

INFORMATION ON CASTLE TIORAM
DRAWN FROM
GEOFFREY STELL
CASTLE TIORAM:
A STATEMENT OF CULTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

A. WEST COAST CASTLES OF RELATED FORM TO CASTLE TIORAM

A.1. Table of related castles with points of significance

(see section 4, table 4.1)

Name of castle	Suggested date	Possible evidence for early site	Island site	Anchorage/boat landing	Restored for modern occupation	Associated with later house	Property in state care
Castle Calvay, South Uist	?late medieval?		X				
Castle Tioram, Inverness-shire	Mid-14thC enclosure and 'hall tower', and later	Documentary and physical evidence	X	?		X	
Dunoon, Argyll	?13thC origin?	Place name indication					
Dunstaffnage, Argyll	13thC and later	Place name indication					X
Duntrune, Argyll	15thC and later	Place name indication		X	X	X	
Dunvegan, Inverness-shire	?13thC origin?; c.1400 tower	Place name indication			X		
Mingary, Argyll	c.1300 or later; c.1700 barrack block			X			

A.2. Points emerging from comparison of related Scottish castles

(see section 4)

1. Dunstaffnage is the largest and most complex of the group.
2. Tioram is the second largest of the group, being about two-thirds the size of Dunstaffnage.
3. The closest correspondences of scale, plan and wall-head defences are between Tioram and Mingary.
4. There are no known precise Scottish parallels for the 'hall-tower' at Tioram, but it is perhaps a hybridised version of small halls and towers as at Fincharn and Glensanda.
5. The two most striking features of the later work at Tioram are the wall-head decorative rounds and the tall stair tower. The latter is an unusual feature.

A.3. Suggested building chronology of Castle Tioram

(see section 3.1)

1. **1346x73** main building campaign.
2. **1530s** modifications for John Moidartach, possibly including heightening of original hall and insertion of vault.
3. **c.1610** modifications for Sir Donald, including turreted upperworks and relocation of stair tower.
4. **c.1668** repairs to roofs.
5. **1690s/early 1700s** possible reorganisation for barrack accommodation.

B. CASTLES SHOWING ARCHITECTURAL RELATIONSHIPS WITH CASTLE TIORAM

B.1. West Coast castles with a 'hall-keep' or 'hall house' as a prominent element

(see section 4)

Castle Tioram, Inverness-shire

Borve, Benbecula

Fincham, Argyll

Glensanda, Argyll

B.2. Irish castles with a 'hall-keep' or 'hall house' as a prominent element

(see section 4)

Castle	Likely date
Delvin, Westmeath	14 th /15 th -century
Dunmoe, Meath	14 th /15 th -century
Kindlestown, Wicklow	14 th /15 th -century

B.3. Irish castles of comparable enclosure plan type to Tioram

(see section 4)

Castle	Likely date
Adare, Limerick	c.1200
Carrickfergus, Antrim	early 13 th -century
Dundrum, Down	early 13 th -century
Harry Avery's Castle, Tyrone	late 14 th /15 th -century

B.4. Welsh castles of comparable enclosure plan type to Tioram

(see section 4)

Castle	Likely date
Coity, South Wales	12 th /13 th century
Criccieth, Gwynedd	12 th /13 th century
Dolwyddelan, Gwynedd	12 th /13 th century

C. THE WIDER CULTURAL AND SOCIAL CONTEXT OF TIORAM

C.1. Castles and houses associated with Castle Tioram

(see section 3.2)

Castle or house	Association with Tioram
Borve Castle, Benbecula	a castle of chiefs of Clanranald
Caisteal Bheagram, South Uist	a castle of chiefs of Clanranald
Coroghan Castle, Canna	a castle of chiefs of Clanranald
Ormiclatye, South Uist	an 18 th -century house of chiefs of Clanranald

C.2. Ecclesiastical sites associated with Castle Tioram

(see section 3.2)

Site	Association with Tioram
Eilean Fhianain, Loch Shiel	church of Tioram's parish
Howmore Churches, chapels, burial enclosures and Stones, South Uist	burial place of chiefs of Clanranald
Teampull Bhuirgh, Benbecula	closely associated with Borve castle
Teampull na Trionaid, North Uist	connected with MacRuari family

D. THE LATER HISTORY OF WEST COAST CASTLES

D.1. Significant West Coast castles of which there are no upstanding remains

(see section 2.3)

Inveraray, Argyll
 Kilmaluag, Raasay
 ‘MacNicholson’s Castle’, Ullapool, Ross-shire
 Stornoway, Lewis

D.2. West Coast castles that are thought to have been continuously occupied

(see section 2.3)

Brodick, Arran
 Craginish, Argyll
 Dunvegan, Skye
 Kames, Bute
 Kelburn, Ayrshire

D.3. West Coast castles that have been (or are being) restored

(see section 2.3, table 2.3.1)

Castle	Date of restoration
Barcaldine, Argyll	1896-1911
Breachacha, Coll	1965-93
Castle Stalker, Argyll	1965-75
Carrick, Argyll	1988-
Duart, Mull	1911-12
Dunderave, Argyll	1911-12
Duntrune, Argyll	1833-5 and 1954-7
Eilean Donan, Ross-shire	1912-32
Kilberry, Argyll	1844-9
Kilmartin, Argyll	1997-?2000
Kinlochaline, Argyll	1997-?2000
Kisimul, Barra	1938-70 (<i>now a property in state care</i>)
Saddell, Argyll	1975-7
Wester Kames, Bute	1897-1900

D.4. West coast castles associated with a later house

(see section 2.3, table 2.3.2)

Castle	Later house
Airds, Argyll	Carradale House, 1844
Ardkinglas (<i>site</i>), Argyll	Ardkinglas House, 1906-8
Ardvreck, Sutherland	Calda House, late 17 th -century
Balloan (<i>site</i>), Ross-shire	Inverbroom House, 17 th -century and later
Breachacha, Coll	Breachacha New Castle, 1750
Dun Ara, Mull	Glengorm House, 1858-60
Dunollie, Argyll	Dunollie House, 17 th -century and later
Duntrune, Argyll	Poltalloch House, 1849-53
Invergarry, Inverness-shire	Glengarry Castle, 1866-9
Inverlochy, Inverness-shire	Inverlochy Castle, 1863 and 1889-92 (<i>the old castle is a property in state care</i>)
Kilmaluag, Raasay	Raasay House, c.1750, c.1809 and later
Kinlochaline, Argyll	Lochaline House, 1820s and 1870s
Knock Old Castle, Ayrshire	Knock Castle, c.1850
Moy, Mull	Lochbuie House, 1793
Old Castle Lachlan, Argyll	Castle Lachlan, 1790 and later
Old Inveraray Castle, Argyll	Inveraray Castle, 1745-61 and later
Rosneath (<i>site</i>) Dunbartons	Rosneath Castle (<i>site</i>), 1803-6
Saddell, Argyll	Saddell House, 1774
Skipness, Argyll	Skipness House, 1878-81 and earlier and later (<i>the old castle is a property in state care</i>)
Tioram, Inverness-shire	Dorlin House (<i>site</i>), c.1864
Toward, Argyll	Castle Toward, 1820-1

D.5. West Coast castles that have been a source of artistic inspiration

(see section 3.3)

Eilean Donan Castle, Ross-shire

Inverlochy Castle, Inverness-shire (a property in state care)

E. A SUMMARY OF POTENTIAL DATING EVIDENCE FOR CASTLE TIORAM

(see section 3.1)

1. **c.1320s** 'Insula sicca' (dry island) was mentioned in a charter of MacRuari possessions issued by Christina, aunt of Amy MacRuari.
2. **1346** Amy MacRuari, who had married John first Lord of the Isles in 1337, inherited the lordship of Garmoran (of which Eilean Tioram was a part) after the murder of her brother, John.
3. **1346x73** the first specific reference to 'Elantyrin' (along with Borve) is in a charter of John MacDonald, first Lord of the Isles, to his son Reginald or Ranald. This was confirmed by Robert II on 1 January 1372/3.
4. **1346x50**. A MacDonald tradition, recorded in the 17th century, said 'Castle Tirrim' and Borve were built by Amy MacRuari, presumably indicating a date between her marriage in 1346 and her likely death in 1350.
5. **c.1380** Tioram is included in a list of castles by the chronicler John of Fordun.
6. **c.1389** John and Amy's eldest surviving son died at Tioram, and in the same year his brother, Godfrey issued a charter from the castle.
7. **1419** Allan is said to have died at the castle.
8. **1481-c.1503**. Allan's grandson, another Allan, laird of Clanranald, is said to have imprisoned three Highland chiefs in the castle.
9. **1554** the castle was bombarded by the earl of Argyll.
10. **1616** a bond gave Clanranald's designated residence as 'Ylantyrum'.
11. **1647**, parliamentary forces under General Leslie captured the castle, though a later source said that it was the earl of Argyll who reduced the castle.
12. **1668**, Donald (clan chief from 1670) was looking for timber to repair his house at the castle.
13. **1676** slate nails were delivered.
14. **1692**, following the chief's defection to James VII, a detachment of government troops was stationed at the castle, and in March 1693 orders were given to make it wind and water tight.
15. **c.1714**. Drawings of the castle by Brigadier Lewis Petit des Etans probably date from 1714, and show what were presumably intended improvements.
16. **1715**, a report by the governor of Fort William in July suggested much work was needed at the castle, and said no work had been carried out for 25 or 26 years.
17. **1715**, Clanranald is said to have taken the castle and ordered its firing. The destruction by fire is also referred to in 1733 and 1748, though the castle was said to be entire when the exiled Lady

Grange was quartered there in 1732, and repairs seem to have been under consideration in 1741, when Petit's drawings were copied.

18. **1745**, it was said to have been used by the Jacobites as an armaments store.

19. **1748**, the castle was drawn by Paul Sandby for the Board of Ordnance, when repairs of £800 were recommended.

20. **1749**, Tioram was one of four castles recommended for conversion to barracks.

21. **1798**, there was a reference to a 'change house' at Tioram in a rental.

22. **1856x71**, Hope Scott, owner of the estate, lowered the courtyard levels.

23. **c.1888** Lord Howard of Glossop carried out repairs, including infilling of breaches in the walls.

24. **1926**, the castle was bought by James Wiseman Macdonald, who had a survey made and arranged for the Ministry of Works to excavate and consolidate the fabric.

F. FACTORS RELATING TO THE ARCHAEOLOGICAL POTENTIAL OF CASTLE TIORAM

1. There was a lowering of ground levels within the courtyard by Hope Scott, owner from 1856 to 1871 (see section 3.1).
2. Works carried out by Lord Howard of Glossop c.1888 may have included some interference with ground levels (see section 3.1).
3. After the castle was acquired by James Wiseman Macdonald in 1926 significant works of excavation were carried out for him by the Ministry of Works (see section 3.1).
4. The finding of a 7th-century bronze hanging bowl may point to early occupation of the site (see sections 2.2 and 4).
5. The north-west curtain wall appears to overlie an earlier structure (see section 4, pp 44-5).
6. Work at Dunollie Castle has shown how useful targeted investigations on such sites can be (see sections 2.2 and 4).
7. The castle 'probably has better than average archaeological potential among the castles of the region' (see section 4).

G. SUMMARY OF THE SIGNIFICANCE OF CASTLE TIORAM

(See introductory summary and Section 4 conclusions)

1. Tioram is the clearest representative of a second generation of West Highland stone castles, dating from the mid-14th century. It combines the forms of an enclosure castle and a 'hall house' in a manner previously unrecognised in Scotland.
2. Unlike its counterparts, Tioram was associated with a single family (Clanranald) for over three centuries, and remained relatively untouched after that; it is a rare unmodified reflection of the lifestyle of a Gaelic lord and his kindred.
3. Like a number of other West Coast castles, it was the mainland outpost of a great maritime estate, but was possibly unique in having its demesne and family burial place located over sixty nautical miles distant.
4. Its associations with significant aspects of Gaelic lordship and culture, especially as developed in the 16th and 17th centuries, are still physically expressed and echoed in the surviving architecture in a way not seen elsewhere.
5. It is a building whose architecture is at the same time both particularly challenging and highly rewarding for those with a specialist interest in castle studies, with unusually great potential for further investigation and analysis.