that are closely associated with features of the medieval agricultural landscape, such as watermills and field systems. [In England] Henry VIII's coastal artillery forts of the sixteenth century heralded a break in this long tradition, being the first major fortifications not to be integrated with their surrounding hinterlands.*

Within the landscapes around even remote coastal promontory sites or offshore island castles such as Castle Stalker and Eilean Donan, it is not difficult to identify nearby areas which are likely to have once been used for this purpose and which, as in the case of Mingary, may have become the setting for later large or 'mains' farmsteads.<sup>201</sup> Perhaps derived from Anglo-Norman times, such is the model relationship with churches and associated communities to which the vast majority of castles conform to a greater or lesser degree – but not, apparently, Castle Tioram. Although here, as elsewhere, the area immediately around the castle, possibly also including the small adjacent strip of mainland at Dorlin, was host to other structures of indeterminate date and purpose, these did not constitute or define a demesne. Likewise, although the territory around Kinlochmoidart House at the head of Loch Moidart three miles east of the castle may conceivably have served as table lands, the castle demesne, as officially designated and acknowledged in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, lay, as we have seen, around Howbeg in South Uist, over 60 nautical miles in a direct line north-west of the castle across the Sea of the Hebrides. No other Scottish castle has yet emerged with a castle-demesne relationship as extraordinarily distant as this. The principal burial-place of Clanranald, at Howmore on South Uist, was equally distant. By comparison, MacLeod galleys journeyed a mere 22 nautical miles from Dunvegan on Skye to their chieftains' burial-place at Rodel on South Harris.<sup>202</sup>

Unusually, thus, Tioram appears to have been the mainland base for an estate whose prosperity depended in considerable measure on its island properties, possibly, for example, as a transit point for cattle brought across for sale in southern markets. Self-evidently, apart from the utilisation of natural resources such as timber and fish, the primary determinants in Castle Tioram's location would have been the anchorage and

beaching facilities which the tidal island close to the river mouth in Loch Moidart offered. Such relatively sheltered anchorages were clearly much prized throughout the western seaboard, particularly those with secure holding grounds on the sea-bed, and a number, though not including Moidart, were singled out for special mention by Dean Monro in 1549. As a close inspection of modern navigation charts shows, another rather less obvious attribute of Loch Moidart was that the reef-strewn approaches to it, rather like the waters around Dunivaig Castle on Islay, effectively formed an outer line of marine defence, demanding local knowledge for its successful navigation.<sup>203</sup>

The inter-island network of lordship exercised successively by the MacRuaris and Clanranalds was admittedly of considerably less geographical extent and variety than the over-arching Lordship of the Isles itself. Between the 1330s and 1493 the senior branch of Clan Donald exercised lordship or overlordship over a vast swathe of the western seaboard, extending from Islay to the Uists and embracing much of the adjacent mainland, especially when, latterly, it also came to include vast tracts of northern lands and rights associated with the Earldom of Ross. It had several principal estate centres, most notably Finlaggan on Islay, Aros on Mull and Ardtornish in Morvern, where, in each case, the principal architectural feature was a substantial hall block around which assemblages of lesser buildings were grouped.<sup>204</sup> In addition to their exercise of rights in the parishes across this vast region, the Lords were major patrons of Iona Abbey and by 1353 had founded a religious house of Augustinian canons on Oronsay, a significant but late expression of traditional monastic patronage.<sup>205</sup> Monumental sculpture constituted another remarkable expression of material culture which emerged during the era of the Lordship. Graveslabs and crosses of distinctive forms were produced by four main schools of carvers from materials obtained locally in Knapdale, and the geographical distribution of known or surviving products appears to correspond broadly with the extent of the Lordship.<sup>206</sup>

Politically, the Lordship proved too extensive and powerful to be tolerated by the later Stewart kings, and the cultural legacy of this relatively short-lived empire likewise is of a scope and variety which has tended to obscure or defy its comprehension and appreciation. Today, apart from the important results of archaeological work undertaken at Finlaggan,<sup>207</sup> the Lordship of the Isles lacks a coherent physical identity, and modern perceptions of its past are not helped by the fact that two of its major centres, Aros and Ardtornish, are consistently, and probably mistakenly, attributed to its MacDougall predecessors.

By comparison, the other MacDonald septs or lineages which managed to survive the collapse of the Lordship have retained a somewhat tighter and more coherent geographical and cultural identity. However, when viewed comparatively, the material remains associated with each of these main branches of the MacDonalds illustrate some significant differences between them and between their owners' experiences. The Macians of Ardnamurchan were virtually wiped out in the 17<sup>th</sup> century leaving their main centre, Mingary, to become absorbed within the Campbell sphere of influence, and ultimately to be used by government forces as a military outpost. The MacDonalds of Glengarry likewise had only one principal seat, Invergarry which, in its present highly dilapidated form, reflects more of its later use as a barracks than as a residence of a chieftain and his kindred. The MacDonalds of Dunivaig with their interests spread through Islay, Kintyre and Antrim,<sup>208</sup> and the

MacDonalds of Sleat on Skye perhaps come closest to Clanranald in their command of inter-island lordships. However, the shattered remains of Dunivaig and the ruins of castles inherited, created or captured by the MacDonalds of Sleat, such as Caisteal Camus (Knock Castle) or Dun Sgathaich,<sup>209</sup> convey little about their everyday occupation and use, and especially about how the maritime lordships associated with them operated in practice.

With the few grand exceptions of Campbell of Argyll (in relation, for example, to Tiree)<sup>210</sup> and Macleod of Dunvegan (and St Clement's Church, Rodel, Harris), the lordships exercised by other major West Highland families tended to be more geographically compact than those of the MacDonalds cited above. For the most part, they were either centred around the chieftain's castle or tower, concentrated mainly on the same island as the estate centre or across neighbouring territories, as was the case with, for example, MacLean of Duart, MacLean of Coll and MacNeill of Barra.



Fig. 166

Distribution of late medieval monumental sculpture on the western seaboard  
(from K A Steer and J W M Bannerman, *Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands*,  
RCAHMS, 1977)



Fig. 167  
Finlaggan Castle, Islay, Argyll:  
aerial view from ...



Fig. 168  
Ardtornish Castle, Morvern:  
general view from ...



Fig. 169  
Aros Castle, Mull, Argyll:  
general view from ...



Fig. 170  
Knock or Camus Castle, Skye:  
general view from ...



Fig. 171  
Dun Sgathaich, Skye:  
general view from ...



Fig. 172  
Map showing distribution of  
properties associated with  
MacDonald of Sleat  
[TO BE COMPLETED]



Fig. 173  
Dunivaig Castle, Islay, Argyll:  
general view from ...



Fig. 174  
Dunivaig Castle, Islay, Argyll:  
general view from ...



Fig. 175  
Map showing possessions of  
MacDonalds of Dunivaig, Barr  
(Kintyre) and The Glens (County  
Antrim)



Fig. 176  
Dunvegan Castle, Skye:  
reconstruction drawing by David L Roberts (date)



Fig. 177  
Keills Chapel, Argyll: detail of  
drawing of graveslab by ... (date)



Fig. 178  
Alexander MacLeod tomb, Rodel  
Church, Harris:  
detail of carved galley



Fig. 179  
Dunderave Castle, Argyll: drawing  
of carved effigy of musician



Fig. 180  
Kilchurn Castle, Argyll:



Fig. 181  
Alexander MacLeod tomb, Rodel  
Church, Harris:  
detail of hunting scene



Fig. 182  
Kinlochaline Castle, Morvern:  
Horatio McCulloch (1855)

### *Associations*

Comparisons between the many-faceted aspects of culture within the *Gàidhealtachd* are both difficult and invidious, but, taken as a whole, perhaps only the Macleods of MacLeod at Dunvegan Castle on Skye could rival or improve upon the patronage exercised by Clanranald at Castle Tioram. In its heyday Dunvegan could boast the genius of harpers such as Ruairidh MacMhuirich (c.1646-1713), aka Roderick Morison or *An Clàrsair Dall* ('The Blind Harper'), and bagpipe music played by hereditary pipers of the calibre of the legendary MacCrimmon kindred, most notably Patrick Mòr (1595-1670) and Patrick Óg (1645-c.1730).<sup>211</sup> However, compared to Tioram which essentially retains its 17<sup>th</sup>-century form, the anglicisation of the later chiefs of MacLeod and the ways in which Dunvegan itself has been transformed over the past two centuries make it difficult to appreciate or even visualise the setting in which the glories of traditional culture could be seen and heard. Morison's own *Òran Mòr MhicLeòid*, 'The Great Song of MacLeod', is now the closest we come to an evocation of the time when the 'heroic' halls rang out with music, poetry and conviviality, but, under the chieftainship of Iain Breac MacLeod's son, Roderick, had become 'chilly and deserted'. What had been the norm in the great houses of chieftains in earlier times was increasingly becoming a rarity.<sup>212</sup>

Much of the precious corpus of early Gaelic manuscripts may indeed be linked with places and patrons but often only in a general, not a specific, manner. The 15<sup>th</sup>- and early 16<sup>th</sup>-century anthology in the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* is associated with Macnab and Campbell patrons in Perthshire and Argyll, for example, while places associated with the island branches of the Beaton family at, for example, Ballinaby (Islay), Pennycross (Mull) and Husabost (Skye) have left no physical traces of their association with this famous and scholarly kindred, the last of whom, as we have seen above, was the compiler of the so-called *Black Book of Clanranald*.<sup>213</sup>

As far as religious associations are concerned, in their support of the Irish Franciscan mission in the 1620s and 1630s, the Clanranald family were only one among a number of what the priests described as 'gentry', on whom they depended for their work in reviving the Catholicism of areas which had been without priests for many years. However, only perhaps in the Barra and South Uist territories of Kisimul-based MacNeill did they achieve anything like the success rate and permanency comparable to that effected over Clanranald lands and people in the rest of the Uists and the mainland areas around Castle Tioram. The broad and long-lasting significance of this process, which depended critically upon lairdly collaboration, has perhaps not received the recognition that is its due, certainly as compared to better-known near-contemporary episodes such as the Protestant 'Plantation' of Ulster.<sup>214</sup>

As Athol Murray's detailed researches have shown,<sup>215</sup> Castle Tioram's aesthetic and Romantic associations as a ruin in the landscape are no greater than merely average among the castles of the western seaboard. In a letter of 27 August 1800 to Sir Walter Scott, John Leyden's praise of the natural scenery from a high point on Shona concluded with a comment that 'the view of Castle Tyrim was extremely beautiful'.<sup>216</sup> In other respects, however, most commentators and artists found comparatively little to inspire them into the composition of prose, poetry or painting. In the eyes of another commentator, Dr John MacCulloch, even Kinlochaline, a fairly conventional corbelled and turreted tower house in Morvern (which was the subject of an 1855 Horatio McCulloch painting), received a much more enthusiastic report than that

accorded to Castle Tioram.<sup>217</sup> For generations of travellers, artists and writers from the Romantic era onwards, however, none could compare with Kilchurn Castle on Loch Awe for the beauty of its ruins in a Highland landscape. For them, as Athol Murray has demonstrated,<sup>218</sup> Kilchurn has long enjoyed iconic status as the archetypal West Highland castle, rivalled latterly by the reconstructed Eilean Donan.

The relationship of Dorlin House to Castle Tioram fits in with the perception of a structure whose intrinsic attributes were subordinate to its natural surroundings, conforming to a general pattern which obtained widely across the West Highlands. It is clearly evident from its position and alignment that the 1860s house was sited principally to command a view of the mouth of the River Shiel and the entrance to Loch Moidart, a west-facing view which would have been enhanced in the evenings by the sunset. Eilean Tioram and the castle merely form the northern 'frame' or margin of this natural panorama, a vista that was ever-changing with the tides across the extensive strand. Comparatively, however, as mentioned above, Castle Tioram is unusual among its medieval counterparts in having outlived its Victorian successor.



Fig. 183 = Fig. 103  
Castle Tioram:  
general view from south



Fig. 184 = Fig. 128  
Borve Castle, Benbecula:  
general view from ...



Fig. 185 = Fig. 119  
Eilean Fhianain, Loch Shiel:



Fig. 186 = Fig. 126  
Howmore South Uist:  
the 'Clanranald Stone'



Fig. 187 = Fig. 124  
Howmore South Uist:  
general view from ...



Fig. 188 = Fig. 138  
Ormiclate, South Uist:  
principal or ... elevation



Fig. 189 = Fig. 134  
Caisteal Bheagram, Loch an Eilean,  
South Uist: general view from ...



Fig. 190 = Fig. 41  
Coroghan Castle, Canna:  
general view from ...

*Conclusions: summing up*

As pointed out above, Castle Tioram certainly cannot claim to possess a range of detailed attributes which bear favourable physical comparison with other polygonal or rectilinear enclosure castles of the western seaboard, its regional counterparts or 'peers'. However, what it lacks in open, self-evident architecture Tioram more than makes up for in other ways. Overall, its assemblage of subtle, relatively understated features come together to give the castle a much more intriguing and challenging character than most, if not all, of its regional peer group. It is this very combination which makes Tioram a castellologist's castle, one which demands extraordinary levels of architectural detection and embodies much scope for further investigation and analysis. Such qualities cannot be readily defined and tabulated but they place Tioram close to the very top of a scale which measures degree of difficulty of comprehension. This very statement of cultural significance - and the recent studies of the castle - are themselves clear measures of its elevated position on that scale. It is no exaggeration to claim that few, if any, castles in Scotland as a whole pose greater cerebral challenges than Castle Tioram. In this limited sense this castle is virtually 'peer-less'.<sup>219</sup>

Indeed, the earliest standing phases of the castle, as detected and outlined in this report, may, as result of further research, prove to be of exceptional significance, making Castle Tioram the clearest representative we possess of a second generation of West Highland stone castles. The probability that it may not be part of the very first generation of stone castles in the region, though its design may have been derived from them, is no detriment to its interest and importance - indeed, quite the contrary. Dating almost certainly from the middle decades of the 14<sup>th</sup> century it derives its layout and design from earlier forms of enclosure castle and 'hall houses', combining these two elements in a manner previously unrecognised in Scotland. The closest analogies, yet to be explored, may be with Gaelic Ireland, where, as in the Scottish *Gàidhealtachd* much social importance was attached to the communal use of the hall or halls. Whatever Irish parallels might be found, in the broad sweep of castellar development, such an 'enclosure hall' would stand, chronologically and typologically, mid-way between classic 13<sup>th</sup>-century enclosure castles and the towers and barmkins of 15<sup>th</sup>-century and later date.

In terms of the more intangible assets of context and associations, however, Castle Tioram may be regarded as being of outstanding interest and significance, placing it in a category above and beyond those which traditionally have been seen as its architectural and historical 'peers'.

Unlike counterparts such as Mingary, Castle Tioram was associated for over three centuries with a single family and remained relatively untouched thereafter, and for these reasons the developments and phases which can be read into the form and fabric of the building acquire more than ordinary significance. They serve as a mirror to the changes - and continuity - of the lifestyle, activities and to some extent, the political 'ups' and 'downs' of Clanranald, a family which endured remarkably well, better than most outside the Campbell empire, despite the fact that, on occasion, its members are known to have sailed close to the wind, metaphorically as well as physically.

The castle also gains much by its association with a family which manifests many significant aspects of Gaelic lordship and culture. Out of the lingering aftermath of the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles between 1493 and 1545, Clanranald emerged bearing the cultural mantle of Clan Donald, becoming patrons of the most important bardic dynasty known to West Highland history. Perhaps through this close association the family has been the subject of many tributes and stories in poetry and song, much of it handed down through oral tradition, a living link with Clanranald in its 16<sup>th</sup>- and 17<sup>th</sup>-century heyday. Unlike the castles of Dunvegan or Kisimul which have similar cultural associations but have been the subjects of later, comprehensive works of conservation and re-modelling, that period is still tangibly reflected in the surviving architecture of Castle Tioram.

The place of Tioram within the lordship of Garmoran as it emerged in the 14th century also adds to its significance. Like the Lordship of the Isles itself, the MacRuari lordship had more than one centre, one other at that period being Borge on Benbecula. The fact that Castle Tioram was not geographically central within this lordship, indeed that it stood enigmatically close to its southern boundary, conveys the impression of being both a chief residence and at the same time a mainland outpost of a maritime empire which was always linked – and looked – to the islands on and beyond the immediate horizons. Few other Scottish mainland castles possess these attributes and none is so conspicuously lacking in a self-supporting and cultivable demesne. In and around Loch Moidart, Clanranald clearly found an especially safe haven for galleys and, to judge by later documented activities, probably an abundance of fish stocks and a supply of timber that was relatively easily reached from the water.<sup>220</sup> Probably from the outset, Benbecula and the Uists made up for the natural resources that were lacking in the ‘rough bounds’, providing the arable and grazing land which ultimately, by the early 17<sup>th</sup> century, was formally recognised as the castle demesne.

The wider context of a lordship with widely ramified interests and lands thus gives special meaning to Castle Tioram and to the sites intimately associated with Clanranald: from Eilean Fhianain in Loch Shiel, through Coroghon Castle on Canna, to Borge Castle on Benbecula, Eilean Bheagram tower, Howmore churches and chapels and Ormiclate on South Uist. Fragmentary, elusive and, in some cases, relatively humble as these remains are, taken together in their island and highland settings, they have an extraordinary collective power. They serve as tangible reminders of a mobile, maritime lifestyle which is perhaps more accessible and understandable to modern generations than many of the grander yet perhaps socially more remote examples of castles and estates elsewhere in Scotland.

## **ABBREVIATIONS**

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## APPENDIX: WESTERN SEABOARD CASTLES AND RELATED SITES

### ARGYLL

#### COLL

Breachacha Castle  
Crannog, Breachacha  
Dùn Amlaimh, Loch nan Cinneachan  
Crannog, Loch an Dùin  
Crannog, Loch Anlaimh  
Crannogs, Loch Cliad  
Crannog (possible), Loch na Cloiche

#### COLONSAY

Dun Eibhinn  
Fort, Loch An Sgoltaire

#### ISLAY

A' Chrannag, Craigens  
Dun Athad  
Dunivaig Castle  
Finlaggan Castle, Eilean Mor, Loch Finlaggan  
Castle, Loch Gorm  
Crannog (possible) and Indeterminate  
Remains, Ardnave Loch  
Island-dwelling, Eilean Mhic Iain, Loch Lossit  
Island-dwelling, Eilean Mhuireill, Loch  
Finlaggan  
Fortified island, Loch Allallaidh  
Island-dwelling, Loch Còrr  
Fortified island (possible), Loch an Fhir Móir  
Island-dwelling (possible), Loch Bharradail  
Crannog, Loch Ballygrant  
Island-dwelling, Loch Laingeadail  
Island-dwelling, Loch nan Deala  
Crannog (possible), Loch Staoisha

#### JURA

An Aros (site), Glengarrisdale  
Claig Castle  
'Crannog', Loch a' Mhuilinn

#### KINTYRE

Aird's Castle, Carradale  
Dunaverty Castle  
Kilkerran Castle  
Old Largie Castle  
Motte, Macharìoch  
Castle, Island Muller  
Saddell Castle  
Skipness Castle  
Fortified dwelling, Tangy Loch  
Tarbert Castle  
The Trench, Trench Point

#### LORN

Achallader Castle  
Barcaldine Castle  
Eilean an Stalcair (site)  
Caisteal Na Nighinn Ruaidhe, Loch Avich  
Castles Farm  
Castle Stalker

Dunollie Castle  
Dunstaffnage Castle  
Eilean Tighe Bhain, Loch Tromlee  
Fraoch Eilean Castle  
Innis Chonnaill Castle  
Kilchurn Castle  
Fortified dwelling, Loch a' Phearsain  
Castle (site), Loch na Sreinge  
Fortified dwelling, Rubha na Moine Loch Nell  
Eilean Tighe Bhain, Loch Tromlee  
Fortified dwelling, Eilean Stalcair, Loch Tulla

#### LORN ISLANDS

Garvellachs, Dùn Chonnaill Castle  
Kerrera, Gylen Castle  
Lismore, Achadun Castle  
Lismore, Castle Coeffin  
Seil, Ardfad Castle  
Shuna, Castle Shuna  
Torsa, Caisteal Nan Con

#### MID ARGYLL & COWAL

Earthwork, Achadunan  
Motte, Achanelid  
Castle (site), Ardkinglas  
Asgog Castle  
Castle (site), Lochgair  
Auchenbreck Castle (site)  
Motte, Balliemeanoch, Strachur  
Fortified dwelling, Caol Chaoruinn, Torran  
Carnassarie Castle  
Carrick Castle  
Motte, Castle Crawford, Dunoon  
Old Castle Lachlan  
Castle Sween  
Motte (possible), Cnoc Mhic Eoghainn,  
Ballimore  
Craignish Castle  
Castle (site), Dubh Loch, Glen Shira  
Fortified dwelling, Duine, Ardfern  
Fortification, Dun an Garbh-sroine  
Motte (possible), Dun an Oir, Achanelid  
Dunderave Castle  
Dunoon Castle  
Duntrune Castle  
Castle, Eilean Dearg  
Fincham Castle  
Castle (site), Garvie  
Motte (possible), Glenbranter-Ford  
Old Inveraray Castle (site)  
Kilberry Castle  
Kilmartin Castle  
Knockamillie Castle  
MacEwan's Castle (Caisteal Mhic Eoghainn)  
Fortified dwelling, Robber's Den, Ardrishaig  
Toward Castle  
Crannog, Dubh Loch, Glen Shira

Island-dwelling, Eilean dà Ghallagain  
Island-dwelling, Eilean na Circe  
Island-dwelling, Eilean Tigh, Loch nan Torran  
Island-dwelling, Loch a' Bhàillidh  
Island-dwelling, Loch an Daimh  
Island settlement (site), Loch Glashan  
Island-dwelling, Loch Leathan

#### **MULL**

Aros Castle  
Duart Castle  
Dun Ara  
Dùn Bàn, Ulva  
Moy Castle, Lochbuie  
Eilean Amalaig, Loch Spelve  
Caisteal Eòghainn a' Chinn Bhig, Loch Sguabain  
Eilean Ban, Loch Frisa  
Crannog, Loch Assapol  
Crannog (site), Loch Bà  
Crannog, Lochnameal  
Crannog (possible), Loch Poit na h-I

#### **NORTH ARGYLL**

Ardtornish Castle  
Caisteal Dubh Nan Cliar  
Caisteal Nan Con  
Drimnin Castle (site)  
Glensanda Castle  
Kinlochaline Castle  
Mingary Castle

#### **TIREE**

Castle (site), Island House  
Crannogs, Loch Bhasapoll  
Crannog and Enclosure, Loch na Buaile  
Crannog (possible), Loch na Gile

#### **TRESHNISH ISLES**

Cairnburgh Mor  
Cairnburgh Beg

#### **AYRSHIRE**

Ardmillan Castle  
Ardrossan Castle  
Ardstinchar Castle  
Carleton Castle  
Place of Crosbie  
Culzean Castle  
Dunure Castle  
Fairlie Castle  
Greenan Castle  
Seagate Castle, Irvine  
Kelburn Castle  
Knock Old Castle  
Newton Castle (site), Ayr  
Portencross Castle  
Skelmorlie Castle  
Thomaston Castle  
Turnberry Castle

#### **CUMBRAE**

Castle, Castle Island, Little Cumbrae

#### **BUTE**

#### **ARRAN**

Brodick Castle  
Kildonan Castle  
Lochranza Castle

#### **BUTE**

Ascog Castle  
Kames Castle  
Kelspoke Castle  
Kilmory Castle  
Rothsay Castle and Chapel  
Wester Kames Castle

#### **DUNBARTONSHIRE**

Dumbarton Castle  
Dunglass Castle  
Dunglass (Cromwellian) Fort  
Faslane Castle  
Rosneath Castle  
'Tremass Castle', Auchentorlie

#### **INVERNESS-SHIRE**

Castle Tioram  
Erchless Castle  
Motte (possible), Cnoc an Tighe Mhoir,  
Erchless Castle  
Invergarry Castle  
Inverlochy Castle  
Tor Castle  
Urquhart Castle

#### **BARRA**

Dun Mhic Leoid  
Kisimul Castle

#### **BENBECULA**

Borve Castle  
[?Dun Buidhe, Loch Dun Mhurchaidh, Knock Rolum]

#### **CANNA**

Coroghan Castle

#### **ERISKAY**

Weaver's Castle, Eilean Leathan, Stack Islands

#### **NORTH UIST**

Dun Mhic Laitheann, Groatay  
Dun Thomi (Thomaidh), Vallay Sound  
[Dun an Sticer, Loch an Sticer, Port nan Long]  
Dun na Dise, Baleshare Ford, Claddach  
Baleshare  
Dun, Loch Huna  
Dun Mhic Raouill, Loch Eval, Tighary  
Fortified Island, Eilean Buidhe, Loch Skealtar  
Dun, Loch Scadavat  
Dun Scor, Loch Caravat  
Dun Ban, Loch Hunder  
Dun an t-Siamain, Loch Dun an t-Siamain,  
Eaval  
Dun Aonais (Aonghuis), Loch Aonais  
Dun Nighean Rìgh Lochlainn, Loch an Duin,  
Breinish  
Dun Ban, Loch Caravat  
[Dun Torcuill, Loch an Duin]

[Dun Olavat, Eilean Domhnuill an spionnaidh,  
Loch Olavat, Griminish]

#### **RAASAY**

Brochel Castle  
Kilmaluag Castle

#### **SKYE**

Caisteal Maol, Kyleakin  
Caisteal Uisdein  
Dun Ringill  
Dun Sgathaich  
Duntulm Castle  
Dunvegan Castle  
Knock Castle (Caisteal Camus)

#### **SOUTH UIST**

Caisteal Bheagram, Loch an Eilean  
Castle Calvay  
Ormaclett/Ormiclate House  
[Clanranald Stone, Howmore]  
Dun, Eilean an Staoir, Milton  
Dun Raouill, Loch Druidibeg  
Dun, Loch Druim an Iasgair, Carnan  
Dun, Loch Cnoc a Buidhe, Mingary  
Dun Mor, Loch an Duin Mhoir, Geirnish  
Fortified island, Dun na Killie, Eilean Buidhe,  
Loch Dunakillie

#### **RENFREWSHIRE**

Castle Levan  
Castle (site), Bath Street, Gourrock  
Mansion house (site), Greenock  
Inverkip (or Ardgowan) Castle  
Newark Castle (including tower and chapel),  
Port Glasgow

#### **ROSS-SHIRE**

Balloan Castle (site)  
'MacNicholson's Castle', (site), Ullapool  
Dun Lagaidh  
Dun an Ruigh Ruadh  
Eilean Donan Castle  
Eilean Ghruididh, Loch Maree  
Strome Castle

#### **LEWIS**

Stornoway Castle (site)

#### **SUTHERLAND**

Ardvreck Castle  
Caisteal Bharraich  
Eilean Assynt



Fig. 191: Clach Chlann 'Ic Ailean (The Clanranald Stone), Kildonan Museum, South Uist (Geoffrey Stell, 11 May 2006)