



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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ALBA

Property in Care (PIC) ID:	PIC202
Designations:	Scheduled Monument (SM90203)
Taken into State care:	1937 (Guardianship)
Last Reviewed:	2024

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LOCH DOON CASTLE



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LOCH DOON CASTLE

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I. SUMMARY

This document aims to present a holistic approach to support the definition of cultural significance of Loch Doon Castle as a Property in Care (PiC). It highlights the key features that make Loch Doon Castle special by assessing it against six values that cover tangible as well as intangible heritage values. The most important aspects of significance for the site are summarised under *1.2 Statement of Significance* before each value is assessed individually under *2 Assessment of values*. The overall assessment is taking into account the ongoing development of our knowledge of the site. The Statement informs Historic Environment Scotland's conservation and management activity, provides the basis for interpreting the site and highlights areas where more research is needed.

As well as being a Property in Care, Loch Doon Castle is protected as a Scheduled Monument (SM90203). The designation considers different, though overlapping, aspects of cultural significance and highlights the importance of the site.

In this document the various components discussed are identified by the following terms:

- Loch Doon Castle – refers to both the whole site in Guardianship, which is the re-erected Castle at the shore of Loch Doon as well as to the castle when it was on its original site on the island.
- Loch Doon – the loch.
- Castle Island – the island where the castle was built originally.

1.1 Introduction

Loch Doon Castle¹ lies at the south end of Loch Doon, on its western shore, in East Ayrshire approximately 7 miles (11.3km) south of Dalmellington. Tucked away on the high rolling moors that separate Ayrshire from Galloway, Loch Doon is well-hidden by some of the highest hills in the region: the Rhinns of Kells, the Dungeon Hills, and the Range of the Awful Hand.

Originally Loch Doon Castle was situated on an island, known as Castle Island, at the south end of Loch Doon. When it was proposed that Loch Doon was to be dammed in 1936, which raised the water level and would have submerged much of the castle, the Ministry of Works (MoW) made the

¹ Also known as Balloch Castle (Paterson 1847, 30) and alternatively as Balliol Castle and Craigmalloch, see [Canmore ID 63601 - Loch Doon Castle \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk) (accessed: 13 June 2023).

decision to dismantle the castle and move it to its current location on the Loch's shore in 1935, some 500m west-north-west from Castle Island.

The history of Loch Doon Castle is therefore a tale of two monuments. The Property in Care (PiC) is the re-erection of the original Loch Doon Castle, the remains of which survive on Castle Island in the loch. The PiC derives much of its significance from this original castle. Therefore, while the original castle remains are not part of the PiC, both will be discussed at points throughout this Statement of Significance. The national importance of both the original and the reconstruction is recognised through their statutory designation as separate scheduled monuments.²

The building is modest in size, being a stout castle of enclosure measuring little more than 30m in diameter. Finally abandoned in the 17th century, the castle was designated a scheduled monument in 1921. Three years after its re-erection began, it was taken into care in November 1937 via a Deed of Guardianship at which point the re-erected castle effectively became the scheduled monument.³ The remaining parts of the castle on Castle Island were scheduled in 1999.

The castle as it stands today on the shore of Loch Doon consists of the eleven-sided curtain wall and some of the surviving internal architectural features. However, the later sixteenth century features like the tower were not reconstructed. The site is unstaffed and is usually free to access all year round, with visitor numbers estimated to be around 1,073 per year.⁴ Loch Doon Castle is at the end of a long single-track road with car parking available in its immediate vicinity.⁵

² Link to scheduling documentation: [SM8619 - Loch Doon Castle, original site and remains of, 570m NE of Craigmalloch \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](#) and re-erected castle: [SM90203 - Loch Doon Castle \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](#) (Both accessed: 25 May 2022).

³ Loch Doon Castle, together with other ancient monuments that were considered for relocation, served as a catalyst for the Commissioners to consider if a re-erected monument would maintain its existence as an ancient monument. They concluded that it would do so if the material itself attracted the designation of ancient monument and that once the relocation was complete the Commissioners would have the site scheduled and/or accepted a Deed of Guardianship. This was the case for Loch Doon Castle. Letter dated 14th October 1936 from A.W.B. to Secretary Office of Works. MW1/583, National Records Scotland.

⁴ 2019-2020 estimated figures, courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

⁵ Prior to visiting, please check access information, available at: [Visit a place - Loch Doon Castle \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#) (Accessed: 31 May 2022).

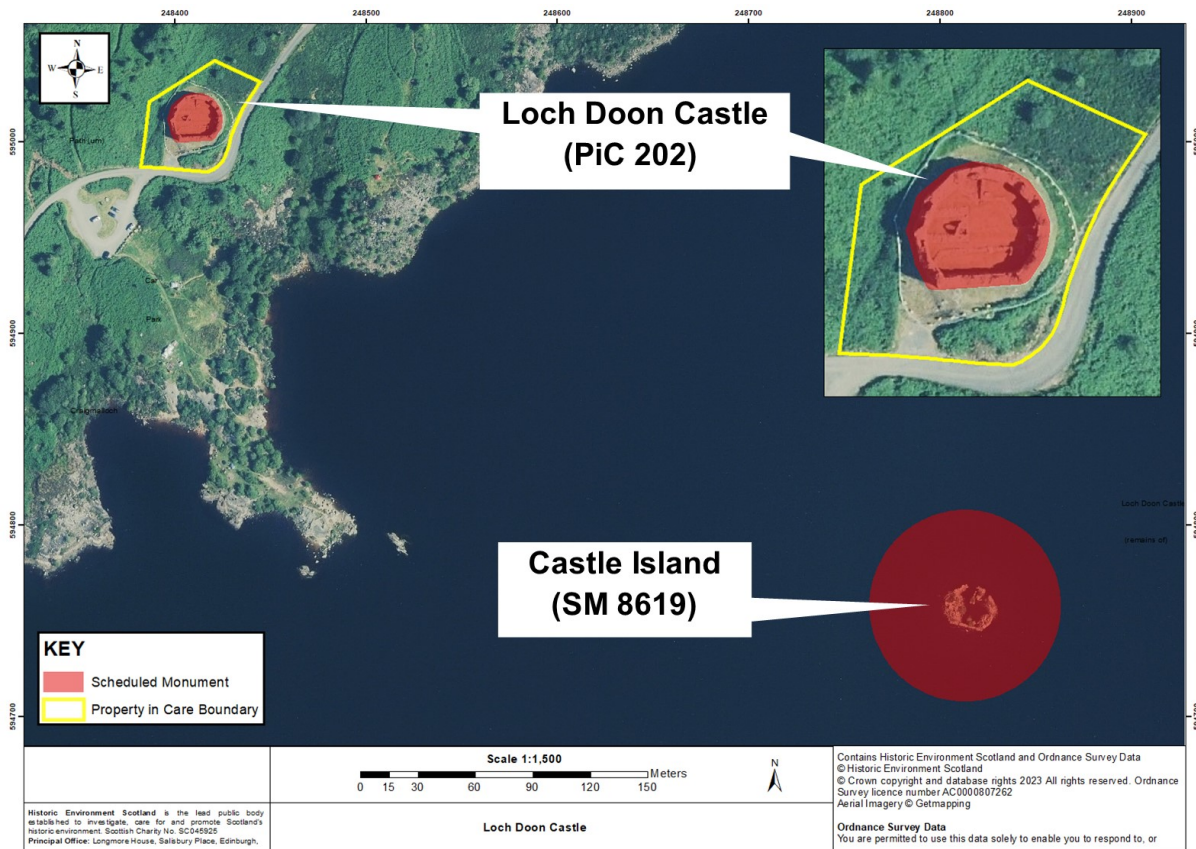


Figure 1: Loch Doon Castle on its current location on the loch's shore scheduled area (SM90203) and Property in Care (PiC202) boundary as well as its original location on Castle Island scheduled area (SM8619). Image for illustrative purposes only.

1.2 Statement of Significance

An unusual fortalice (small fortification) with origins in the late 13th century AD, Loch Doon Castle is noteworthy for several reasons: its unique layout; the exceptional quality of workmanship in its fabric; its connections to significant events in Scotland's history (including the Wars of Independence); and its status as a castle divided in two.

- Loch Doon Castle is a highly unusual medieval castle in East Ayrshire. Dating to the late 13th or early 14th centuries, it contains a number of features in its design which make it unique among Scotland's castles. In layout it resembles an amalgam of two styles: the 'hall-house' and the 'castle of *enceinte*'.⁶ Hall-houses are a very uncommon form of early stone castle found variously in the north and south of Scotland. Castles of *enceinte* are also unusual, and generally associated with Scotland's Gaelic (western) seaboard.

⁶ Enceinte describes the main enclosure of a fortress.

- Among castles of enceinte, Loch Doon Castle is unrivalled for the exceptional craftsmanship in its masonry. It contains several examples of finely moulded gothic detailing (namely pointed arches) which are uncommon in Scottish castles, though are found in hall-houses of the period. More broadly, there are few medieval castles of any kind in Scotland whose masonry is of a quality similar to that of Loch Doon Castle.
- The castle played an important role in the Wars of Scottish Independence. It is highly likely that Loch Doon Castle was constructed on the orders of Robert I (the Bruce), an iconic and pivotal figure in Scottish history, or his father.
- Loch Doon Castle is unique in Scotland as a medieval castle that has been dismantled and carefully re-erected in another location to preserve it for future generations. In this regard it survives as an extremely important case study in the evolution of heritage management in the 20th century.
- Though now no longer situated on an island, the castle's setting is still largely unchanged. As it was relocated not far from its original position, the remote vastness of the wilderness surrounding it is still experienced and serves as a dramatic contrast to the architectural beauty of the castle. The surrounding landscape is intrinsically linked with the castle's history and placenames still serve as a reminder of this.

2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

Before the Castle

The area around Loch Doon has produced evidence for some of the earliest known human activity in Scotland, with a number of Mesolithic sites around the loch's shores.⁷ Donald's Isle,⁸ approximately 2km north of Loch Doon Castle and normally submerged, is home to a medieval domestic structure of likely 13th or 14th century date. Excavated between 1933 and 1936, this was found to comprise a rectangular stone-built structure with associated timber and stone outbuildings. The thickness of its walls (1.5m) suggest a high-status, possibly two-storey, building.⁹ Discoveries from the excavations included an Edward I coin of 1260 and medieval pottery, suggesting some occupation of the island contemporary with that of Loch

⁷ Wright 2012.

⁸ See [Canmore ID 63590: Loch Doon, Donald's Isle \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk/id/63590) (accessed: 19 October 2023).

⁹ Wyeth 2018, 260.

Doon Castle. Other finds from Donald's Isle, including worked flint and a segment of 1st-2nd century AD glass armlet, suggest considerably earlier activity on the island.

Castle Island on which Loch Doon Castle itself was constructed consists of rocky outcrops of bedrock and a central mass of rubble. This may be indicative of a deliberate enhancement of the island's size and shape, and it is possible that the island was inhabited or utilised before the castle was constructed, for example as a crannog. However, there is no conclusive evidence for this.

A number of archaeological discoveries have been made around Castle Island which demonstrate early medieval activity on the loch. In 1823 and 1831, seven wooden boats or canoes were found at the bottom of the loch opposite the castle's entrance. Hewn from solid oak and approximately 7.3m long and 1.2m wide, these were subsequently radiocarbon dated in the late 20th century to 619 cal. AD (calibrated AD).¹⁰ One of these boats contained a Viking battle-axe (Type Rygh 560) now in Kirkcudbright Museum.¹¹

Construction of Loch Doon Castle

The castle itself was constructed on castle island around the turn of the 13th and 14th centuries, probably by the Earls of Carrick. As noted above, there may have been earlier activity or building on the island. Conceptually, Loch Doon Castle is a castle of *enceinte*: an early form of stone-built castle whose primary feature is a large and robust curtain wall. In this group Loch Doon Castle stands as an outlier both for the exceptional craftsmanship in its form, as well as its location: excepting a few other outliers, most castles of *enceinte* are located on Scotland's west coast (such as Castle Tioram, Mingarry Castle, **Castle Sween**,¹² and Castle Lachlan).

¹⁰ See [Canmore ID 73879: Loch Doon - Logboats \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk/id/73879) (accessed: 04 July 2023). Two of the logboats were given to the 'Museum of Glasgow' (now the Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow). Their accession numbers are GLAHM:A.30 and GLAHM:A.31. The collection entries can be explored online on [University of Glasgow Collections \(gla.ac.uk\)](https://collections.gla.ac.uk) (accessed: 03 June 2024).

¹¹ See [Canmore ID 117063: Loch Doon - Axe Head, Paddle and Club \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk/id/117063). The axe is part of the Stewartry Museum collection and its collection entry can be viewed online on Future Museum website: [Iron Axe Head - Loch Doon \(futuremuseum.co.uk\)](https://futuremuseum.co.uk) (both accessed: 04 July 2023).

¹² Throughout the text, site names in **bold** are managed by Historic Environment Scotland and are publicly accessible. Access information can be found at: historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/ (accessed: 01 June 2022).



Figure 2: Oblique aerial view of the re-erected site of Loch Doon Castle, looking to the south-south-west (DP 159783). © Crown Copyright: HES

The castle's enceinte is uniquely eleven-sided and D-shaped on plan. The shape may have been determined by the shape of the island, however, architectural licence was most likely also involved in the final form of the castle. The longest side faces the south, likely to maximise the benefits of sunlight in a building range of which this side of the enceinte was the south wall. The enceinte's outer face distinctively comprises two dramatically different construction methods: finely dressed ashlar blocks form the lower courses up to a height of approximately 2-2.5m, laid beneath more randomly arranged rubble. The reason for this change is uncertain. The ashlar extends to the castle's detailing, which include finely moulded pointed archways throughout. The castle's main entrance, to the north, is large for a castle of this size, and would have contained a portcullis. A small postern (side) gate is located in the enceinte's eastern side. To the west are the remains of a later medieval keep, believed to have been added to the castle in the 16th century. The re-erected remains do not include this later tower.

20th century history – dismantling and re-erection

During the First World War, the area around Loch Doon was earmarked for a military training area as the Loch Doon Aerial Gunnery School. The plans

were very extensive and only partially completed before the project was abandoned after two years.¹³

In the 1930s Loch Doon was dammed as part of the Galloway Hydroelectric Scheme. Loch Doon dam,¹⁴ constructed in 1936, is prominently sited at the northern end of Loch Doon with the road to the west side of the loch crossing the top on a raised roadway. Because of fears that the changed water level would submerge the castle, it was decided to dismantle and re-erect it on the shore prior to the dam's construction. Therefore, in 1935, the castle was dismantled by the Ministry of Works (a predecessor body of HES) and re-erected on the loch's shore.¹⁵ Remains of foundations and wall-core from the original castle remain in their original position on the island and are still visible when the loch's water level is low.

During the Second World War, the area around Loch Doon was again used for military training. In 1941 during a training flight a Supermarine Spitfire Mark IIA crashed into the loch. It was recovered in 1982 and is now displayed in the Dumfries and Galloway Aviation Museum.¹⁶

Statutory protection and conservation

In 1921 Loch Doon Castle was designated as a scheduled monument and was protected under the 1913 Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act which made it a crime to damage monuments included in the schedule.¹⁷

Following its re-erection on the shore of Loch Doon, Loch Doon Castle was taken into state care via a Deed of Guardianship in November 1937 and became scheduled in its new location.

Loch Doon Castle continues to be legally recognised as being of national importance through its designation as a scheduled monument under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. The Act seeks to protect scheduled monuments by making it an offence to carry out works¹⁸ there without gaining prior written permission, in the form of scheduled monument consent, obtained through Historic Environment Scotland. The Scheduled Monument Consent Policy¹⁹ sets out how applications for

¹³ See [Canmore ID 194894: Loch Doon Gunnery School \(canmore.org.uk\)](#). More information can also be found on: [Secret Scotland - Loch Doon Aerial Gunnery School \(secretscotland.org.uk\)](#) (both accessed: 04 July 2023).

¹⁴ See HES designation information [LB51711: Galloway Hydro Electric Power Scheme, Loch Doon Dam \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](#) (accessed: 11 October 2023).

¹⁵ See Appendix 2 for more details on the decision to relocate Loch Doon Castle.

¹⁶ [Loch Doon Spitfire - Dumfries Aviation Museum \(dumfriesaviationmuseum.com\)](#) (accessed: 11 October 2023).

¹⁷ Fry 2014, 1.

¹⁸ Works can include anything that would add to, flood, take away from or damage a monument. It is also illegal to carry out works which may detect metals, including certain types of geophysical survey, without obtaining consent beforehand.

¹⁹ The policy can be downloaded from the HES website: [Scheduled Monument Consent Policy \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#) (accessed: 11 October 2023).

consent are considered. It states that the primary purpose of scheduling is to maintain them in the form they have come down to us and that decisions for change should be informed by an understanding of their nationally important cultural significance. Scheduled monuments, along with their settings²⁰ are also protected within the planning system. The Managing Change in the Historic Environment Guidance Notes series²¹ provides further guidance about how the relevant policies should be applied in terms of certain types of application and in relation to setting. These policies are applied the same, whether or not a monument is also a property in care.

Since its re-erection, there has not been any major conservation intervention at the castle. Interventions were limited to regular vegetation clearance, localised masonry repair and repointing. The site was part of the Monument Monitor programme from 2019–2021. Monument Monitor is a citizen science project using photographs submitted by members of the public to help inform the condition monitoring and conservation of heritage sites.²² Loch Doon Castle was included in the programme to monitor the effects of wild camping, campfire damage and littering at the site. The programme was embraced by members of the public who sent regular photographic submissions throughout the years. The castle was frequently used for wild camping during the Covid lockdown 2020–1. These issues are some of the main conservation challenges for the site.²³

2.2 Evidential values

Because of the castle's dismantling and re-erection, it cannot display the same evidential value that it had prior to 1935 as a medieval building. While the ashlar seems to have been faithfully re-built, the wallheads were reduced and the re-erection was selective in omitting those elements thought to be later than the early castle. Modern mortars have been used throughout the rebuilding, with rough-racking added to the (much-reduced) wall-heads. Therefore, the research potential of its physical fabric is compromised, and its current below ground archaeology does not relate at all to the original castle. The scheduled remains on Castle Island retain

²⁰ Setting is the way a monument's surrounding contribute to how it is experienced, understood and appreciated.

²¹ The series can be accessed on the HES website: [Managing Change in the Historic Environment \(historicenvironment.scot\)](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/Managing-Change-in-the-Historic-Environment) (accessed: 11 October 2023).

²² For more information on the programme visit the HES website: [Monument Monitor \(historicenvironment.scot\)](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/Monument-Monitor) (accessed: 09 November 2023).

²³ Please note that wild camping and staying overnight is not allowed at Historic Scotland properties and should be avoided at all scheduled monuments. Damaging a scheduled monument is an offence which can lead to fines of up to £50,000. For more information, please read the leaflet [Wild Camping at Scheduled Monuments \(PDF, 670KB\)](#) (accessed: 09 November 2023).

some evidential potential to remedy this, though disturbance, exposure and rising water levels may be detrimental to their condition.



Figure 3: Loch Doon Castle walls from south-west. © Joss Durnan.

Above ground archaeological evidence

In broad terms, the PiC is a faithful re-erection of Loch Doon Castle. The Ministry of Works (MoW) was particularly aided in this task by the ashlar construction of the castle as, in most cases, it is clear that the blocks would only fit together in one specific arrangement.

Historic photographs of the castle on Castle Island demonstrate that, while the ashlar elements are like-for-like in their location, the rubble is less consistent. In places rubble masonry appears to have been re-built accurately, in others the stones have been laid in a new arrangement. Pinning stones are used throughout the rubble elements of the castle but also appear in joints between ashlar blocks in places. These pinnings are absent in the original castle, indicating some minor deviations in form in the re-erection. Elsewhere, historic repairs visible in the original castle (for example the infilling of a crack in the south-eastern corner of the curtain wall) have not been incorporated into the rebuild. This gives the impression of the re-erection being a representation of what the MoW believed the castle was 'supposed' to look like.

The castle's re-erection has resulted in any subtleties present in the castle's phasing being lost. This includes, for example, any repairs or modifications to the castle's masonry (particularly in the rubble elements where this would be more discernible) that occurred prior to its dismantling. The re-erection also shows evidence of minor structural problems having been rectified when it was relocated, for example the re-setting of slipped voussoirs (wedge-shaped stone forming one of the units of an arch) in the main entrance and postern.



Figure 4: The slipped voussoir of the main entrance to the castle on Castle Island (left photograph) and the re-set voussoir of the main entrance to the castle on the shore (right photograph). (SC 1206901 on left © HES (Scottish Development Department) and SC 2021677 (cropped) on right © Crown Copyright: HES).

It is clear from historic photographs that considerable detail has been lost from the castle in its re-erection. The curtain wall originally survived to a considerably greater height before being dismantled. Additionally, very little of the later 16th century tower has been removed or re-erected. In its original location, the tower survived to four storeys on the south elevation at least and included very fine pointed arches to the stair tower doorways. Other detailing that has been lost includes finely squared window seats and a garderobe at second-floor level. The tower was vaulted on the first floor; no evidence of this survives in the re-erected castle. The remains of the tower were still largely upstanding in 1937 but, by 1966, had collapsed completely (see figure 12). Additionally, the foundations of buildings which are present within the re-erected castle are largely conjectural, with the exception of the later keep, and were laid out by the Ministry of Works in

1935–6.²⁴ Their relationship to any pre-existing foundations in the original castle is not clear, and aerial photographs of the island after the castle's removal do not show foundations corresponding to these.

Despite these limitations of the PiC, the re-erected castle continues to illustrate the exceptional architectural value and uniqueness of layout present in the original.

Below ground archaeological evidence

By virtue of re-erection in the 1930s, there is no below-ground archaeology associated with the castle in its current location. It is possible that excavation could reveal evidence relating to the castle's reconstruction and those who undertook it, but any below ground evidence of the castle's medieval or post-medieval use will have been lost. The remains on Castle Island retain considerable archaeological potential though this has been reduced considerably through the dismantling of the castle and the rise in water level following the damming of Loch Doon. Historic photos demonstrate that parts of the castle (for example the tower) were filled with rubble to first floor level which were not archaeologically investigated prior to clearing. During the course of the castle's dismantling, a gold coin of William V, Duke of Guelders was discovered by one of the workmen.²⁵

2.3 Historical values

Much of Loch Doon Castle's historical value derives from its ties to the Earls of Carrick and associated involvement in the Wars of Scottish Independence. Today, ties to the Wars of Scottish Independence represent some of the most evocative and visceral associations for Scots and other visitors to Scotland's historic sites.

Loch Doon Castle and the surrounding landscape has close ties to Robert I (the Bruce), a pivotal figure in Scotland's history, along with many of the actors orbiting around him. Through these, the castle has a strong association with the Kennedys, a vassal of the Bruces, who exerted control over Carrick for centuries.

The later life of the castle as a historic monument – that is, a monument to the treatment of our history – demands acknowledgement and is of historical value. In its re-erected state, the castle stands as a unique

²⁴ The foundations of interior buildings are not illustrated on plans that are available within MW/1/1139. It seems the tumble inside the castle may not have been fully removed. The summary report included in the file suggests that courtyard buildings must have been of timber constructions. A detailed excavation of Castle Island would be necessary to assess any potential interior features. The exception to this is the foundation of the later keep.

²⁵ Internal correspondence MoW, MW/1/582. Note that there is some inconsistency in the identification of the coin as the date given within the correspondence (1402–1423) does not match the person identified as William V, Duke of Guelders.

artefact in Scotland, showcasing the thought process of early conservationists and heritage professionals.

Connection to Robert I and Wars of Independence

The castle is believed to have been an early bastion of the Carrick earldom, first being mentioned as a seat of theirs in 1306. During this time the earls were members of the de Brus (or Bruce) Family, with Robert de Brus, 6th Lord of Annandale, becoming earl *jure uxoris* (*by the right of his wife*) through his marriage to Marjorie, Countess of Carrick, in 1271. This union greatly expanded the earldom, with the Bruce family now controlling a swathe of southern Scotland stretching from the border territories to the Firth of Clyde. Robert and Marjorie were wed at Turnberry Castle, her family's seat and, excepting Loch Doon Castle, the only early stone castle known in Carrick.²⁶

Marjorie died in 1292, and her son, the future king Robert I, succeeded as earl. It is likely that Loch Doon Castle was constructed by order of himself or his father who died in 1304, perhaps in response to the outbreak of war in 1296, or possibly to better control the family's now much-expanded earldom. Loch Doon Castle was strongly positioned in this regard, lying at a regional crossroads between Galloway, Ayr, and Carrick. The contrast within the curtain wall between the finely cut ashlar beneath the upper rubble parts, may indicate that the approaching war had an influence on the final appearance of the castle as the need to complete it sooner rather than later may have influenced design choices (as discussed in section 2.4).

In any case, the castle's strong strategic position saw its defences put to the test throughout the First War of Scottish Independence (1296–1328). Loch Doon Castle's castellan in 1306 was Sir Gilbert de Carrick, distant cousin of Robert I and ancestor to the Kennedys. That year de Carrick gave shelter to Sir Christopher de Seton, a supporter of Robert I who had fled from the Scots' bitter defeat at the Battle of Methven in June. The English subsequently besieged the castle, with de Carrick surrendering it to them later that year. Captured, de Seton was taken to Dumfries where he was hanged, drawn, and quartered.²⁷ This was part of a sustained effort by Edward I to hunt down and eliminate Robert I's captains and supporters and, ten years after the start of the war, marked the elimination of the last Bruce stronghold in south-west Scotland.

Sir Henry de Percy, a commander of Edward I's, was granted estates in south-west Scotland in 1299. Sometime before 1306 de Percy discovered a collection of documents at Loch Doon Castle which were subsequently examined by Edward I. These suggested that the castle was a centre for administration and military strategy in the Wars, or that it was deemed a

²⁶ Wyeth 2018, 224.

²⁷ His brother, John de Seton, had held Tibbers Castle for Robert I, and suffered a similar fate when it too was taken by the English in 1306.

secure place by the Bruces. After its surrender to the English in 1306, the castle hosted two siege machines of Percy's.²⁸

After the death of Edward I in 1307, Robert I began a campaign to recapture castles across Scotland, steadily working his way south. Loch Doon Castle was retaken in 1314, however unlike other castles that were recaptured by Robert I it was not dismantled. The Second War of Scottish Independence broke out in 1332 and, in 1333, Loch Doon Castle was one of only five castles in Scotland still held for the exiled David II against the pretender to the throne, Edward Balliol. Another English siege was successfully repelled in 1335.

Loch Doon Castle under the Kennedys

Sometime after the Second War of Scottish Independence (1332–1357) Loch Doon Castle passed to the Kennedys, who became significant landholders in Carrick from the reign of Robert III (1390–1406) onwards.²⁹ Their influence persisted in Carrick throughout the later Middle Ages. In 1434 the castle was held for the crown by Fergus Kennedy as keeper of the castle.³⁰ In 1446, it was taken by William Douglas, 8th Earl of Douglas, after another siege. It then remained in Douglas hands until at least 1452, when William Douglas was killed by James II of Scotland at **Stirling Castle**.

The castle was returned to the Kennedys sometime thereafter. It remained with them until 1511 when it was taken from them by William Crauford of Lefnoris. During the reign of James V (1513–43) the castle is reported to have been burnt, possibly by order of the king as he worked to reduce the power of the lords. It is likely that the construction of the square keep within the castle was undertaken as part of a subsequent reconstruction programme³¹ by the Kennedys.³² The castle's importance persisted at least in a ceremonial or traditional form into the 17th century: John Kennedy, 7th Earl of Cassillis, held the heritable office of Keeper of Loch Doon Castle in a ratification of 1672.³³ However, it appears that the castle was abandoned some time during the 1600s.

²⁸ Wyeth 2018, 257.

²⁹ Wyeth 2018, 226.

³⁰ Wyeth 2018, 257.

³¹ Stevenson 1985, 69.

³² The attribution is based on our current understanding of the phrasing.

³³ [The Castles of Scotland, 'Loch Doon Castle'](https://thecastlesofscotland.co.uk) (thecastlesofscotland.co.uk) (accessed: 20 October 2023).



Figure 5: External view of Loch Doon Castle on Castle Island before it was dismantled in 1935 (SC 1206923) © HES (Scottish Development Department).

In the 19th century, the castle's ruins were quarried for the construction of a nearby shooting lodge, prior to which 'a large portion of this remote insular fortress was entire, and it contained a magnificent staircase of seventy steps'.³⁴

Re-erection

Loch Doon was to be dammed in 1936, raising the water level by 38ft (11.6m).³⁵ This would submerge much of the castle and, as a consequence, the Ministry of Works embarked upon a truly monumental task: the dismantling, removal, and exacting reconstruction of parts of the castle on the Loch's shore (for a more detailed account on the re-erection works see Appendix 2).

³⁴ Burns 1938.

³⁵ AMD drawing July 1933, MW/1/1139.

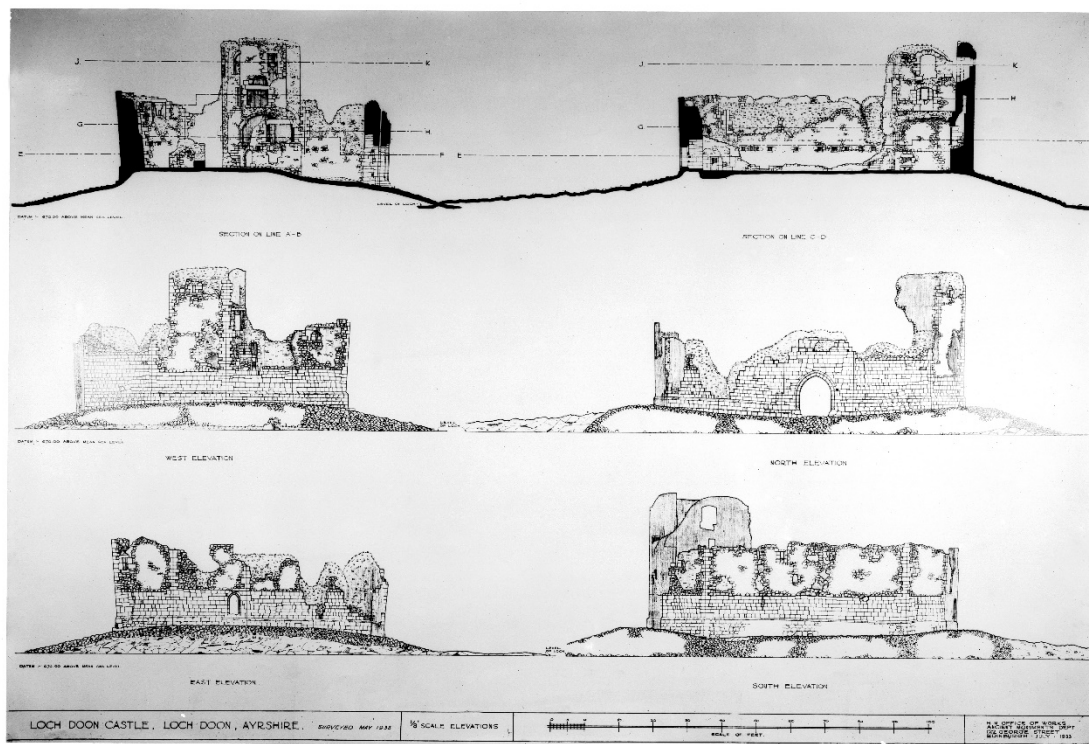


Figure 6: Photographic copy of sections and elevations drawing of Loch Doon Castle on Castle Island created in 1933 (before it was dismantled and re-erected on its current location) as part of a survey by the Ministry of Works (SC 1206937) © HES (Scottish Development Department).

Reconstructed, the castle now represents a technical and philosophical exercise in the protection and celebration of heritage by the state. It stands as a monument to the evolution of our understanding of historic sites, how they should be cared for, and how they should be protected. Through longevity Properties in Care become manifestations of this changing practice, allowing the visitor to understand, appreciate, and experience how and why conservation methods change. They also provide the opportunity to examine how historic sites are presented to the public and in what form, and what this says about wider societal trends in a given period or through time.

These elements of PiCs are often colloquially referred to by staff at Historic Environment Scotland and its predecessors as ‘monumentry’ – the parts of a monument that are historic to its life as a site in guardianship. Loch Doon Castle as an entity stands as perhaps the superlative example of ‘monumentry’ in Scotland. As a re-erected medieval castle, it is both ancient monument – being essentially a facsimile of the original – and 20th century monument to the technical achievement, and conservation practice, of those who built it. It therefore presents an excellent case study in early heritage management practice in Scotland, contributing significantly to our understanding of the development of conservation, as

well as the evolution of the Ancient Monuments Branch of the Ministry of Works into Historic Environment Scotland today. Though ostensibly a medieval castle, Loch Doon Castle stands as one of the significant minority of scheduled monuments constructed in the 20th century.

In this regard the castle raises challenging but important questions around what makes a place *significant* and what makes it *authentic*.

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

Architectural significance

Architecturally, Loch Doon Castle is the outstanding example of its type. Castles of enceinte generally follow a pattern of design: a high curtain wall encloses a courtyard around the inner face of which buildings are arranged. Usually, the curtain wall is almost featureless, forming an imposing and stout edifice to any who approach. Any windows, if present, tend to be small. Often a postern gate is present (Mingarry, **Kisimul**, **Rothesay**, Tioram, Lochindorb). Where topography such as rock outcrops has been utilised, the curtain wall typically be irregular in plan and follow these features to maximise their effectiveness and the use of space (Mingarry, Tioram, **Dunstaffnage**, **Kisimul**). Others (**Sween**, **Skipness**, Roy, Lachlan, Kinclaven) exhibit a more regular square or rectangular plan. Loch Doon Castle conforms to neither of these, being uniquely eleven-sided, with the long (southern) edge forming the wall of a range of buildings. This long edge, in tandem with other structural features surviving from the stronghold's first phase, suggest the castle included conceptual elements of the hall house. The construction techniques used at Loch Doon Castle, the design of its architectural detailing, and its layout, share qualities with 13th century hall-houses surviving elsewhere, such as **Skipness** (Argyll & Bute) Rait Castle (Moray), and Old Tulliallan Castle (Fife). This suggests a relatively lavish domestic function to Loch Doon Castle uncommon among medieval castles: the hall-house was typically a strongly built lordly residence, rather than a fortification.

To the visitor, Loch Doon Castle is sombre and staid in appearance without being plain. The castle's ashlar masonry is particularly intricate in places, making frequent use of checked and rebated joints, and is arguably of a greater quality than its Scottish contemporaries where similar construction methods were employed (a now-lost Ministry of Works plaque noted **Bothwell**, **Dirleton**, and **Kildrummy** as the nearest examples, but others include **Morton**, **Rothesay**, Roxburgh, Tibbers, and Old Tulliallan). The pointed arch of the entrance provides a very visual statement of the prowess of the castle's designers and builders, as well as pointing to the power, taste, and wealth of its owners. Architectural detailing in this gothic tradition is uncommon in 13th century castles in Scotland; other examples include **Morton**, Rait, and Old Tulliallan.

The castle also sports a distinctive plinth course near its base. This feature is present at other medieval castles in Galloway, notably Castledykes, Cruggleton, and Tibbers.³⁶

Skipness Castle in Argyll shares a number of architectural similarities with Loch Doon Castle. Constructed in the 13th century as a hall-house, it includes a plinth course and a main entrance comprising a pointed arch with round arch behind. Like Loch Doon Castle, the doorways of the stair tower also have pointed arches.

Phasing

The remaining features of Loch Doon Castle give some insight into its construction, which can be broadly divided into three phases:

1. The construction of the enceinte by the Earls of Carrick (13th century) – considered the original castle which remains were largely transferred to the mainland.
2. The construction of the western keep by the Kennedys (16th century) – this was not transferred to the mainland and subsequently collapsed. All evidence of this phase now relies on photographic evidence.
3. The dismantling and re-erection of the castle by the Ministry of Works (MoW) (20th century) – this entails the comprehensive conservation work carried out by the MoW and incorporates the current castle as it stands on the shore of Loch Doon today.

Phase One: Earls of Carrick stronghold

The only surviving features of the 13th century stronghold are the curtain wall, the entrance gate and some remains of internal features. These give some insight into the original castle of enceinte and are also the features that were deemed of outstanding significance when the MoW considered the fate of the castle in the 1930s. As a result, these features can still be examined and with careful analysis of existing photographic surveys of the castle in its original location on Castle Island, it is possible to come to conclusions about the original medieval castle.

³⁶ Wyeth 2018, 256.

The curtain wall



Figure 7: Exterior view of the curtain wall (SC 2021676) © Crown Copyright: HES

There is an obvious change in masonry within the curtain wall where the lower courses are formed from very fine ashlar blocks and the upper curtain wall and the tower are created from 'inferior rubble work'.³⁷ The traditional view is that Loch Doon Castle was destroyed by fire before being reconstructed in the 16th century. Ostensibly this explains the obvious change in masonry, however, in photographs of the castle in its original location, very few ashlar blocks are visible in the rubble around the castle. Had the original castle been constructed of ashlar in its entirety, it is reasonable to expect that much of the remains of this would be apparent, either in the tumble around the castle, or incorporated into its rebuild in the 16th century. There are a number of reasons as to why so much ashlar may not be visible:

1. The ashlar was deliberately removed from the island for use elsewhere.

³⁷ Archaeology Notes from A.S. Robertson 13 December 1955 on [Canmore ID 63601: Loch Doon \(Castle\) \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk) (accessed: 24 May 2024).

2. The ashlar was spread a sufficient distance from the castle as to be submerged, thereby making such valuable stone more difficult to retrieve.
3. The curtain wall is of a single phase comprising two construction methods.

The first two of these hypotheses are dependent on the castle having been slighted and/or robbed. If the castle was slighted, and the higher quality masonry dumped in the loch, this could be clarified through underwater survey. It is also believed masonry was removed from the castle in the 19th century for the construction of a nearby shooting lodge.³⁸ Certainly, the absence of any ashlar within the rubble masonry points to none being available when the rubble-course elements of the castle were built.

The third hypothesis, that the curtain wall represents a single work, is supported by a number of factors. The change from ashlar to rubble coursing is a clear and sudden one: on most elevations, the ashlar rises to a uniform level between six and eight courses high before changing to rubble. Had the castle been slighted, it is unlikely that such careful levelling of the masonry would have been carried out. Additionally, the ashlar rises in height on the elevations approaching the main entrance, with the entrance itself seemingly remaining intact. The entrance gate, typically a castle's weakest and therefore most strongly defended point, would surely have been a key element to be destroyed in any slighting exercise. That this was not done makes any deliberate slighting of the castle seem unlikely.

It is possible, if the upper, rubble parts of the curtain wall are indicative of reconstruction, that the ruinous ashlar elements were levelled off to provide an easily workable base on which to build. This would also explain the sudden change. Had this been the case however, it is reasonable to expect that the removed ashlar blocks would have been incorporated into the rebuild, of which there is no evidence. This means the hypothesis that both the ashlar and the rubble represent a single construction phase is the most plausible.

The ashlar masonry, so carefully laid as it is, is of exceptional quality. It is therefore unlikely that the castle's architect (which it most likely had) had not taken account of the volume of masonry required and available, and the castle's owners not accounted for the time and cost involved in its construction. The most likely explanation, if both styles of construction are part of a single phase, is that the change in method was a matter of some expediency. If the castle was constructed in the late 13th century by the Earls of Carrick, as is believed, the changing relationship between Scotland and England may have influenced Loch Doon Castle's construction. With peace in Scotland beginning to unravel in the final decade of the 13th

³⁸ McCormick 1947.

century, and Edward I's eventual invasion in 1296, it may have appeared to the Earl of Carrick that time was of the essence in completing a castle in such a strategic location as Loch Doon Castle in what was rapidly becoming a hostile environment. This would go some way to explaining the change in construction methods, as the aesthetic qualities of the castle became less important, giving way to its functional role as a military residence of war.

Finally, the quoins used throughout the castle are of a consistent style across the ashlar and rubble courses and, in photographs of the original castle, span the full height of the surviving walls. Given the irregular shape of the castle on plan, it is highly likely that these quoins were dressed on-site for their specific joint, strongly implying a single construction phase for the curtain.

The interior of the curtain is finished in coursed rubble, further pointing to an aesthetic motivation for the use of ashlar on the outer face. The sudden change to rubble masonry could be seen as an unsightly one that undermines the pleasing appearance of the ashlar, further bolstering the suggestion that the different construction styles were as a result of urgent necessity.

Interior

It appears that there was no keep or donjon in the first phase. This accords with the layout of other castles of enceinte. Little beyond speculation can be said of what structures were contained within the curtain wall during this period. Foundations of buildings are present within the re-erected castle; however, these are conjectural, with the exception of the later keep, and were laid out by the Ministry of Works in 1935–6.³⁹ Their relationship to any pre-existing foundations in the original castle is not clear, and aerial photographs of the island after the castle's removal do not show foundations corresponding to these.

A series of putlog holes run along the inner face of the south elevation, with another along the west elevation. The first of these is surely indicative of a great hall, probably at first floor level with storage rooms or cellars below. This may have had the appearance of a hall-house. A summary document prepared by the Ministry of Works during the survey of the castle suggests the courtyard buildings would have been of timber, though no evidence is given for this conclusion.⁴⁰ An aumbry is set into the curtain wall at the west end of this feature. At the east, not present in the

³⁹ The foundations of interior buildings are not illustrated on plans that are available within MW/1/1139. It seems the tumble inside the castle may not have been fully removed. The summary report included in the file suggests that courtyard buildings must have been of timber constructions. A detailed excavation of Castle Island would be necessary to assess any potential interior features. The exception to this is the foundation of the later keep.

⁴⁰ Document, MW/1/1139.

reconstruction but evident in old photographs of the castle in its original location, is a doorway giving access to a stair contained within the thickness of the curtain wall.⁴¹ This likely led to a parapet or wall-walk. Photographs taken before the castle was dismantled show small windows in the south elevation, suggesting this building rose to three storeys in height. Also shown in the south elevation, though not carried over to the re-erected castle, is a corbelled projection suggesting a fourth storey, or possibly a wall-walk. This feature may be the remains of a latrine chute, though it more closely resembles a box machicolation (opening through which to drop molten lead, boiling oil and missiles). There is, however, no obvious aperture beneath the feature for which a machicolation could provide defence.

The second run of putlog holes, those in the west elevation, may be indicative of a domestic chamber to be used by the castellan or earl when in residence. The large fireplace in the curtain is positioned centrally in this run of putlog holes, and the disturbance of the supporting arch above it by the later tower's vault demonstrates that it existed prior to the later tower's construction.



Figure 8: View of the central fireplace in the western wall with the supporting arch disturbed and infilled with rubble in the re-built © Joss Durnan.

⁴¹ For example: [SC 1206902 \(digital copy of A 51097\) \(canmore.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 03 June 2024).

The lack of putlogs in the elevation between the ‘hall’ and ‘chamber’ is difficult to explain. Without first floor access in this location, the privy contained in the curtain wall here is inaccessible. It is possible that this feature was originally part of the wider hall/chamber superstructure, and that the putlog holes here have been subsequently blocked, either during the construction of the later tower or the re-erection of the castle. Photographs of this area prior to re-erection do not offer any clarification as tumbled masonry was present to above the height of any possible putlog holes.

A vaulted cellar may have been present in the eastern elevation, south of the postern gate and north of the hall range. This is evidenced by a single stone in the re-erected castle, which may be the springer of a vault, and a grassed-over mass of masonry in historic photographs, which may be the remains of an intact vault that were not re-erected.⁴²

Entrance gate



Figures 9 and 10: External (left) and internal (right) view of the entrance gate to Loch Doon Castle in its current location (left: SC 2021678 and right: SC 2021677, both images © Crown Copyright: HES).

The main entrance to Loch Doon Castle comprises a simple but imposing pointed arch of two chamfered⁴³ orders. The curtain wall is at its thickest across this entrance, with the plinth course rising in height before it meets

⁴² For example: [SC 1206896 \(digital copy of A 51091\) \(canmore.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 03 June 2024).

⁴³ The surface made when the sharp edge of a stone block or piece of wood is cut away.

the gate. The gate would have been defended by a portcullis with a timber door of two leaves behind. This in turn was secured by two substantial drawbars. It has been suggested that the innermost arch of the entrance may be a later addition or part of a rebuild.⁴⁴ However, it is more likely that the entrance represents a single phase of construction. The voussoirs⁴⁵ of both the inner (round/Romanesque) and the outer (pointed/gothic) arches bear masons' marks that correspond to each other, suggesting the same masons were involved in the preparation of each arch. These masons' marks are visible in photographs taken of the castle prior to its dismantling, suggesting they are original. Furthermore, the masonry which forms the squared holes for the upper of the two drawbars makes use of fairly complex joints, requiring blocks that make up both the inner and outer arches, implying the two are contemporary. It is therefore very likely that the entrance is an original 13th century feature of the castle. The use of round arches in combination with differing outer finishes to an aperture can be seen in other castles of the period, such as Innis Chonnel, Lachlan, and **Skipness**. The rounded arch was likely intended to perform a more functional role, acting as vaulting for the masonry above, with the outer face providing a more decorative embellishment.

The main entrance sits some approximately 1.5m lower than the postern and the doorways in the castle's interior. Often, postern gates are raised above ground level to make access from the outside more difficult for would-be intruders; however, here the height difference between the main entrance and the doorways of the interior structures may point to the main entrance having been a water-filled 'sea gate'. The benefits of such an entrance include convenient access to the castle's interior, and the means of safely storing a vessel, thereby allowing the shore to be reached should a siege be successfully repelled. The main entrance of Loch Doon Castle is fairly large for a castle of this size, and this may have been to enable small vessels to pass inside. Photographs of the entrance prior to the castle's reconstruction show what appears to be a narrow, sloped mass of masonry within the east side of the entrance, possibly the remains of a small jetty. Sea gates may have been a preferred feature of the Earls of Carrick for their castles. Turnberry Castle – the earldom's seat – was served by three sea gates contained underneath the body of the castle.

It is unlikely that the water level was below the bottom courses of the castle's walls in the 13th century and that, when the castle was first constructed, the level of the loch was rather higher than it is today. There are a number of reasons for this. First, aerial photography taken since the loch was dammed demonstrates that Castle Island is an irregularly shaped natural outcrop of bedrock. At this low water level, the island is considerably larger in surface area than the castle. Had this been the case when Loch Doon Castle was constructed, its builders would surely have

⁴⁴ Wyeth 2018, 256.

⁴⁵ A wedge-shaped stone forming one of the units of an arch.

made greater use of this larger area. Second, the apparent use of the main entrance as a water-filled gate would require the loch to reach the castle's walls. Finally, recent aerial photographs with the water level particularly high show the loch entering into an area inside the main entrance, with the rest of the interior remaining dry.

Phase Two: Kennedy tower



Figure 11: Interior of the Kennedy tower. The fireplace obscured here by a vault is considered to be pre-dating the construction of the tower. The tower was not re-constructed on the shore (SC 1206929 © HES (Scottish Development Department)).

A keep constructed against the western curtain wall of the castle is believed to originate in the 16th century. It rose to at least four stories with a vault at first-floor level. This appears to have been crudely inserted into the curtain, with the upper two floors of the tower lying on a slightly

different orientation to the lower two. Historic photographs show a lack of keyed-in masonry between the tower and curtain, strongly pointing to the former being a later addition. Furthermore, the first-floor fireplace set within the curtain wall would be poorly positioned in a corner of this tower, and partly obscured by the tower's vault. Finally, it appears that the south-west corner of this tower partly-obscured the doorway giving access to the first-floor privy set within the thickness of the curtain.⁴⁶

The clumsy integration of this tower into the castle is inconsistent with the masonry present in its spiral staircase. Here, it appears the staircase's doorway on each of the four floors was finished in finely moulded pointed arches, similar to those seen elsewhere in the first phase. This may point to reuse of existing masonry from an earlier phase, or possible the integration of the stair tower from an earlier, first-phase keep, into the later 16th century build. The stair tower of **Skipness Castle** shows similar treatment. It is also noteworthy that angled quoins were present through the full height of the tower's south-western corner. Given the relative lack of care taken in the construction of the 16th century tower relative to the 13th century enceinte, it seems unlikely new, carefully angled quoins would have been dressed on-site in order to extend the height of the curtain in this location. It is therefore possible that the western elevation of the tower, as well as the staircase, originate in an earlier keep.

Phase Three: Guardianship monument

In the mid-18th century, the level of Loch Doon was lowered approximately 14 feet (4.3m) through the creation of two sluices at the loch's northern end. These, created by the Earl of Cassillis and a Mr Macadam of Craigengillan, were intended to improve the agricultural land around the loch.⁴⁷ The effect of this lowering of the water is visible in antiquarian photographs of the castle.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ Visible for example on historic photograph [SC 1206893 \(digital copy of A 51036\) \(canmore.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 03 June 2024).

⁴⁷ Hetrick 1898, 159-60.

⁴⁸ For example: [SC 1206933 \(digital copy of A 51111\) \(canmore.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 03 June 2024).



Figure 12: Photograph taken in April 1937, shortly after the re-erection work was completed. In the background is Castle Island with the Kennedy tower before it collapsed (SC 2021834) © Crown Copyright: HES.

Proposals to dam Loch Doon were made in the 1930s, and it was this that prompted the dismantling of the castle to be re-erected on dry land. For the castle's re-erection, each stone was numbered, removed, and then rebuilt into the castle on the shore. The later tower was not reconstructed in 'order to leave the more interesting early castle unencumbered';⁴⁹ however, as discussed above, the rising costs of the reconstruction meant some elements were left on the island. It is likely that logistical considerations also contributed to the tower not being rebuilt, as this would have required significantly more scaffolding to reach the heights required. It is unknown if the foundations of the buildings, besides those of the tower, are based on layouts observed in the original castle. It seems likely, however, that those of the hall and the building on the north side, are conjectural – these buildings are not visible in aerial photography of the original castle.

Despite now being dammed, Loch Doon is often low enough for the original castle to be visible.

⁴⁹ Stevenson 1985.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values



Figure 13: General oblique aerial view of Loch Doon, looking north-east (DP 201166) © Crown Copyright: HES.

With their often-compact size and strong curtain walls, castles of enceinte were often strongly defended and challenging for would-be attackers. Loch Doon Castle is exemplary in this regard as a secluded, remote stronghold that would be difficult to access. Though relocated to the loch's shore, the Property in Care retains many of these characteristics, and the surviving visual relationship with the castle's original island location allows its unusual setting as a building on water to be readily appreciated. Castles of enceinte with similarly remote and watery settings are unusual, the most obvious example being Lochindorb Castle in Highland.

Several features in the surrounding landscape bear names that connect them to the history of the castle. For example, a large stone of rock is called 'port stone',⁵⁰ it was situated on the eastern margin of the loch (now submerged), a short distance north of Portmark farmhouse (now in ruins). The name refers to the local tradition that the English set out at this stone to besiege Loch Doon Castle in 1306.⁵¹ Further inland, at the north-east

⁵⁰ [Canmore ID 63605: Loch Doon, Port Stone \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk/entry/63605) (accessed: 01 November 2023).

⁵¹ [OS1/20/7/12 Kirkcudbrightshire OS Name Books, 1848-1851, Volume 7 \(scotlandsplaces.gov.uk\)](https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/entry/OS1/20/7/12) (accessed: 24 May 2024).

base of Meaul, is the ‘King’s stone’⁵² and ‘King’s well’⁵³ where King Robert I was believed to have sat and drank when passing over the mountains to visit Loch Doon Castle.⁵⁴

Prior to its relocation, the future location of the castle was discussed at length by the Ministry of Work in the 1930s. One proposal would have seen parts of the castle transported to the gardens of Culzean Castle which was already accessible to the public on a Saturday at the time. However, it was recognised ‘that one of the main interests of the building is the contrast between its beautiful workmanship and its wild isolated position and that for this reason it would be better to keep what is preserved on a site nearby and similar to that on which it now stands.’⁵⁵

Ultimately, it was decided to keep the castle close to its original location, but on the shore of Loch Doon. On the mainland, the castle now looks less imposing and rather small as it is no longer bound by the boundaries of the island. However, being located not far from its original location, an appreciation of the castle’s remote, watery setting can still readily be discerned. Just as the original castle was, the Property in Care is flanked by brooding hills and tucked away from centres of settlement and activity. The aesthetics of its beautifully carved ashlar curtain wall is still contrasted by the wild landscape that makes up the lochside and it is still part of the historic landscape that it helped to shape.

2.6 Natural heritage values

The Galloway Forest Park was designated a Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association in 2009. At the time it was only the fourth Dark Sky Park in the world and the first in the UK. It is named a Gold Tier park for its breathtaking and rare stargazing conditions. The area around Loch Doon Castle sits within the boundary of the Dark Sky Park.⁵⁶ The Scottish Dark Sky Observatory was constructed in 2012 and located at the north end of the loch, before being destroyed by fire in June 2021.

The loch itself was designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) in 1986, being the last-known site in south-west Scotland for the indigenous Arctic charr, a relict species from the last Ice Age. Additionally, Loch Doon

⁵² [Canmore ID 63886: King’s Stone \(canmore.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 01 November 2023).

⁵³ [Canmore ID 63885: King’s Well \(canmore.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 01 November 2023).

⁵⁴ [OS1/20/14/10 Kirkcudbrightshire OS Name Books, 1848-1851, Volume 14 \(scotlandsplaces.gov.uk\)](#) (accessed: 24 May 2024).

⁵⁵ Report dated 22nd May 1934 in MW1/581.

⁵⁶ For more information visit the Forestry and Land Scotland website: [Galloway International Dark Sky Park \(forestryandland.gov.scot\)](#) (accessed: 01 November 2023).

fish are now thought to be genetically distinct from other naturally occurring populations, the nearest of which are in Argyll and Cumbria.⁵⁷

The area around Loch Doon Castle is mostly dry heath dominated by heather. As the castle was relocated to its current position, there are no plants that have a direct connection to the monument. There are also no locally important or historically significant species in the immediate surroundings of the castle. However, Loch Doon is home to an osprey nest further north, with the birds returning each year since 2010.

2.7 Contemporary/use values

There has not been a formal study of the contemporary values of this site to local communities or communities of interest. Therefore, the following observations are intuited from HES staff experience of the site and from online sources.

The site is unstaffed, making visitor numbers difficult to quantify. It was estimated that over 1,000 people visited during the pre-Covid year 2019-20. The castle is clearly a visitor attraction with a significant draw, likely contributing to the success of nearby small tourism-based businesses. A nearby campsite, for example, advertises the castle on their website under things to do in the area.⁵⁸

The change of location has made Loch Doon Castle more accessible to visitors. Now located on the mainland, passed by a road with an adjacent car park, it can be explored without many difficulties. If the castle had remained on Castle Island, a boat would have been necessary to visit the castle. Without one, people would have only experienced the castle from afar rather than being able to inspect it up close. People enjoy exploring the ruins and learning about the castle's history.⁵⁹

Most people that comment on Loch Doon Castle on popular review websites mention the castle in connection with other outdoor pursuits like fishing, hiking and camping. A designated walking route starts at the castle and many visitors combine a visit to the castle with a walk along the Craiglea Trail.⁶⁰ The area is also popular among star gazers as the site is

⁵⁷ SSSI Citation which can be downloaded from [NatureScot - Loch Doon SSSI \(site code 976\) \(sitleink.nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 12 June 2023).

⁵⁸ [Things to see and do - Doon Caravan and Camping \(lochdooncaravanandcampingpark.com\)](#) (accessed: 24 May 2024).

⁵⁹ As per comments left on [Google reviews on Loch Doon Castle \(google.com\)](#).

⁶⁰ [Craiglea Trail and Loch Doon Castle \(walkhighlands.co.uk\)](#) (accessed: 24 May 2024).

part of the Galloway Forest Dark Sky Park and is a popular wild camping spot.⁶¹

Many visitors value the remoteness of the location, describing it as a peaceful setting and in ‘the middle of nowhere’.⁶² The location seems to be one of the appealing aspects of the castle to the visitors as one blogger says ‘One of the appealing things about Loch Doon is the location. ... the landscape becomes more bleak and forbidding, and by the time you reach the castle, it seems like you are a thousand miles from anywhere.’⁶³ This confirms that the interplay of the castle with its wild isolated position is continuing to be one of the main interests of the building.

To what extent the rebuilding is challenged in its authenticity by visitors is unclear and requires more research. Most reviewers mention the rebuilding as a fact and part of the history of the building, a few, however, deem it ‘fake’⁶⁴ or describe it as ‘*just* a rebuilt ruin’ (emphasis added).⁶⁵

3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

- As discussed in Section 2.2 the archaeological potential of the castle is negligible due to its re-erection to its current location in 1935. Any understanding of the associated archaeology would have to be derived from an investigation of Castle Island. The remains of the original castle have not been studied archaeologically since the re-erection exercise.
- Understanding of the later phases of the castle is limited due to their lack of incorporation into the rebuild.
- The planning of the original courtyard ranges.
- The re-erected later remains within the enclosure are difficult to comprehend.
- The social values associated with Loch Doon Castle need further research.
- How far is the re-erection a challenge to the castle’s authenticity for visitors?

⁶¹ Please note that wild camping and staying overnight is not allowed at Historic Scotland properties and should be avoided at all scheduled monuments. Damaging a scheduled monument is an offence which can lead to fines of up to £50,000. For more information, please read the leaflet [Wild Camping at Scheduled Monuments \(PDF, 670KB\)](#) (accessed: 09 November 2023).

⁶² [Google review \(2022\) of Loch Doon Castle \(google.com\)](#).

⁶³ [Loch Doon Castle \(britainexpress.com\)](#)

⁶⁴ [Google review \(2018\) of Loch Doon Castle \(google.com\)](#).

⁶⁵ [Google review \(2022\) of Loch Doon Castle \(google.com\)](#).

4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

Dunstaffnage Castle is similar in layout and date to Loch Doon Castle. It is more representative of the ‘castles of enceinte’ group. **Kisimul Castle**, also a castle of enceinte, is located in a similarly watery location.

Castle Sween, **Skipness Castle**, and **Inverlochy Castle** are all more regularly laid out courtyard castles, being square or rectangular on plan. **Skipness** began life as a hall-house.

Rothesay Castle is unusual for its round plan but, like Loch Doon Castle, is a 13th-century castle of enclosure constructed of ashlar.

Other castles connected to King Robert I and the Scottish Wars of Independence include **Lochmaben Castle**, **Kildrummy Castle**, and **Bothwell Castle**.

5. KEYWORDS

Castle; Castle of enclosure; Loch Doon; Robert the Bruce; Wars of Independence; medieval; enceinte; gothic; ashlar; Galloway; Carrick; island site; re-erection.

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Further resources:

Canmore ID: 63601

Site Number: NX49SE 1

NGR: NX 48814 94758 (please note that the coordinates are based on the original site on Castle Island which is outwith the PiC boundary).

Canmore entry: [Loch Doon \(castle\) \(ID: 63601\) \(canmore.org.uk\)](https://canmore.org.uk/entry/63601)

Scheduling description of upstanding remains on mainland accessible on HES portal: [SM90203: Loch Doon Castle \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/entry/SM90203)

Scheduling description of remains on Castle Island accessible on HES portal: [SM8619: Loch Doon Castle, original site and remains of, 570m NE of Craigmalloch \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](https://portal.historicenvironment.scot/entry/SM8619)

Digitised copies and transcripts of the Ordnance Survey Name Books are available on Scotland's Places website: [Kirkcudbrightshire OS Name Books, 1848-1851, volume 7: Loch Doon Castle \(OS1/20/7/25\) \(scotlandsplaces.gov.uk\)](https://scotlandsplaces.gov.uk/entry/Kirkcudbrightshire-OS-Name-Books-1848-1851-volume-7-Loch-Doon-Castle-OS1/20/7/25)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: TIMELINE

1271: Robert de Brus, 6th Lord of Annandale, became Earl of Carrick *jure uxoris* (by the right of his wife) through his marriage to Marjorie, Countess of Carrick.

1292: Marjorie died and her son Robert, the future King Robert I, succeeded his father as Earl of Carrick.

1296: Outbreak of war with England, later to be known as the First War of Scottish Independence.

During late 13th and early 14th centuries: The castle was constructed on Castle Island, probably by the Earls of Carrick.

1304: Robert de Brus, Robert I's father, died.

25 March 1306: Robert I was crowned King of Scots at Scone, near Perth.

1306: The castle is first mentioned as a seat of the Earl of Carrick. The castellan was Sir Gilbert de Carrick, a distant cousin of Robert I and ancestor to the Kennedys. He gave shelter to Sir Christopher de Seton, a supporter of Robert I, who had fled from the Scots' bitter defeat at the Battle of Methven in June.

1306: The castle was besieged by the English, and it was surrendered by de Carrick later that year. Sir Christopher de Seton was captured and taken to Dumfries where he suffered a traitor's death.

1314: King Robert I retook Loch Doon Castle from the English.

1 May 1328: The First War of Scottish Independence ended when the English King Edward III was forced to sign the Treaty of Edinburgh-Northampton which recognised the independence of Scotland and Robert I as King of Scotland.

7 June 1329: King Robert I died and was succeeded by his son, King David II.

1332: Outbreak of the Second War of Scottish Independence.

1333: Loch Doon Castle was only one of five castles in Scotland still held for the exiled King David II.

1335: An English siege was successfully repelled.

1357: The Second War of Scottish Independence ended with the signing of the Treaty of Berwick.

After 1357: Loch Doon Castle passed to the Kennedys, who became significant landholders in Carrick from the reign of Robert III (1390-1406) onwards.

1434: Loch Doon Castle was held for the crown by Fergus Kennedy as keeper of the castle.

1446: William Douglas, 8th Earl of Douglas, captured Loch Doon Castle after a siege.

1452: William Douglas was killed by James II of Scotland at **Stirling Castle** and Loch Doon Castle was returned to the Kennedys sometime thereafter.

1511: Loch Doon Castle was taken from the Kennedys by William Crauford of Lefnoris.

During 1513-43: Loch Doon Castle was reported to have been burnt and badly destroyed during the reign of King James V, possibly by order of the king as he worked to reduce the power of the lords.

16th century: Addition of the Kennedy tower, a medieval keep. It was likely constructed as part of a reconstruction programme by the Kennedys after the fire.

During the 17th century: Loch Doon Castle was abandoned.

1672: John Kennedy, 7th Earl of Cassillis, held the heritable office of Keeper of Loch Doon Castle.

- 19th century:** Loch Doon Castle ruins were quarried for the construction of a nearby shooting lodge, prior to which 'a large portion of this remote insular fortress was entire, and it contained a magnificent staircase of seventy steps.'⁶⁶
- 1823 and 1831:** Seven wooden boats or canoes were found at the bottom of the loch opposite the castle's entrance.
- 1921:** Loch Doon Castle on Castle Island was designated a scheduled monument.
- 1929:** Survey of the castle assessing its stability was undertaken.
- July 1933:** Loch Doon Castle was surveyed by the Ministry of Works' (a predecessor body of HES) Ancient Monuments Department.
- 1935:** The castle was dismantled stone by stone from Castle Island by the Ministry of Works and re-erected on the loch's shore.
- 1936:** Loch Doon dam was constructed which raised the loch's water level.
- November 1937:** Loch Doon Castle was taken into state care via a Deed of Guardianship. At this point, the re-erected castle effectively became the scheduled monument.
- 1954:** Erection of direction plate and special descriptive plate was fixed on wall inside castle.
- 1966:** A coin hoard was found on the shore of Loch Doon containing 1,887 silver pennies in the remains of a pottery jug. The great majority were English, Edward I and II, several Anglo-Gallic, some Irish and about 45 Scottish, Alexander III to Robert I coins.⁶⁷
- 1970:** Old direction post taken down and new post erected
- 1972:** Thwart-board of boat; oak hole-pin; leather shoe-sole and green glaze strap-handle were found by divers off-shore of Castle Island.⁶⁸
- 1969:** Medieval pottery was found on eroded, scoured surface of Donald's Isle, a small isle in Loch Doon.
- 1970s–90s:** Vegetation, moss and debris was regularly removed from wallheads, walls and foundations as conservation measures.
- 1985:** Safety rails fitted to window and painted.
- 1992:** Project consolidation of all masonry walls on castle completed.
- 1999:** The remaining parts of the castle on Castle Island were scheduled.

⁶⁶ Burns 1938.

⁶⁷ Stevenson 1966, 17.

⁶⁸ Truckell and Ansell 1972, 12.

2009: Galloway Forest Park was designated a Dark Sky Park by the International Dark Sky Association. It was only the fourth Dark Sky Park in the world and the first in the UK at that time. Loch Doon Castle falls within the boundary of the Park.

2022: Access to the castle was temporarily restricted as part of the High Level Masonry project.

2024: Full access to the castle was restored after detailed inspection.

APPENDIX 2: RE-ERECTION OF CASTLE

Loch Doon was to be dammed in 1936, raising the water level by 38ft (11.6m).⁶⁹ This would submerge much of the castle and, as a consequence, the Ministry of Works (MoW) embarked upon a truly monumental task: the dismantling, removal, and exacting reconstruction of the castle on the Loch's shore.



Figure 14: Photograph of the re-erection work during the 1930s (SC 2021811) © Crown Copyright: HES

The Ministry of Works' Ancient Monuments Department surveyed the castle in July 1933 and began exploring site options for its re-erection in

⁶⁹ AMD drawing July 1933, MW/1/1139.

March 1935, eventually identifying a rocky setting near to the water's edge.⁷⁰

Initially the Galloway Water Company's consulting engineers, Alexander Gibb and Partners, proposed only to move 'the more interesting portions of the castle, namely the main gateway and the fireplace, for exhibition in some more accessible position, such as Edinburgh or Ayr'.⁷¹ Drawings were produced showing the entrance, fireplace, aumbry, and postern, arranged next to each other in a length of reconstructed wall angled in a style imitating that of the curtain wall.⁷² This proposal was roundly rejected by Frederick Raby, an Assistant Secretary in the Ministry responsible for ancient monuments policy⁷³ who suggested such a solution would render the saved elements 'practically meaningless'.⁷⁴

The Ancient Monuments Department had begun assessing the stability of Loch Doon Castle as early as 1929.⁷⁵ This was in response to a survey of the castle that identified the north and south elevations were bowing outwards by 1'2 (35cm) and 10" (25cm) respectively, as well as water erosion beneath the castle's foundations.⁷⁶ In light of the proposed raising of the loch however, the Department determined that it would be both undesirable and impracticable to attempt to preserve the castle in its original position. Survey drawings demonstrated that the castle would be almost entirely submerged, leaving only the upper storeys of the tower and higher parts of the curtain visible above the water.⁷⁷ It was therefore decided to remove from the island as much of the castle as was possible. Time was seen to be of the essence, and, in July 1935, works were got underway so as 'to not lose the summer'.⁷⁸

The works were overseen by the Department's chief architect, John Wilson Paterson, with input from Raby and James S. Richardson, Inspector of Ancient Monuments for Scotland. Funding for the work was limited to just £3,000 (approximately £156,000 in 2021). Sir John Stirling Maxwell and Lord Meston both offered labour force through their contractors.⁷⁹ The Galloway Water Power Company funded the re-erection.

By October 1935 there were six masons working on the site of the new castle with two on the island. The dismantling process was hampered by some of the worst weather on record, with the work party's motorboat unable to reach the island on some days. By the 23rd however, all external

⁷⁰ AMD drawing July 1933, MW/1/1139; MoW memo. 14 March 1935, MW/1/582

⁷¹ Correspondence 17 May 1935, MW/1/582.

⁷² Alternative scheme dated 02/08/1934, MW/1/1139.

⁷³ Lapidge 1997.

⁷⁴ Correspondence 24 May 1935, MW/1/582.

⁷⁵ Internal correspondence, 24 May 1935, MW/1/582.

⁷⁶ Drawings, MW/1/1139.

⁷⁷ Drawings, July 1933, MW/1/1139.

⁷⁸ Internal correspondence, 11 July 1935, MW/1/582.

⁷⁹ Correspondence, 23 October 1935, MW/1/582.

ashlar and dresswork had been transferred to the new site.⁸⁰ The project also involved 'dragging operations' using a grappling iron attached to the motorboat in an ultimately unsuccessful effort to locate the castle's portcullis on the loch bed.⁸¹ Work continued throughout the winter and into summer 1936.

Initially, it was decided to remove only the ashlar elements of the curtain wall at a cost of £2,720.⁸² Richardson subsequently suggested that the rubble masonry should also be removed where practicable. The Chief Inspector of Ancient Monuments, J.P. Bushe-Fox, agreed, stating:

I [feel], however, that much of the grandeur and dignity of the ruin will be lost if the original outline and appearance are not, as far as possible, retained. Without the Tower these will undoubtedly be lost and the Castle, to those who remember it standing on the island, will be hardly recognisable. The fact that the Tower is of a later date need not influence us.⁸³

This decision to retain as much of the castle as possible, regardless of age or perceived worth at the time, provides an interesting insight into the developing perceptions of what constitutes cultural significance in the early 20th century.

⁸⁰ MoW memo., 23 October 1935, MW/1/582.

⁸¹ MoW memo., 14 December 1935, MW/1/582.

⁸² Correspondence, 31 August 1936, MW/1/582.

⁸³ Internal correspondence, 31 July 1936, MW/1/582.