

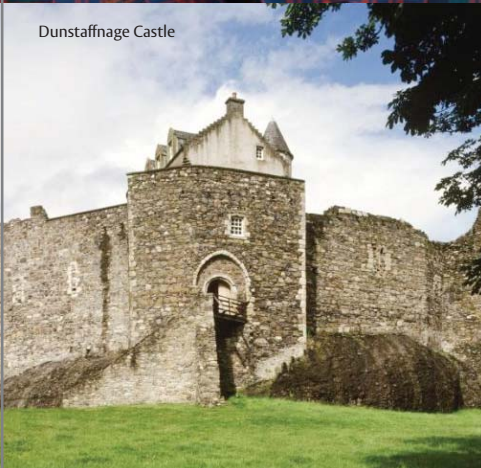
The glory days of the MacDonalds were as the medieval Lords of the Isles. They were effective rulers of a sea empire stretching down the west of Scotland. And even after the lordship was broken by the Scottish Crown, the clan remained a powerful force for centuries to come.



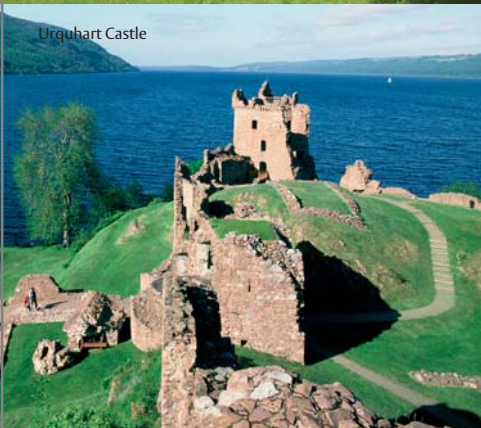
IN 1395 DONALD MACDONALD, LORD OF THE ISLES, SEIZED URQUHART CASTLE BESIDE LOCH NESS.

MacDonald Clan tartan

Dunstaffnage Castle



Urquhart Castle



THE MACDONALDS

Many castles have played host to the MacDonalds – some more willingly than others.

Robert the Bruce had cordial relations with the clan – the mighty Angus Og having supported him at Bannockburn.

But conflict was almost inevitable between Scottish kings who were expanding their territories and power and the largely independent Gaelic Lordship of the Isles.

In 1395 Donald MacDonald, Lord of the Isles, seized Urquhart Castle beside Loch Ness.

Then, in 1402, the clan took the Earldom of Ross.

For generations Urquhart Castle and its estates were in a conflict zone between the MacDonalds and the Crown. Control of the castle and its lands swapped back and forth, with the situation made worse by raiders lifting livestock.

Another castle, Tantallon, was used to imprison Alexander, 3rd Lord of the Isles, who had been forced to submit to James I in 1429.

Inverlochy Castle then became the scene for a battle in 1431 between the MacDonalds and royalist forces.

Victory enabled the clan to negotiate their leader's release.

Triumph turned to disaster when the power of the Lords of the Isles was finally broken in 1493. Yet the clan was far from a spent force as far as the people of Glen Urquhart were concerned.

In 1545 they combined with the Camerons of Locheil in taking the castle and its estates in what became known as the Great Raid.

They left with 2,000 cattle, 383 horses and 3,000 sheep – from the castle they took money, guns and a dozen feather beds.

A century later, in the 1640s, the MacDonalds were involved in supporting the royalist Marquis of Montrose against the covenanters though their principal aim was to retake territory from the Campbells.

Among the victims of the conflict was Castle Sween, one of the earliest in Scotland, which was partly destroyed by the MacDonalds in 1647 and left derelict thereafter.

IONA ABBEY

The ancient abbey of Iona was a spiritual centre for the MacDonald Lords of the Isles.

The abbots were so important that the lords included them on the council they used for advice in ruling the Hebrides.

Iona was also where the great men of the MacDonalds were buried.

Many ornately carved grave slabs still survive carrying effigies of MacDonald warriors and leaders of other powerful families of Argyll and the Western Isles.

The Lords of the Isles made generous gifts to the abbey – a good way to win God's favour and speed a soul's passage to heaven.

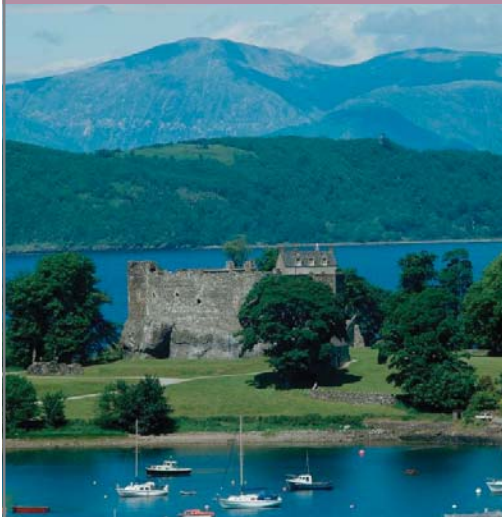
Among them was a precious shrine – now lost – which was made to contain the hand of St Columba.



Dunstaffnage Castle

Glencoe

McLeans Cross, Iona



THE MASSACRE OF GLENCOE WAS A DARK MOMENT IN SCOTLAND'S HISTORY

DUNSTAFFNAGE CASTLE

Perched on a rocky outcrop, Dunstaffnage Castle has stood guard at the meeting point of Loch Etive and the Firth of Lorn since the 13th century.

For much of that time it has been a Campbell stronghold – and a place of woe for the MacDonalds.

It was from Dunstaffnage that seaborne expeditions were launched against rebellious MacDonald Lords of the Isles. Here too was where the garrison managed to capture Sir Alexander MacDonald, second-in-command

of royalist forces led by the Marquis of Montrose, in 1647. He was hanged from the walls.

In 1746 Flora MacDonald, who helped Bonnie Prince Charlie escape to France after the defeat at Culloden, was arrested and held at Dunstaffnage before being removed to the Tower of London.

GLENCOE

The massacre of Glencoe was a dark moment in Scotland's history.

In 1692 the Highland clans were ordered to swear loyalty to King William – many still supported James VII who had been deposed for insisting on absolute power.

A deadline was set, and the MacDonalds of Glencoe (or Maclains) made strenuous efforts to make their declaration in time, their oath was late.

The Secretary of State, John Dalrymple, Master of Stair, rejected the oath and ordered the army to cut them off root and branch.

Troops spent 12 days living with the MacDonalds, enjoying their hospitality, on the pretext that there was no room at their barracks.

They were then ordered to wipe out their hosts. Some 38 were massacred and others died trying to escape through a blizzard.

MACDONALD SITES

- 1 Castle Sween:**
In 1308 Robert the Bruce besieged Alasdair Og (MacDonald) in the castle.
- 2 Culloden:**
The MacDonald memorial was placed on the battlefield in 1966 when the burial place of the MacDonalds was rediscovered.
- 3 Dunstaffnage Castle:**
Where Flora MacDonald was imprisoned after helping Bonnie Prince Charlie escape to France.
- 4 Glencoe:**
The MacDonalds lived in Glencoe since the 14th century and were massacred there after their chief missed the deadline to sign an oath of loyalty to William III.
- 5 Glenfinnan Monument:**
Built by Alexander MacDonald, 10th Chieftain of Glenaladale in 1815 to commemorate the bravery and fidelity of his forefathers, at the spot where Prince Charles Edward Stuart raised his father's royal standard in 1745.
- 6 Iona Abbey:**
Burial place of Angus Og MacDonald (died 1330) and subsequent Lords of the Isles.
- 7 Newhailes:**
The family home of the Dalrymples. Sir John Dalrymple, Master of Stair, engineered the massacre of the MacDonalds of Glencoe.
- 8 Skipness Castle:**
This castle, built by the MacSweens, was a stronghold of the MacDonalds until their forfeiture in 1493.
- 9 Strome Castle:**
A 15th-century MacDonald castle, destroyed by Kenneth MacKenzie, lord of Kintail in 1609.
- 10 Tantallon Castle:**
Alexander 3rd Lord of the Isles was held prisoner at Tantallon provoking a major revolt in the north, in 1431 which forced his release from royal captivity.
- 11 Urquhart Castle:**
MacDonald Lords of the Isles gained control of the castle in 1451 but forfeited in 1493. A later attempt to reclaim their Lordship led the MacDonalds of Glengarry to storm the castle once more, an event known as 'the Great Raid'.



Key to sites

- Historic Scotland
- National Trust Scotland
- Historic Houses Association

Iona Abbey



Culloden



Tantallon Castle

