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SCOTLAND

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Property in Care (PIC) ID:	PIC030
Designations:	Scheduled Monument (SM90204)
Taken into State care:	1939 (Guardianship)
Last Reviewed:	2025

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LOCHLEVEN CASTLE



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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

LOCHLEVEN CASTLE

Contents

1. SUMMARY	3
1.1 Introduction	3
1.2 Statement of Significance	4
2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES	6
2.1 Background	6
Major developmental phases	6
Royal connections	7
Lochleven under the Douglas family	7
The later years and ruin	7
Guardianship and conservation	8
2.2 Evidential values	9
Physical evidence – archaeological investigations	10
Documentary evidence	11
2.3 Historical values	11
Wars of Independence – mythmaking and shaping narratives	12
Relationship to St Serf’s Priory in Loch Leven	13
Lochleven as a State prison	13
Mary Queen of Scots	14
Early antiquarian interest	16
2.4 Architectural and artistic values	17
Outer courtyard	18
Curtain Wall	18
Glassin Tower	20
The Tower	21
The Courtyard Buildings	24
Artistic values	26
2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values	27
2.6 Natural heritage values	29

2.7 Contemporary/use values	31
Intangible Cultural Heritage	32
3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING	32
4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES	33
5. KEYWORDS	33
BIBLIOGRAPHY	33
Further resources	36
APPENDICES	37
Appendix 1: Timeline	37
Appendix 2: Associated artefacts	46
Objects in the collection of Historic Environment Scotland	46
Objects in the collections of the National Museums Scotland.	46

I. SUMMARY

This document aims to present a holistic approach to support the definitions of cultural significance of Lochleven Castle¹ as a Property in Care (PIC). It highlights the key features that make Lochleven 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, Lochleven Castle is protected as a Scheduled Monument (SM 90204). The designation considers different, though overlapping, aspects of cultural significance and highlights the importance of the site.

1.1 Introduction

Lochleven Castle stands on an island in Loch Leven with an area of about 3ha, about 500m east from the Kinross shore. The development of the castle can be attributed to it being located in a prime defensive island location, on the main route between Edinburgh and Perth. The island had been considerably smaller before canalisation work reduced the water level of Loch Leven in the 19th century. The curtain wall follows this pre-19th century shoreline, indicating that the castle complex spanned the whole of the original smaller island.

The main surviving part of the castle complex comprises the southern parts of a strong curtain wall enclosure, the main tower and curtain wall standing largely complete to wallheads. A large and externally plain stone tower house with corbelled parapet; and the tower features – a single entrance at second floor level; two lower tunnel vaulted floors with three upper floors above, each a single room; a small number of windows with stone seats; a turnpike stair; and garderobe chambers in the thickness of the walls.

Lochleven Castle became protected under the 1913 Ancient Monuments Consolidation and Amendment Act as an Ancient Scheduled Monument in 1920. In the same year it was first offered into state care by its owner Sir Basil Graham Montgomery Bart. Due to financial constraints, however, it was only taken into state care through a Guardianship Agreement in 1939.

¹ Sometimes also referred to as Loch Leven Castle or Castle Island (see [Trove ID 27913: Lochleven Castle \(trove.scot\)](#) (accessed: 14 May 2025)). For clarity, this statement uses Lochleven to refer to the castle while Loch Leven refers to the loch.

The site is staffed and open to visitors on a seasonal basis from April to October. A car park and public toilet (not maintained by HES) are located on the mainland. HES currently operate from an admission/retail area on the mainland, however, this is likely to move to the island in the near future. Visitors are taken to the island from the Boathouse pier. The castle itself is about 30m from the island pier up a grass slope. Interpretation panels are available throughout the site explaining the surviving features and the castle's history.² Visitor numbers reached over 15,900 before the COVID-19 pandemic, with over 10,000 in season 2024.³

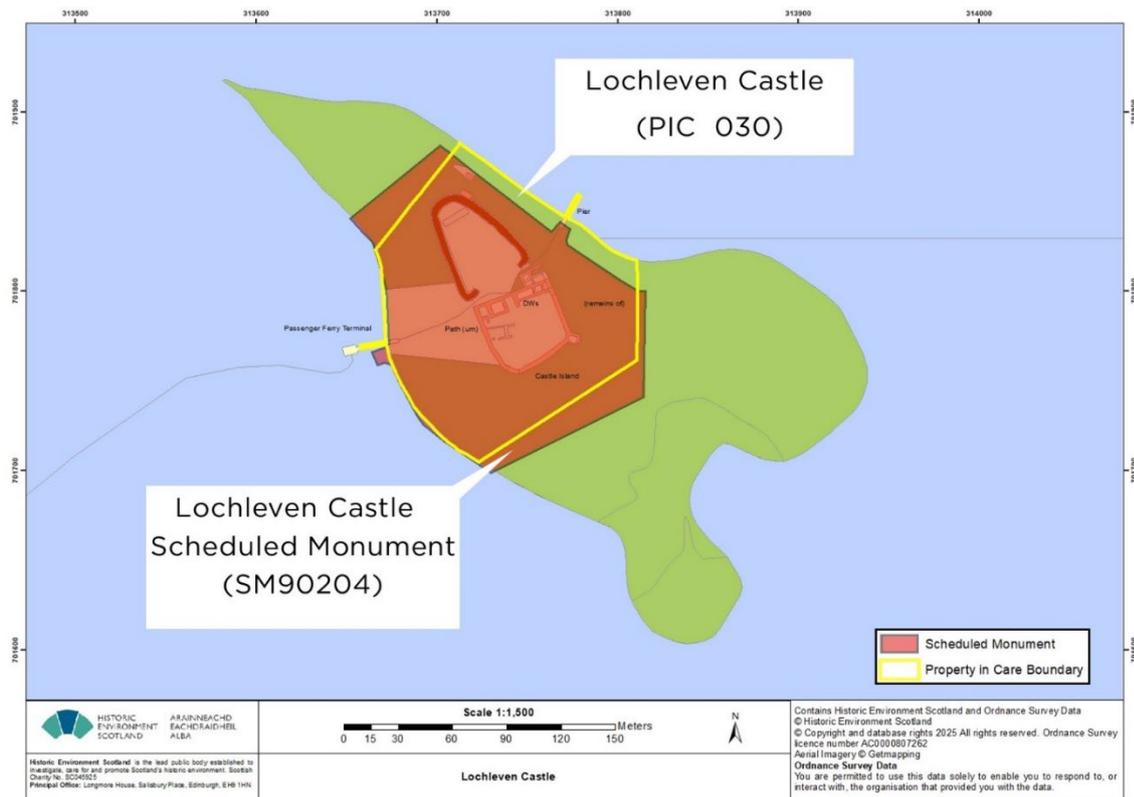


Figure 1: Castle island with Lochleven Castle Property in Care (PIC030) boundary and scheduled area (SM90204). Image for illustrative purposes only.

1.2 Statement of Significance

Lochleven is an early and particularly well-preserved example of a tower house and barmkin (outer fortification) complex. The early date is confirmed by both documentary and architectural evidence.

From the early 1300s, Lochleven, together with a handful of innovative early tower houses, such as Drum and Hallforest, set the seal for the development of this form. Projecting strength and power, this was to

² Prior to visiting, please check access information, available at: [HES Visit a Place, Lochleven Castle Access \(historicenvironment.scot\)](https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/lochleven-castle-access) (accessed: 16 May 2023).

³ 15,914 visitors in 2019/20 and 10,097 in 2024/25, courtesy of Historic Environment Scotland (HES).

become the archetypal lordly defended residence in Scotland, with hundreds being built during the following centuries. It is nationally important for a number of reasons including:

- Lochleven's role as a royal castle and State prison is an important element in understanding the exercise of royal control at the time.
- The archaeology of the site has the potential to inform our understanding of this and similar sites.
- The apparently simple concept of the tower, with straightforward elevations conveying a logical expression of the interior arrangements, might indicate a lowly rank, but history disproves this, confirming Lochleven to have originated as a royal castle.
- The high-quality construction of the tower, as the best-preserved survival of the complex of buildings, is a valuable indicator of contemporary royal and lordly style.
- The tower vaults were considered to be suitably impregnable so as to possibly hold part of the royal exchequer in 1329.
- The castle played a vital role in the Second War of Independence, being besieged by Anglo-Scottish Balliol forces in 1335, as only one of five castles which remained in the hands of David II.
- The attractive and neatly designed Glassin Tower makes a fine addition to the overall plan, forming a comfortable self-contained lodging, provided with murderous shot holes. However, this was more a symbolic martial display rather than seriously defensive.
- The chief significance of the castle in the national consciousness is as the place of imprisonment of Mary Queen of Scots, after her capture and forced abdication at the hands of the 'Lords of the Congregation', for almost a year from June 1567.
- Sir William Bruce, in creating Kinross House and Gardens, made the ruined castle the focus on the axis of the parterre. This is important to the origins of the Picturesque Movement, possibly the earliest such example in the UK, pre-dating the work of Vanburgh by 30 years. The ruined castle was intended as a feature to stir reflection, a historic icon as the place of imprisonment of Queen Mary. Bruce had owed his advancement to his involvement in the Restoration, and as a supporter of the ill-fated James VII/II. This renewed interest in the castle aided its preservation.
- The place of the castle in the national consciousness was reinforced by visits from cultural tourists, poets and artists in the 19th century. It was sketched by J.W.M Turner around 1820, and Queen Mary's imprisonment and escape became a popular subject for historical Romantic artists.

- Its significance is further reinforced in that the castle attracted the attention of leading early antiquarians, including Francis Grose and Lt Gen Hutton.

The above short statement encapsulates our current understanding of the main significances of this site. A broader overview of the cultural and natural heritage values of the place is given below.

2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

A small crannog was found in 1887 in Loch Leven at about sixty yards (55m) from the shore, directly south of the west entrance to the public burial grounds at Kinross. Animal remains in the form of bones and teeth, remains of a clay hearth, several fragments of hand-made pottery and a small piece of wood with rude carving on it were discovered at the site.⁴ This and other prehistoric remains found around Loch Leven, suggest that the area was actively settled. The small island close to the shore would have been an attractive place for a homestead with natural defences from prehistory, although there is no physical evidence of this.

Major developmental phases

The first iteration of a castle on castle island may possibly have been a castle of enclosure in the 13th century. The small island was likely enclosed, however, it is not known what material was used, it may have been either timber or stone, with a hall, chamber block, kitchen and other service buildings likely present. By the early 1300s all or part of the enclosure was replaced by a stone curtain wall of cubical masonry, this work is still visible in the lower parts of the enclosing curtain wall. This represents a major investment in transporting stone to the island and is likely to have taken a number of years to complete.

The tower house was possibly built around 1340 for the keeper of the royal castle.⁵ The enclosure was divided in two by the construction of the less strong east to west barmkin wall adjoining the north side of the tower, probably at a later stage.

Subsequent years have seen sustained phases of repairs, maintenance works and alterations with the construction of the Glassin Tower around circa 1550 possibly the final major works to be carried out at the castle.

⁴ Begg 1888, 118-24.

⁵ [RPS. 1339/1](#) (date accessed: 28 January 2025).

Royal connections

King Robert I (the Bruce) most likely used the castle periodically throughout the early 14th century as a royal residence and as a seat of royal government.⁶ It is possible that the castle was rebuilt around this time creating its essential mature form, with the present curtain wall and tower house.

After the end of the Second Wars of Independence, King David II was recorded as residing at Lochleven Castle several times. In 1368 Lochleven Castle was named by the Scottish parliament along with **Edinburgh**, **Stirling** and **Dumbarton**, as one of the four royal castles, ranking it alongside the kingdom's key strongholds.⁷

Lochleven Castle ceased to be a royal property when the castle was given to Sir Henry Douglas, who was married to Marjory, niece of King Robert II in 1390. What had been royal lands in the area were formed into a hereditary feudal barony for Douglas and his heirs.

Lochleven under the Douglas family

The great hall in the courtyard was built by Sir Robert Douglas, laird of Lochleven, in 1540. He was also responsible for building a new mansion on the mainland shore at Kinross, known as the New House of Loch Leven (the site now occupied by Kinross House). Sir Robert was able to fund this having received considerable patronage from King James V, including a charter in January 1541 which annexed the sheriffdom of Kinross and its remaining powers and revenues to the lordship of Loch Leven, and promoting the town of Kinross to the status of a burgh.

Even though no longer in royal ownership, the castle was nevertheless regularly visited by the monarchs, including Mary, Queen of Scots. In November 1565 it nearly returned to royal ownership when Sir William Douglas of Lochleven's loyalty was in question, and he was ordered to hand over the castle to Mary's Privy Council. However, he was eventually allowed to stay after agreeing to make the castle available for royal use.

The later years and ruin

In 1578 the 4th Earl of Morton, a distant cousin of the Douglas of Lochleven family, resigned as Regent of Scotland and retired to Lochleven and occupied himself with developing the formal garden in the outer court. Ten years later Sir William Douglas of Lochleven became the 6th Earl of Morton and inherited a number of properties including New House. There is little reference to Lochleven Castle for the next hundred years, and according to a nineteenth century source, the castle was becoming ruinous by this date.⁸

⁶ *RRS*, No. 245, 513, and *RRS*, 84, 152-153, *Morton Registrum*, vol. 2. No. 15, 11.

⁷ [RPS. 1368/6/15](#) (date accessed: 18 October 2024).

⁸ Henderson 1990.

Lochleven Castle and the Kinross lordship were ultimately sold by the Earl of Morton to Sir William Bruce, an architect, courtier and former secret agent in 1675. Sir William Bruce built a palatial modern seat on the mainland shore of Loch Leven, called Kinross House and demolished New House. The new mansion was positioned so that the axis of the building and garden was aligned on Lochleven Castle, with the old stronghold forming the eye-catching view from the main public rooms, and of the formal axis on which the entire landscape is now organised.

Sir William Bruce repaired the castle's Glassin Tower in 1690.⁹ However, by 1698 the castle is reported to be 'ane utter ruin and of a melancholie aspect'.¹⁰ Two years later the antiquarian Captain Francis Grose visited the castle and recorded the first detailed description of the ruins. By this time the castle island had become already a tourist attraction, based on its tragic association with Mary Queen of Scots.¹¹

The water level of Loch Leven was lowered at the beginning of the 19th century to improve the outflow into the river Leven, controlled by sluices and thus provided more power to watermills driving factories along its bank. This scheme created the larger, wooded island seen today as the depth of the loch dropped by 4.5ft (1.37m).

Guardianship and conservation

As well as being a Property in Care (PIC), Lochleven Castle has been legally recognised as being of national importance through its designation as a scheduled monument, the entry was last amended in 1998. As such it is protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979. The Act seeks to protect scheduled monuments by making it an offence to carry out works¹² there without gaining prior written permission, in the form of scheduled monument consent, obtained through Historic Environment Scotland.

Lochleven Castle was first designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1920, which prompted Kinross Estates to offer the castle into Guardianship which was rejected by the Ministry of Works (MoW) on financial grounds.¹³

The offer was repeated in 1937 which was followed by an inspection report by the MoW in August 1938 and the castle was taken into state care via a Deed of Guardianship in June 1939.

The conservation programme took place in the post-Second World War period and involved the repair of wall-heads and wall-walks, new stone

⁹ Henderson 1990, 30.

¹⁰ Henderson 1990, 30.

¹¹ Grose 1797, 60.

¹² 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.

¹³ NRS file MW1/563.

paving to the main tower and Glassin Tower, new stone stair treads, tree removal and clearance of soil and debris from the courtyard.

In the early 1980s there was a need for urgent masonry consolidation work at the outside of the east end of the north curtain as some masonry was in danger of collapse. The work prompted a small excavation in June 1982. Some work was also carried out within the partly ruined south-east tower where consolidation of the ground floor was preceded by an investigation of existing levels.¹⁴

In the mid-nineties it was decided to build a new reversible timber staircase along the east part of the Tower's north wall. This was preceded by a short programme of excavation which revealed evidence for an original staircase, giving access to the Great Hall.¹⁵ Additionally, a new timber stair was installed in the Tower turnpike stair to give access to an oak Viewing Gallery that was installed in the same year on the third-floor level. The timber forestair was replaced in 2022 with a free-standing metal structure.

In 2022 the castle underwent a thorough inspections through the High-Level Masonry Programme which assesses the impact of climate change on sites as well as the scale of deterioration caused by a number of other factors, including the materials used in the building's construction, its age and physical location. During the inspection and necessary repairs access to the castle was restricted as a safety precaution. The site reopened in May 2023 to visitors.¹⁶

2.2 Evidential values

The archaeological and architectural importance of Lochleven Castle is significant. Only selective archaeological work has been undertaken to date and the castle's isolated island location and abandonment relatively early mean that the potential for good archaeological survival will be high, bearing in mind that the natural extent of the island was far smaller than the current extent.

The archaeology of the site has the potential to inform our understanding of Lochleven Castle and similar sites. The entire island will have been intensively used in various ways throughout the occupation of the castle, where it was not built upon it was likely to be cultivated to provide food or pleasure grounds for the occupants.

The Tower is structurally complete and does not seem to have been modified to any significant degree even though it was occupied for at least 250 years. It therefore remains essentially a one-period structure.¹⁷ Further

¹⁴ Lewis 1987.

¹⁵ Ewart and Stewart 1995.

¹⁶ [HES News, May 2023, Lochleven Castle reopens to visitors \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#)

¹⁷ Walker and Ritchie 1987, 95-96.

survey work has the potential to reveal more about the Tower's and wider castle's development and phases.



Figure 2: Lochleven Castle tower and curtain wall (008-000-088-596-R)
© Historic Environment Scotland.

Physical evidence – archaeological investigations

In the late 19th century, the factor for the Lochleven Estate, R. Burns-Begg Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, conducted excavations revealing the footings in the courtyard. He only published his interpretations, not his findings, which means that the archaeological potential of the site will have been diminished by this work. However, Burns-Begg's activities are not thought to have involved a comprehensive clearance of the site but rather to have been largely restricted to revealing masonry structures and so evidence of earlier timber phases of construction may have been left undisturbed. This is corroborated by early 20th century photos of the barmkin and tower.

Only selective archaeological work has been carried out in recent times and included two short programmes of excavations in 1982 and 1995. Both revealed remains of structures and other finds including pottery that was possible to date. The structure revealed in 1982 along the south-east corner of the outer courtyard is a possible bakehouse. Dates ascribed to pottery found indicate that the abandonment of the structure was no later than the early 17th century. It is not clear when it was built or how the structure fits

into the chronological relationship to the curtain wall.¹⁸ The excavation in 1995 revealed the footings of the stone forestair which gave access to the Great Hall of the Tower. The stonework comprised a reveting wall and rubble core, with two surviving steps at its lowest level, access to which was via metallated pathways within the courtyard. Finds from the accumulated deposits from the outer faces of the forestairs contained pottery of circa 16th century date and midden from the occupation of the tower.¹⁹

In 2011 a watching brief was maintained during excavation of three trenches for new visitor signs. A considerable amount of artefactual evidence was recovered from these small excavations including oyster shell, bottle glass, bone and pottery which, subject to attribution of dates, may help to better understand the processes through which the castle and the island were built over time.²⁰

Documentary evidence

There are quite a few primary sources available that can shed light on the history of Lochleven Castle. The principal sources are the Exchquer Rolls 1326 to 1708 (Exch Rolls), the Registers of the Great Seal of Scotland (*Reg.Mag.Sig.*), the Acts of the kings of Scots Robert I and David II (*Regesta Regum Scottorum*), and the Treasurers Accounts (1500s). In some instances, these records refer to events 'at Kinross' – in the absence of any other realistic location, in all cases it is proposed here that this may refer to Lochleven Castle. For the siege in the 1330s, the chronicles of Wyntoun and Bower provide good narratives and there is a wide breadth of primary source material relating to Queen Mary's captivity.

These records add considerably to our understanding of the castle as a key royal residence, state political prison, place of safety and fortification, and this is confirmed by the important role it played in the Wars of Independence. This also aids our understanding of the subsequent history of the castle as a property of the Douglases, including the key episode associated with imprisonment of Mary Queen of Scots. Also, these records are invaluable for informing our knowledge of construction works at the castle. Lacking archaeological dating evidence, the phasing of the castle relies on fairly limited documentary and architectural stylistic evidence.

2.3 Historical values

Lochleven Castle has a long and rich history. There are a few themes that stand out in its historic significance:

¹⁸ Lewis 1987, 581.

¹⁹ Ewart and Stewart 1995, 100.

²⁰ Kirkdale Archaeology 2011, 3-5.

- It was an important royal stronghold and played an important role in the Scottish Wars of Independence. Though its role in the First War of Independence is unclear, the fact that it became intertwined with stories of William Wallace, a key figure in the First War of Independence, highlights at the very least its perceived significance at the time when the stories were retold. Undoubtedly, it was valued as a place of safety and fortification.
- Due to its remote and secure island location, it was used as a State prison for royal prisoners which continued when Lochleven ceased to be a royal castle and became property of the Douglases.
- Most famously during the Douglas years, Mary Queen of Scots was kept as a prisoner at Lochleven as part of her fateful last year in Scotland before she fled to England, never to return. This marks Lochleven's arguably most famous and significant episode in history.
- It was this connection to Mary Queen of Scots that raised the interest of early tourists, artists and antiquarians.

Wars of Independence – mythmaking and shaping narratives

The role of the castle in the First Wars of Independence is unclear. There is no entirely reliable reference to the castle during this conflict, but two much later sources contain claims that it is the scene of significant military activity – there is a vivid but probably essentially legendary story that William Wallace captures the island from an English garrison in late 1297,²¹ and a more matter-of-fact but apparently unverifiable claim that an English siege of the castle is defeated by the Scots in 1301.²²

In 1323, it is recorded that King Robert I (the Bruce) stayed 'at Loch Leven' with his royal court. As this references the loch rather than Kinross, it could suggest that the castle island is meant.²³ If so, it would suggest that Lochleven was a royal castle at the time and in 1329 there is mention of a deposit of royal cash 'at Loch Leven' of which money is withdrawn to cover government expenses.²⁴ Although the castle is not explicitly mentioned until 1333, it is possible that the royal treasury was kept on the island,

²¹ The source of this is the 15th century epic poem *The Wallace* in which the recapture of Lochleven from an English garrison forms a major dramatic set-piece, and within the narrative of the poem, represents the culmination of a successful campaign to expel all English garrisons north of the Forth (Wallace, Bk. X. ll 451-530, ed. McKim 2003, 277-280).

²² Balfour 1824, 86. It is possible that the chronicle compiled in the seventeenth century is an entirely accurate report taken from an older source that cannot now be located, but the claim must be used with caution, as there is little reliable evidence for any English military presence north of the Forth between 1297 and 1303. More certainly, the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward II of England, marches through Kinross while on campaign in 1303 and 1304 and probably again in 1306.

²³ *RRS*, No. 245, 513 and 84, 152-153, *Morton Registrum*, vol. 2, NO. 15, 11.

²⁴ *Exchequer Rolls*, 222.

though this could also have referred to the priory.²⁵ There are additional suggestions that Lochleven may have become the seat of the administrative machinery of Scotland's royal government in this period.²⁶ Lochleven was considered a safe and important place for the monarchy at the time.

We rely on the 15th century chronicler Andrew Wyntoun, the Prior of the monastery on **St. Serf's** Inch (the much larger island at the east end of the loch), for our first verifiable references to the castle. He may have been working with an earlier written source but certainly had excellent local knowledge. He writes that during the Second War of Independence Lochleven Castle is one of only a handful of strongholds which remain in the control of Scottish garrisons loyal to Robert I's (the Bruce) son King David II in 1333. The other castles are the kingdom's western sea-gate **Dumbarton** on the Clyde, the northern fortresses of **Kildrummy** and **Urquhart**, and the small island stronghold of the Peel of **Loch Doon** in the far south-west.²⁷ In 1335 Lochleven Castle was besieged by a mixed force of English soldiers and local supporters of King Edward Balliol, commanded by Sir John Stirling, a knight of Scottish origin who made a successful career as an English military commander.²⁸ Lochleven was defended by the garrison commander Sir Alan Vieuxpont and the siege was ultimately unsuccessful.

Relationship to St Serf's Priory in Loch Leven

The castellans are likely to have had a spiritual and donor relationship with the island priory of **St Serf** located at the east end of the loch, although the evidence of this is lacking. Some may have been buried here. The monastery however was not a place of public worship, which for the castle residents was the now-lost medieval parish church of Kinross, located in the Kirkgate cemetery, 1km west of the castle island.²⁹ The castle is likely to have maintained a private chapel possibly in the northern enclosure, served by a priest from the Kinross parish church, although such a building has never been identified.

Lochleven as a State prison

Due to its remote and secure island location, Lochleven Castle served as a place for safe keeping of royal prisoners. It continued to be used as a State

²⁵ Penman 2014, 247, for example, accepts that the Priory is meant rather than the castle.

²⁶ Compare *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. 1, 171, which seems to show the delivery of a considerable quantity of sealing wax needed for the production of official documents in 1328-1329, *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. 1, 467, which refers to the royal chamberlain being resident in Lochleven Castle in the 1330s, and [RPS A1330/12/1](#), which indicates a meeting of the royal council 'at Kinross' in December 1330.

²⁷ Laing 1872, *Wyntoun*, 404. Wyntoun may have been working with an earlier written source but certainly had excellent local knowledge.

²⁸ Laing 1872, *Wyntoun*, 409-412.

²⁹ [Corpus of Scottish medieval parish churches: Dunblane and Dunkeld dioceses \(st-andrews.ac.uk\)](#)

prison even after the castle had been passed into the hands of the Douglas family in 1390.

Detainees included historic figures like, Robert Stewart (soon to be King Robert II), the nephew and heir-presumptive, who was arrested by his royal uncle David II in summer 1368 and imprisoned for much of the second half of that year in Lochleven Castle. Robert's son Alexander, better known as 'the Wolf of Badenoch', was imprisoned afterwards in early 1369 and was kept at Lochleven for around four months.³⁰ In 1431 Archibald, the 5th earl of Douglas, was imprisoned in the castle by his uncle James I and was released in September.³¹ Patrick Graham, Archbishop of St Andrews, was imprisoned in Lochleven by King James III in 1478 and died there shortly afterwards. He was buried in the chapel on **St Serf's** Inch.

The most famous prisoner held at Lochleven Castle was Mary Queen of Scots. She remained imprisoned there after her capture and forced abdication, for almost a year from June 1567 (see below for further details).

One of the later prisoners of Lochleven Castle was Thomas Percy, the earl of Northumberland. He was imprisoned there from 1569-72 by James Douglas, 4th earl of Morton. Percy had fled to Scotland after his unsuccessful northern rebellion against Queen Elizabeth. He was eventually returned to England and ultimately executed by Queen Elizabeth.³²

Mary Queen of Scots

As mentioned earlier, Lochleven Castle is most strongly connected to Queen Mary's imprisonment, and it arguably derives its chief significance in the national, and indeed international, consciousness as the place of imprisonment and forced abdication of Mary Queen of Scots.

However, Queen Mary had visited Lochleven Castle several times before during her reign and had stayed there overnight and used it as a base for hawking, one of her favourite pastimes.

It is possible that she visited or at least had seen Lochleven Castle in her very first month of arrival in Scotland in 1561 when she made a seventeen-day tour through her central counties. Her first recorded royal visit was in spring 1563 when she stayed a week in mid-April at Lochleven. During her stay she met with John Knox, leader of the Protestant Reformation, and had one of their religious disputes. It is most likely that this encounter would have taken place in the Great Hall of the castle. She met him again the next day while she was hawking near Kinross and asked him to mediate in the domestic dispute between the earl of Argyll and his wife, her half-sister, Jean Stewart.

³⁰ *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. 2, 309, 347, compare. *Exchequer Rolls* vol. 2, lxi.

³¹ Watt 1987-98, *Bower Bk*, XVI, vol. 8, 265.

³² Lindsay 1986, 344.

In 1565 Mary visited again with her second husband, Henry, Lord Darnley as part of their triumphant progress through Fife during the Chaseabout Raid when she secured possession and loyalty of Castle Campbell and Lochleven.

Her next stay would be her final, and most famous one. After the confrontation at Carberry Hill on 15 June 1567, Queen Mary was taken first to Edinburgh and on 17th June was brought to Lochleven Castle where she would remain imprisoned for nearly a year until her escape on 2nd May 1568.

This was an intensely tragic period of her life, involving not only her fall from power, but also the miscarriage of her twins, and as such has become famed around the world, attracting considerable interest in Lochleven as the place where this happened, leading to the ultimate tragedy of her execution ordered by Elizabeth I.

The third floor of the Tower was used by Mary Queen of Scots during her imprisonment, within the window is an altar shelf with a piscina (a basin where the altar vessels were cleansed after Mass) which would have allowed her private worship. It has been suggested that this small oratory was created for her, but it is not known when it was introduced. Below the window is a small cupboard. A tiny closet opening off the south window was perhaps a strongroom for valuables, although many of her jewels had been confiscated and sold.

One room at the top floor was occupied by her doctor and is believed to be the room where Queen Mary disguised herself prior to her escape by boat.

Mary Queen of Scot's life has been hugely romanticised over the years and her time spent at Lochleven Castle is no exception. The Romantic tales associated with Mary and her time imprisoned at the castle range from the terrible tragedy of the miscarriages, despair in the face of losing her kingdom, contrasted with contemporary ambassadorial reports of pleasant courtly scenes of her embroidering with her ladies, dancing and playing cards, and strolling in the gardens with Lady Margaret Douglas, mother of her jailor. The story then explodes in the popular imagination with the excitement and peril of her daring escape, oars flashing in the loch, leaving behind the cries of her thwarted captors with their holed boats unable to pursue. This scene prompted great interest in the event launching something of an industry of 19th century history paintings focused on the Queen's valiant escape.³³

³³ For example, [Thomas Danby, 1864, The Escape of Mary, Queen of Scots from Loch Leven Castle, 2 May 1568, oil on canvas, Victoria and Albert Museum \(artuk.org\)](#).

Early antiquarian interest

The castle was the subject of early historical and antiquarian interest, notably by the leading antiquarian of the time, Lt Gen G Hutton (1785-1823) and Captain Francis Grose. Hutton's notebooks contain sketches and records of the castle as well as of **St Serf's Priory**³⁴ and Grose included a sketch and description of Lochleven Castle in his publication *The antiquities of Scotland* (volume 2, 1797).³⁵ This is considered to be the first detailed description of the ruins.

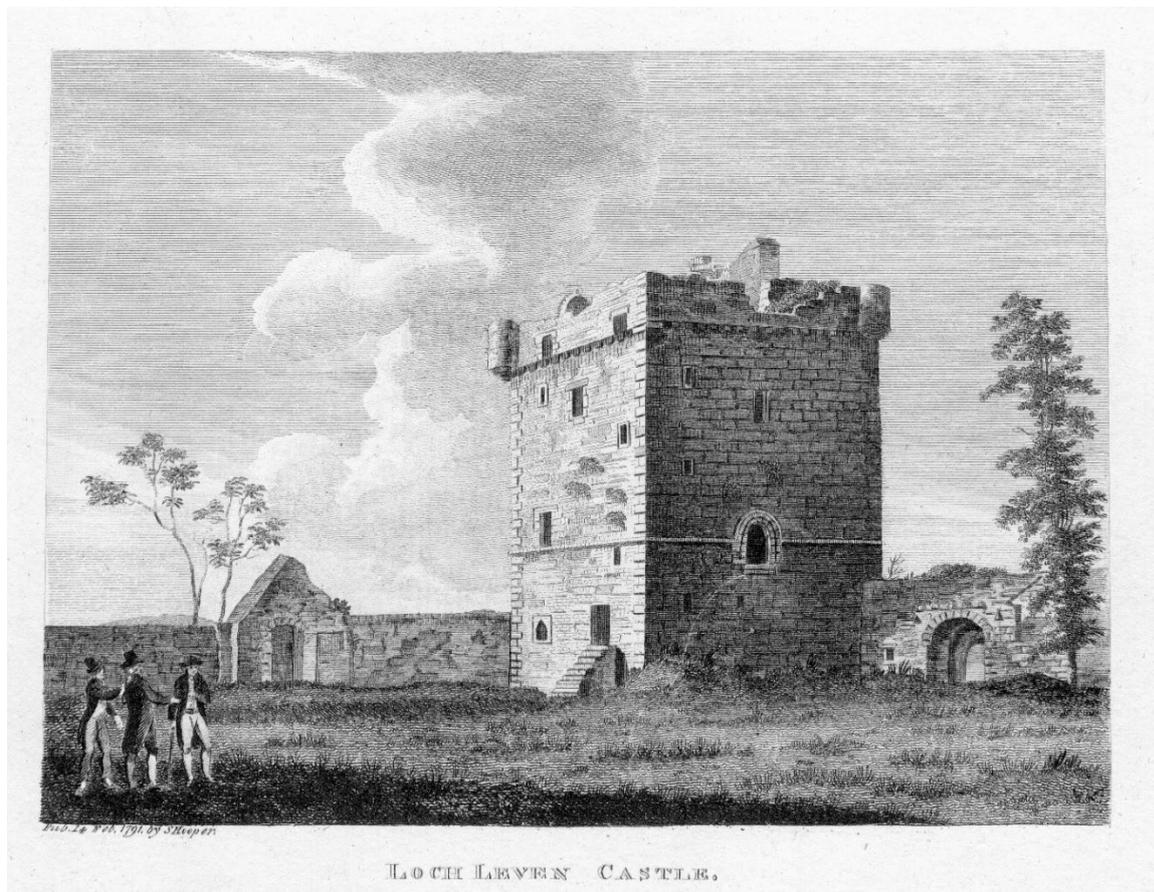


Figure 3: View of Lochleven Castle, engraving by S. Hooper (1791). Note the steps to a first-floor window on the south wall of the tower which provided access to the interior. (SC1435546) © Courtesy of HES.

Robert Burns-Begg, a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and factor of the Lochleven Estate, conducted excavations revealing the footings in the courtyard. He published his interpretations along with a detailed account of Mary Queen of Scots imprisonment on the island in his book *History of Lochleven Castle*.³⁶ Unfortunately, he did not publish his findings and his work may have diminished the archaeological potential of the site (see above 2.2 Evidential value).

³⁴ Available online from [National Library of Scotland, Hutton Drawings, Volume 2, Fife \(31-34\) \(digital.nls.uk\)](https://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/scottish/hutton-drawings-volume-2-fife-31-34/) (accessed: 04 December 2024).

³⁵ Grose 1797, 225-228.

³⁶ Burns-Begg 1887.

2.4 Architectural and artistic values

Lochleven Castle is an almost stereotypical Scottish medieval tower-house – with a principal tower adjoining a compact courtyard filled with subsidiary buildings, all vernacular and essentially timeless in style, partly concealed on a (now) wooded island in the middle of a loch, roofless but otherwise essentially complete, in terms of the core at least.



Figure 4: Aerial view of Lochleven Castle (008-000-088-597-R) © Historic Environment Scotland.

This impression of consistency is somewhat misleading however, as its appearance has changed substantially over the centuries – the outer courtyard and gardens to the north are now lost, and most obviously the size of the island was significantly increased when the water level of the loch was lowered in the nineteenth century. The architecture of the castle reflects its state when abandoned in the later seventeenth century. Superficially all of a piece, this belies the fact that the layout and buildings have undergone many developmental changes during four centuries of use.

The oldest standing feature of the castle is part of the curtain wall which probably dates back to the 13th century, its roughly cubical blocks are characteristic of work of that date.³⁷ The Tower House was built in the 14th century and is one of the earliest tower houses which has not been modified to any significant degree. The entrance to the Tower House is at the second floor which is highly unusual, as entrances would usually be at

³⁷ Gifford 2007, 503, also RCAHMS 1933, 296.

first floor level. There are theories that another entrance existed, however, a detailed standing building survey is needed to confirm these. Other architectural highlights are to be found in the ancillary buildings in the courtyard, namely the New Hall and the Glassin Tower.

It is difficult for visitors to gain an appreciation that the castle effectively took up the entire area of the original island. Island castles have obvious additional defensive capabilities, making stealthy approach almost impossible. The downside being challenges of supply and communication. Although there are many castles on promontories or linked by causeways, there are relatively few in island locations comparable to Lochleven.

Threave Castle in Galloway, **Loch Doon Castle** in Ayrshire, and Loch an Eilein Castle near Aviemore, are the best comparators.

Outer courtyard

The outer courtyard located to the north of the main enclosure is demarked on the west side by a raised bank. It seems likely that the curtain wall originally encircled the *entire* island as a single entity, and so the wall of the later castle's compact courtyard only represents *half* the original enclosure. The plan of the outer courtyard is not clear, probably rectangular, with only scant remains of the stone enclosing wall found visible. This area originally contained service buildings and latterly gardens, with structures likely to have been pent against the inside of the wall. There may even have been one or more mural towers. An early boat landing may have been at the south-east corner of this enclosure, with a gate through the curtain. The only visible building is located here, multi-phase in development, partially investigated in 1982 (see 2.2 Evidential values). This could have been part of a gateway structure referred to in contemporary accounts of Mary Queen of Scots' captivity and escape, which late in the life of the castle served as a bakery with an oven in one of the rooms. There is also a reference in a written source which suggest that at least one larger cannon was emplaced just outside the gate above the landing stage, presumably to fire at attacking boats on the loch.³⁸ The east side of the castle is where the water is deepest and was the location of the only practical landing site before the 1830s. There is evidence of substantial modifications to the castle's gardens in the 16th century, including a careful levelling of the surface - this is presumably the origin of the current configuration as a plateau with steep sloping banks.

Curtain Wall

The inner walled barmkin enclosure occupies the southern half of the island's pre-1836 area and as extant today, defines a relatively small courtyard, with ranges of buildings against the north and west sides. However, this arrangement dates from a comparatively late phase in the castle's development - perhaps when the hall was built in 1540 or at the

³⁸ Burns-Begg 1887, 101.

same time as the garden was remodelled around 1578, or perhaps after 1685, to emphasise the ruined castle's new role as a visual focus of the carefully-choreographed vista from Kinross House.

Northern curtain wall

This wall cuts across the middle of the island to complete the courtyard enclosure and separate it from the gardens to the north. It is less impressive, relatively low, narrow and lacking a wall-walk, as well as being built on an emphatically straight line. It is different in character from the other stretches of curtains, designed like the 'barmkin' walls of many Scottish tower-houses to project an aesthetic impression of castellated strength.

This has implications for the architectural chronology of the castle, as the way that the northern courtyard wall meets the tower has been used to argue that the curtain wall as a whole postdates the tower and thus belongs relatively late in the castle's history. It was entered through a simple round-headed gate in the wall. This is surmounted by a simple uncarved heraldic shield.

Documentary evidence and physical traces indicate that the original layout was very different: a large defensive enclosure would have encircled the entire island, with the tower maybe free-standing at one time.

East and south curtain walls

The curtain to the east and south are the best-preserved sections of the outer defences, standing an impressive twenty feet high and intact to wall-walk level. The main tower and Glassin Tower are fitted with shot holes.

West curtain wall

The curtain wall to the west is lower and more irregular, rising into an approximation of a roofline to frame the gable window of the hall in the courtyard, which is known from documentary evidence to have occurred around 1540.³⁹ The north part of the wall may have been lowered in height to accommodate this. Interpretation is further complicated by references to considerable stone-robbing in the late eighteenth century, and indications in early illustrations that the south section was formerly much more ruinous; the current configuration of the wall may in part be a Victorian restoration.

Stairs up to the wall-walk survive at the south-west and north-east corner of the curtain wall circuit.

Alternatively, the west curtain may have always been comparatively slight. The areas of made ground to the west and north were originally

³⁹ Sanderson 1987, 69.

underwater, but too shallow to bring a boat in which would have made access to the castle from this site difficult.

Glassin Tower

The Glassin Tower was built around 1550 and is located at the south-east corner of the curtain. It contained compact but well-appointed rooms, one on each of four levels. This would have given a fine impression, when all-over harled, with splendid windows and shot holes, capped by a conical roof and chimneys. The tower is now ruinous missing its floors and roof. It has a pair of entrance doors, the right hand one opens into steps down into the vaulted **basement**, provided with an inflow chute to pour in water from the lochside. The left door opens onto a stair giving access to two upper floors. The top floor could only be accessed from the wall walk. The ground floor room was a living space with a small fireplace; this room is particularly impressive - it has a projecting oriel (upper storey projecting or over-hanging window) and a second large window, the details of which show it to have been fully glazed, not half-shuttered as was usually the case. The first-floor room above was a bedchamber, with a fireplace and a close garderobe.



Figure 5: External view of Glassin tower with projecting oriel window (008-001-039-388-R) © Crown Copyright HES.

John Gifford writes of the Glassin Tower - ' ... never was there a more purposeful display of murderous intent with its plentiful provision of gun

loops and shot holes' for hand-held guns.'⁴⁰ However, the large windows described above underline that this was more martial imagery rather than serious defence. The Glassin Tower is said to have been repaired in 1690, and contrary to later traditions, there is little reason to think that this was ever Mary's prison. The name, which could mean 'glazed tower',⁴¹ could refer to the generous glazed windows.

The Tower

This stands as the centrepiece of the castle. It is relatively small in scale, just 11.2m by 9.7m externally with walls up to 2.5m thick. It comprises five floors and an attic, a simple rectangle without the usual staircase jamb. The tower is structurally complete and surprisingly for a building known to have been occupied for at least 250 years, has not been modified to any significant degree and remains essentially a one-period structure.⁴²



Figure 6: Exterior view of the tower (008-001-039-444-R) © Crown Copyright HES.

⁴⁰ Gifford 2007, 64.

⁴¹ As per the [Dictionary of the Older Scottish Tongue](#) whereby 'glassin' means 'Made of, or fitted with, glass' or 'glazing' (accessed: 12 December 2024).

⁴² Walker and Ritchie 1987.

Exterior

The shell of the tower is complete but missing floors and roof. This is considered to date from the first half of the 14th century and is therefore one of the earliest tower houses. This was designed as the main accommodation for the family of the keeper, and their household. The tower was built with four floors and an attic. The wall head was carried on a projecting single row of corbels, with a half-round, projecting small turret at three of the four corners. The corbel table coupled with the projecting turrets add considerable architectural embellishment to the otherwise plain design of the tower. There would possibly have been crenellations, now lost. It is likely that the upper floor has been altered and raised during the early 16th century, when the open rounds may have been increased in height and given conical rooves. Windows were pierced through the wall head, and an improved caphouse for the stair created at the south-east corner. This would have presented a more ornamental appearance. The wall surfaces now presented as well-coursed reddish-buff sandstone masonry, would originally have been harled throughout thereby giving a more unified appearance to the panels of walling. The same applies to all the buildings of the later inner court.

The original entrance was on the east side at second floor level 5m above the ground, now replicated by the modern access stair. However, there are theories that another entrance existed, a detailed standing building survey is needed to confirm these. The head of the rounded arch doorway is fully engaged with the single stepped-in string course which wraps around the entire building, providing an elegant architectural detail. It is unusual in tower house design to have an entrance above the usual first floor level. Above the door is a now blank shield that would possibly have been initially painted with the royal arms or Douglas arms.

Ground floor

The ground floor is a simple space with a tunnel vault; there are square-headed slit windows on three sides. The relatively modern doorway opening to the south appears to have been enlarged from another similar window. Above this is a hatch in the western end of the vault, which seems to have originally been the only means of access to the basement. The architecture is in general well-preserved - with the exception of the reworked doorway, and a substantial modern staircase rising inside the room through a large opening in the vault, both of which appear to be nineteenth-century insertions, designed to replace previous access arrangements to the first floor. This basement is likely to have been a storage space for provisions, complete with a well, now filled in.

First floor

The first floor,⁴³ also vaulted, is more of a living space; there is a garderobe closet in the west wall (the outflow of its chute vents outside at ground level), while the south wall is lit by two windows - a narrow square-headed slit and a wider window with seats flanking the embrasure and a stone slop sink drained through the wall below. A similar window is placed in the centre of the north wall. The east wall contains a large fireplace complete with salt box, its arch largely robbed out, and to the right, the doorway of a spiral staircase leading upwards to the three upper floors. The first floor is generally described as a kitchen, but seems too large and well-appointed, although family meals may well have been prepared here; the layout of the room and the nature of the detailing suggests a lower hall. This may have been accessed by a now-lost door and stair on the west side. This chamber communicated with the cellar below by means of a floor hatch, for pulling up bulky items or for a ladder.

The implied reworking of the entrance arrangements is not the only change made on this level: in addition, the windows may have been enlarged, as they are noticeably offset within their embrasures - if they were originally more symmetrical, they would have been closer in size to the slit-window. 18th century prints show that the large south-east window was adapted to serve as a doorway in later times, accessed by a straight stone forestair from the courtyard, of uncertain date but attested as early as 1790. However, detailed standing building survey is necessary to confirm phasing.

Second floor

The second-floor upper hall, is more open and impressive in its architecture, featuring the double-doored main entrance to the tower through the east wall, the inner door being an iron yet, evidenced by a pair of holes for its large iron hinges. The entrance area was originally partitioned off by a timber screen again evidenced by fixing holes. The 'high' or lord's end of the hall at the west has a fireplace, later reduced in scale but part of the fine original moulding remains. This, and the two floors above, may well have featured finely decorated timber ceilings. A small arched doorway in the south-east corner leads to the spiral stair, giving access to the upper floors.

Third floor

The third floor is traditionally regarded as Queen Mary's prison and bedchamber, although in reality she and her household may have utilised all three of the upper floors as befitted her high status. It is well equipped with a fireplace, windows and window seats, along with a mural garderobe chamber. Sir William Douglas may have arranged for the east window alcove to have been converted into a private oratory by adding an altar

⁴³ What we refer to today as the first floor is sometimes referred to as an intermediary floor between the ground floor and what we now consider the second floor.

shelf and piscina, with a small cupboard below for altar vessels. However, it is not known when these were added and may also have predated Mary's arrival.



Figure 7: Detail of third-floor window used as a private oratory in the tower (008-001-039-397-R) © Crown Copyright HES.

Fourth floor

The attic top floor was originally no more than a garret dormitory for the garrison and servants, this may have been transformed into a finer space by alterations in the 16th or perhaps 17th century, raising the roof and adding a large rectangular window to north and south with window seats. Tradition has it that this was the chamber occupied by Mary's doctor.

The Courtyard Buildings

The courtyard buildings can be considered in three separate groups: the New Hall, Kitchen and North range.

New Hall

A large building south of the tower, the gable of which is built into the curtain wall, can be identified as the 'new hall' built in the 1540s, and even the slight remains confirm its architectural quality: around forty feet long by twenty feet wide, now highly ruinous, is adequately sized for its purpose if not spectacularly large, and the square room at its upper end, some twenty feet across, can be identified as the chamber of dais, which acted as a drawing room and guest accommodation for important visitors.



Figure 8: General view of Lochleven Castle showing the remains of the New Hall (008-000-082-159-R) © Historic Environment Scotland.

The west gable was lit by a tall window, the stonework of which survives, showing that it was designed for a large 'set' of glass above a horizontal timber transom with a pair of wooden shutters in the lower half, fronted externally by a projecting iron grille. An adjacent jamb indicates the position of a doorway at the west end of the south-facing wall, with sockets for the iron hinges of its wooden door. There is space for at least one window immediately to the east, but the fragmentary wall-footings provide more certain evidence of a wide fireplace and the bay of a south-facing window, which would have lit the high table across the end of the hall. The chamber of dais, entered by a relatively discreet door at the north end of the wall behind the high table, was furnished with a massive hearth in the east gable, and a second doorway in the north wall, leading into a small passage that now appears porch-like, but seems more likely to have originally been a privy. Another south-facing window is likely to have completed the room. This may have been the room in which Mary Queen of

Scots was originally held in the first weeks of her presence on the island in the summer of 1567, while the tower rooms were being prepared and furnished.

At the other end of the building, there is a wing abutting the north wall at the 'low' end of the hall, ranged along the curtain wall - the lack of any evidence for a hearth suggests that this was not a kitchen, but more probably a wine cellar.

Kitchen

To the south of the hall, another building runs at approximately right-angles pent against the curtain. A source of the 1790s states that this was a kitchen, a necessary adjunct to the hall. That source records that it had only recently been slighted by stone-robbers, and that a carved skew-stone from one of its gables bore the initials of Robert Douglas and Margaret Erskine, suggesting that it was contemporaneous with the adjacent hall.⁴⁴ The solid masonry of the circular structure projecting at its south-east corner certainly suggests an oven, though the stone trough set nearby in the floor would be more appropriate in a brewhouse, creating the stereotypical combination of 'kiln and coble'.

North range

This comprises a long, narrow range pent against the north wall east of the tower. They are integral to the wall, and so likely to be of the same date, and although their internal walls are reduced to low footings, much of their interior layout remains clear. The western half of the basement is a large, unheated space, with slit windows in the north wall and two doorways and may have served as a porter's lodge with storage. Next comes a room which has the look of a pantry with a large fireplace and a large south-facing window, probably another kitchen, and beyond this another room, unheated but furnished with both a second similar window and a wall-cupboard, and with stairs which led up to the first floor. The upper floor has largely vanished, but its existence is illustrated by the surviving door-jamb half-way along the curtain and the joist-holes for the floor at the western end. The quality of the ground floor windows suggests that this south-facing upper storey would be brightly lit. Measuring over sixty feet from end to end, but less than fifteen feet in width, this is perhaps a long gallery which doubled as a banqueting house, although it could also have functioned as a self-contained set of guest lodgings.

Artistic values

The castle and island have a long history in the picturesque movement. When Sir William Bruce built Kinross House and Gardens in 1675, he purposefully made the ruined castle the focus on the axis of the parterre. It

⁴⁴ Sinclair 1793, 170-171.

marked the transition of the castle from a functional place to a picturesque ruin.

During the years that followed and especially during the 18th and 19th centuries, the castle and island have been sketched and painted by many artists as a popular picturesque subject. Its fame was further developed by J.M.W. Turner who produced a fine sketch from the shore, which was engraved for popular reproduction in an edition of *The Abbot* by Sir Walter Scott, in Fisher's 'Illustrations to the Waverley Novels' (1836-1837).⁴⁵

As already discussed above, the escape of Queen Mary became a popular subject in the Victorian Romantic movement, including a fine work by Thomas Danby in the Victoria and Albert Museum, London.⁴⁶

The escape of Mary, Queen of Scots, also attracted the attention of 19th century poets, including Longfellow and William Topaz McGonigal, and continues to inspire artists, poets and song writers to this day. In the lockdown of 2020 NatureScot and Feis Rois ran a project entitled *In Tune With Nature*. Beth Malcolm's winning entry features an imagined conversation between Mary Queen of Scots and her lady in waiting as they dream of escaping their prison.⁴⁷ The castle in its loch setting has also been the subject of contemporary traditional music.⁴⁸

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

Loch Leven is designated as a Local Landscape Area which is centred on the loch and includes the western edge of the Lomond Hills and the northern edge of Benarty, which enclose the loch to the east and south.⁴⁹

There are panoramic views eastwards across Loch Leven to the impressive backdrop of the Lomond Hills, particularly Bishop Hill, and south towards Benarty Hill 1,168ft (356m). The east end of the Ochils provide the backdrop to the north-west. The loch is set in a mainly arable farming landscape. The loch's entire 21km (13 miles) circumference is now circumnavigated by the all-abilities Loch Leven Heritage Trail, the western parts of which afford fine views of the castle island.⁵⁰ The contrast

⁴⁵ After [Joseph Mallord William Turner, Loch Leven Castle, 1836, line engraving on paper, Tate Britain \(tate.org.uk\)](#) (accessed: 17 September 2024).

⁴⁶ [Thomas Danby, 1864, The Escape of Mary, Queen of Scots from Loch Leven Castle, 2 May 1568, oil on canvas, Victoria and Albert Museum \(artuk.org\)](#) (accessed: 17 September 2024).

⁴⁷ [NatureScot, In Tune with Nature \(nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 17 September 2024).

⁴⁸ For further detail see HES *Intangible Cultural Heritage Loch Leven Castle* report. Available on request, please email CRTenquiries@hes.scot.

⁴⁹ [Perth and Kinross Council, Landscape: Supplementary Guidance 2020 \(PDF, 22.8MB\)](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

⁵⁰ [Perth and Kinross Countryside Trust, The Loch Leven Heritage Trail \(pkct.org\)](#) (accessed 07 June 2023)

between the broad, flat loch, farmed foothills and steep surrounding hills are one of its special qualities.⁵¹



Figure 9: Oblique aerial view of Kinross House centred on the country house with garden and stables, and with a church, burial ground and castle in the background, taken from the west-north-west (SC1690317) © Crown Copyright: HES.

With the construction of Kinross House at the end of the 17th century, Lochleven took on a new guise – that of a picturesque ruin. It is possibly one of the earliest of such examples in the United Kingdom, pre-dating the work of Sir John Vanbrugh (1664-1726)⁵² by 30 years. It therefore holds an important place in the history of such appreciation and the changes in

⁵¹ [Perth and Kinross Council. *Landscape: Supplementary Guidance 2020 \(PDF, 22.8MB\)*](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024), 43.

⁵² Sir John Vanbrugh was a playwright and English Baroque architect and is best known for his work on the Blenheim Palace and Castle Howard. He had a strong sense of the picturesque which led him to further and more explicit medievalism in his work and foreshadowed the romantic spirit of later Gothic revivals. Fleming et al 1999, 600.

aesthetic attitudes. This element contributed to the garden being considered to be of outstanding value.⁵³

The castle itself sits on the heavily wooded island which provides a striking backdrop when viewed across the loch from the west. On the island itself the quietness, combined with the woodland setting, lends the ruins a peaceful aesthetic.

There are immediate views west of the castle to Kinross House and gardens, and to the adjacent Watch Tower erected in 1852 beside the ruined parish church and old burial ground, located to the south-east of the gardens. In the 1840s extensive tree planting of the newly enlarged castle island was designed so as to retain the intervisibility between the frontage of Kinross House and the castle. The castle is a prominent landmark viewed in passing from the M90.

2.6 Natural heritage values

The castle island forms part of a complex array of international, national and local natural heritage protected conservation designations.



Figure 10: Aerial view of Lochleven Castle on castle island with Bishophill in the background (008-000-088-639-R) © Historic Environment Scotland.

⁵³ [Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape: Kinross House \(GDL00247\)](https://portal.historicenvironment.scot) (portal.historicenvironment.scot) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

The loch was created a National Nature Reserve in 1964,⁵⁴ and a Site of Special Scientific Interest in 1985.⁵⁵ Surrounded by a fringe of wetland and woodland habitats, Loch Leven is one of the most significant wetland sites in the UK. It supports internationally important populations of wintering and breeding waterbirds. There is also a diversity of habitats and associated wildlife.

NatureScot manages the loch, islands and a fringe of mixed habitats around the shores. The RSPB manages wetlands on the southern shore of the loch, along with areas of woodland and hill ground.

Loch Leven is the largest natural shallow water body in lowland Britain and is home to more breeding ducks than anywhere else in inland Europe. From late summer until spring, tens of thousands of other wildfowl from many different countries use it for short and long-term stopovers. Their presence gives Loch Leven year-round interest and a global importance. It also boasts a rich mix of wet grasslands, raised bog, willow and reed beds with an amazing range of plants. The loch also supports a natural brown trout population which supports a famous trout fishery. The rod fishery has been popular since the 19th century and trout offspring have been exported worldwide.

Because of the internationally important bird populations, the loch is part of the European Natura 2000 network classified as a Special Protection Area (SPA)⁵⁶ and is also designated as a Ramsar site for its wetlands and bird interest.⁵⁷ Under Scottish legislation it is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for birds, plants, and insects.⁵⁸

The castle itself contains bat roosts, which include a summer roost of Daubentons bats. The open water, woodland and, in other parts of the nature reserve, long grassland, provide ideal bat feeding habitat. The Guardianship area comprises lawns surrounded by small blocks of semi-natural ancient woodland, with a thick band of emergent vegetation along the loch shore. The woodland and the emergent shore vegetation and to a lesser extent the semi-improved acidic grassland provide valuable habitat.

Species of local importance include broad leaved willowherb, pink purslane, ragged robin, spring beauty and water forget-me-not. A number

⁵⁴ [Loch Leven National Nature Reserve \(nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

⁵⁵ [Loch Leven Site of Special Scientific Interest \(sitelink.nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

⁵⁶ [Loch Leven Special Protection Area \(sitelink.nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

⁵⁷ [Loch Leven RAMSAR \(sitelink.nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

⁵⁸ [Loch Leven Site of Special Scientific Interest \(sitelink.nature.scot\)](#) (accessed: 18 September 2024).

of the plants found on castle island may have had historical uses, as for example ash, meadowsweet, bramble and birds-foot trefoil.⁵⁹

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 castle is a popular visitor attraction, although its natural isolation divorces it from much social activity in the local area. However, it is considered to be important to the residents of Kinross and has been the location of annual school picnics for decades.

Prior to 1965 there had not been an official boat to the island and visitors had to hire a boat privately to access the castle which meant that public access was virtually non-existent. It was due to local effort through the Town Clerk, who noted a rise in interest in visiting the castle, and the allowance of motorboats on the loch in 1963, that eventually opened the island to the public. On its first summer season in 1965, it attracted over 6,000 visitors.⁶⁰

In the last few years, visitor numbers have averaged around 10,000 for the season from April to October, with weather conditions impacting the number of days the castle can be opened.⁶¹ Some visitors chance upon the castle while visiting Kirkgate park on the shore and see the boats going across. The boats are offsite during the winter. A popular motivation for visitors from around the world is the tragic Mary Queen of Scots association. This has prompted many filming requests, especially for tourism programmes. Pre-pandemic HES supported the Rotary Club of Kinross by providing prizes for their annual Boat Race to celebrate Mary Queen of Scots escape from Lochleven Castle. The castle island is also a popular picnic spot.⁶²

⁵⁹ All of these plants had some medicinal purposes. In addition, ash was traditionally used for tools, furniture and other equipment as its wood is very durable. The sap used to be also tapped to produce a sugary drink. Meadowsweet and bog myrtle were used as strewing herbs as they released aroma when crushed and could mask unpleasant smells. Furthermore, it has been associated with brewing ale as it was used as a preservative. Brambles were used for food and also as an ingredient in ale. Birds-foot trefoil was used to produce a yellow dye. (HES, *Statement of Natural Heritage Significance: Loch Leven Castle*).

⁶⁰ NRS, DD27/1705.

⁶¹ Visitor numbers courtesy of HES.

⁶² Information from comments by HES Monument Manager, February 2022.

The journey across the loch by boat offers unique and stunning views of the island, the loch and the surrounding landscape. The trip often includes seeing birds such as herons, ducks and swans with their signets.

Visitors who leave a review online often express they enjoy the experience of exploring the castle and its history, having picnics on the island and often describe the experience as tranquil, atmospheric and calm. While some visitors like to linger on the island, others are content to leave after 45 minutes when the next boat usually returns to the mainland.⁶³

Intangible Cultural Heritage⁶⁴

Much of the intangible cultural heritage relating to Lochleven Castle derives from its historical, romantic and picturesque associations and many aspects of personal association, legend and folklore are closely intertwined.

The loch and castle were sites of early tourism and a significant event on journeys to or from the Highlands. Accessibility by rail in the nineteenth century made it a popular destination.

As with other properties in care, the site is somewhat apart from the community in which it is situated.

The escape of Mary Queen of Scots from her incarceration in Lochleven Castle continues to inspire artists, poets and song writers. Glasgow University undertook a two-year project on Marian culture in 2019 which set out to map the presence of Mary Queen of Scots in Scottish heritage collections.⁶⁵

3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

The overall phasing and development of the castle is unclear, notably the construction and use of the northern enclosure area; this can be better understood through a programme of above-ground survey, coupled with targeted excavation.

Curtain wall development – detailed survey and recording of the curtain could help identify phases of construction. It is unclear as to who built the original curtain, the Scots or the English. Radiocarbon dating of mortar could help resolve this.

⁶³ As per reviews left on [Google reviews of Lochleven Castle \(google.com\)](#) and [Tripadvisor reviews of Lochleven Castle \(tripadvisor.co.uk\)](#) (both accessed: 19 September 2024).

⁶⁴ For further detail see HES *Intangible Cultural Heritage Loch Leven Castle* report. Available on request, please email CRTenquiries@hes.scot.

⁶⁵ [Mary Queen of Scots Project \(mqs.glasgow.ac.uk\)](#) (accessed: 25 September 2024).

A full standing building survey of the tower house is necessary to understand its phasing and could shed new information on its development throughout its use.

A full assessment of the social values of the property is necessary to better understand its connection within the community.

4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

Blackness Castle, Bass Rock (state prisons), **Aberdour Castle**, Dalkeith House, (Earl of Morton), **Threave Castle**, **Bothwell Castle**, **Tantallon Castle** (Douglas family) **St. Serf's Priory**, **Loch Doon Castle**, Kinross House, Hallforest, Drum Castle.

5. KEYWORDS

Mary, Queen of Scots, loch, island, prison, Douglas, Morton, tower-house, Robert the Bruce, Wars of Independence, castle

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Further resources

Trove ID: 27913

Trove Site Number: NO10SW 9

National Grid Reference: NO 13747 01778

Trove entry: <https://www.trove.scot/place/27913>

Scheduling description accessible on HES portal: [Lochleven Castle \(SM90204\) \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](#)

Inventory Garden and Designed Landscape description accessible on HES portal: [Kinross House \(GDL00247\) \(portal.historicenvironment.scot\)](#)

Artefacts relating to Lochleven Castle held within National Museums of Scotland collections can be searched via: [National Museums of Scotland: Search our collections \(nms.ac.uk\)](#).

For a list of sources we have used in the process of researching our Properties in Care: [Bibliography of Properties in Care \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#)

NatureScot's priorities and tasks for managing the reserve between 2016 and 2026: [The Management Plan for Loch Leven National Nature Reserve 2015-2026 \(nature.scot - PDF, 640KB\)](#)

Document providing information on how the landscape of the local authority area has evolved: [NatureScot, Landscape Character Assessment: Fife Landscape Evolution and Influences \(nature.scot\)](#)

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: TIMELINE

- **1253** - Sir John Kinross was documented as sheriff of Kinross.⁶⁶ A sheriff in thirteenth-century Scotland would normally have a castle associated with his seat of office, and as the island location was easily defensible, it is a likely location to have been used. Lower parts of the enclosing curtain wall may date from this time.
- **1257** - The sixteen-year-old King Alexander III was 'at Kinross' on the night of 28th-29th October, when he was kidnapped by the Comyn faction.⁶⁷
- **1296** - Outbreak of war with England, later to be known as the First War of Scottish Independence. There is no reliable reference to Lochleven Castle during this conflict, though it does feature in later tales of William Wallace (see 2.3 Historical values).
- **1303, 1304 and 1306** - English forces under the control of the Prince of Wales, the future King Edward II of England, marched through Kinross, which is on the main north-south route.
- **25 March 1306** - Robert I was crowned King of Scots at Scone, near Perth.
- **1313** - King Robert I may have been in residence at the castle. The castle's function as a State prison possibly developed at this time.
- **1323** - in September and October that year, King Robert stayed 'at Loch Leven' with his royal court, which could potentially have been the castle serving as a seat of royal government.⁶⁸ It is possible that the castle was rebuilt around this time creating its essential mature form, with the present curtain wall and tower house. The latter effectively serving as a royal palace.
- **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.

⁶⁶ Taylor 2017.

⁶⁷ Skene 1871-1872, *Fordun*, vol. 2, 292; compare Laing 1872, *Wyntoun*, vol. 2, 255.

⁶⁸ *RRS*, No. 245, 513, and 84, 152-153, *Morton Registrum*, vol. 2. No. 15, 11.

- **1329** - There was a deposit of royal cash 'at Loch Leven' – by this time the castle seemed to be serving as a secure location for the treasury, however, this could also have referred to the priory.⁶⁹
- **December 1330** - A meeting of the royal council took place 'at Kinross' which could have meant the castle, perhaps even a full session of parliament.⁷⁰
- **1332** - Outbreak of the Second War of Scottish Independence.
- **1332 or early 1333** - the royal baillie of Kinross-shire bought 'cords for machines at Loch Leven'.⁷¹
- **1333** - Lochleven Castle is named explicitly for the first time, as one of a handful of strongholds which remain in the control of Scottish garrisons loyal to Robert I's son King David II, during the civil war against a rival claimant to the Scottish throne, King Edward Balliol, and his English supporters.⁷² The other castles are **Dumbarton Castle, Kildrummy Castle, Urquhart Castle** and **Loch Doon Castle**. Large sums were spent on provisions and building work, to improve the defences and accommodation for the garrison.⁷³
- **1335** - Lochleven Castle was besieged by a mixed force of English soldiers and Scots supporters of Edward Balliol, commanded by Sir John Stirling. The siege camp was well-established on the shore beside the Kinross kirkyard 1km west of, and facing, the castle. The siege began in late March and was still ongoing around 19 June when the Scots besiegers travelled 13 miles south to Dunfermline Abbey to celebrate the Feast of St Margaret, leaving the English contingent to defend their position. The Scots defenders immediately took advantage, successfully attacked the siege camp, carrying supplies and weapons back to the castle. The siege proved to be ultimately unsuccessful.⁷⁴ Another source recounts how the attackers used the tactic to dam the River Leven in order to raise the water level to flood the castle. The dam was burst by the men of the constable, Adam Vipont, before it could take effect.⁷⁵
- **1339** - Before 24th October, command of the castle garrison passed to Master John Douglas, a clergyman and university graduate turned resistance leader.⁷⁶

⁶⁹ *Exchequer Rolls* vol. 1, 222; Penman 2014, 247 accepts that the Priory is meant rather than the castle, though either are a possibility.

⁷⁰ [RPS A1330/12/1](#)

⁷¹ *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. 1, 414.

⁷² Laing 1872, *Wyntoun*, vol. 2, 404

⁷³ *Exchequer Rolls* vol. 1 454, 467, and for the precise dates, 448, 464.

⁷⁴ Laing 1872, *Wyntoun*, vol. 2, 409-412.

⁷⁵ Watt 1987-98, *Bower*, XIII, vol. 7, 99-101.

⁷⁶ [RPS 1339/1](#)

- **1340** – Building activity was recorded, which could have been the construction of the tower.⁷⁷
- **1355** - Sir John Crichton took office as sheriff of Kinross and was soon after appointed keeper of the castle. He subsequently spent money ‘for the repair of walls and buildings, and the support of other burdens of the said castle’.⁷⁸
- **1357** – The Second War of Scottish Independence ended with the signing of the Treaty of Berwick.
- **1361** – King David II was in residence at Lochleven long enough to require delivery of two tuns of wine, at a cost of £20.⁷⁹ Sustained maintenance expenditure was recorded on the castle over the next few years, perhaps connected to royal visits.
- **April or May 1363** - David II issued charters at the castle. The royal accounts show payments for the maintenance around the time of these two royal visits, including repairs on the curtain wall and for the purchase and maintenance of a boat on the loch.⁸⁰
- **June 1368** - Lochleven Castle was named by the Scottish parliament along with **Edinburgh Castle, Stirling Castle** and **Dumbarton Castle**, as one of the four royal castles, ranking it alongside the kingdom’s key strongholds.⁸¹ A committee of knights was tasked to visit the four castles, to assess whether they were ‘impregnable’, and if they were, to ensure that they could be properly garrisoned against invasions, that their walls were strong, and that they were properly provided with provisions and siege engines.
- **Summer 1368** - Robert Stewart (soon to be King Robert II), the nephew and heir-presumptive, was arrested by his royal uncle David II and imprisoned for much of the second half of that year in the castle.
- **Early 1369** – Robert Stewart’s son Alexander, better known as ‘the Wolf of Badenoch’, replaced Robert as prisoner in Lochleven Castle and probably spent around four months in prison. He was certainly released by 1370.⁸²
- **8 May 1372** – King Robert II granted Lochleven Castle to his second wife Queen Euphemia and their son Earl of Strathearn.⁸³ The grant

⁷⁷ *Exchequer Rolls*, vol. 1, 467.

⁷⁸ *Exchquer Rolls*, vol. 1, 578, 581, Robertson 1798, 30, no. 45.

⁷⁹ *Exchquer Rolls*, vol 2, 82.

⁸⁰ *Exchquer Rolls*, vol. 2, 77, 80, 114, 154, 167, 289, 349.

⁸¹ [RPS 1368/6/15](#)

⁸² *Exchequer Rolls* vol. 2, 309, 347, compare *Exchequer Rolls*, lxi.

⁸³ Robertson 1798, 98 no. 328.

was not hereditary, and the castle reverted back to government control by the end of the 1380s.

- **18 March 1390** – The castle was given to Sir Henry Douglas (husband of Marjory, niece of King Robert II) and ceased to be a royal property. What had been royal lands in the area were formed into a hereditary feudal barony for Sir Henry Douglas and his heirs.⁸⁴
- **1431** – Archibald, 5th earl of Douglas imprisoned in the castle by his uncle James I.⁸⁵
- **1436** – Building works were undertaken to strengthen the defences.⁸⁶
- **1478** – Patrick Graham, Archbishop of St Andrews was imprisoned on Lochleven by King James III. He is subsequently buried in the chapel on **St Serf's Inch**.
- **11 July 1527** – Robert Douglas, the heir to Lochleven, was formally engaged to marry Margaret Erskine, daughter of Lord Erskine.⁸⁷
- **1531** – Margaret Erskine bore a son, James Stewart, by King James V.⁸⁸
- **1540** – Sir Robert Douglas, laird of Lochleven, built the great hall in the courtyard. He also built a new mansion on the mainland shore at Kinross, known as the New House of Loch Leven (the site now occupied by Kinross House).⁸⁹ Sir Robert was able to fund this having received considerable patronage from King James V, including a charter in January 1541 which annexed the sheriffdom of Kinross and its remaining powers and revenues to the lordship of Loch Leven, and promoting the town of Kinross to the status of a burgh.⁹⁰
- **14 December 1542** – King James V died.
- **9 September 1543** – Mary was crowned Queen of Scots aged just nine months.
- **December 1543** – Henry VIII attacked Scotland to force a marriage between Mary and Edward, his son. This was the beginning of the Rough Wooing.

⁸⁴ *Morton Registrum*, vol. 2, No. 191, 168-170; Robertson 1798, 125 no. 5.

⁸⁵ Watt 1987-98, *Bower*, Bk. XVI, vol. 8, 265.

⁸⁶ Henderson 1990.

⁸⁷ *Scots Peerage*, Vol. 6, 369.

⁸⁸ *Scots Peerage*, vol. 1, 24.

⁸⁹ Sanderson 1987, 69, and compare NRS *GD150/1105*, which pushes back the existence of Newhouse to May 1540.

⁹⁰ *RMS* vol. 3, No. 2259, 514-515.

- **1547** - During the 'Rough Wooing' English invasion, vestments and relics from St Andrews Cathedral were deposited in the castle for safe-keeping.⁹¹
- **1550s** - Repairs and construction work were in progress, likely to include the construction of the circular Glassin Tower.
- **1551** - The Treaty of Norham formally ended the Rough Wooing and English military presence withdrew from Scotland.
- **1561** - First suspected visit by Mary Queen of Scots.
- **Spring 1563** - Mary Queen of Scots was a guest at the castle where she received a visit from John Knox, leader of the Protestant Reformation. They argued over persecution of Catholics. This encounter was likely to have taken place in the Great Hall.
- **1565** - Mary visited with her husband Lord Darnley.
- **November 1565** - with his loyalty in question Sir William Douglas of Lochleven was ordered to hand over the castle to Mary Queen of Scots Privy Council but was eventually allowed to stay after agreeing to make the castle available for royal use.⁹²
- **17 June 1567** - Mary Queen of Scots was brought to Lochleven Castle, having been taken prisoner by a rebel army. She miscarried twins around this time.
- **24 July 1567** - From her sick bed and under duress, she signed Deeds of Abdication handing over power to her infant son King James VI, with the Earl of Moray, her half-brother, as regent. Her jailer William Douglas was also the half-brother to Moray. Shortly afterwards, she was moved from accommodation in the courtyard into the great tower, occupying the upper floors. Some of her furniture, clothes (for herself and her ladies), embroidery materials, and possessions were moved to the castle, and some alterations were made to improve her comfort, including the provision of a small oratory within the east window area of her third-floor bedroom. She was then allowed to pass the time walking in the garden, playing cards, and even dancing. By this time Douglas and his household were likely to have been resident in the more comfortable New House on the Kinross shore. For much of the time she was closely accompanied by the laird's young wife Lady Douglas, other Douglas ladies, and by two of her own ladies-in-waiting, Mary Seton and Mary Livingstone.
- **2nd May 1568** - Mary made a dramatic escape by boat, disguised in shabby clothes, carefully planned by Will Douglas, a loyal supporter

⁹¹ *Morton Registrum*, vol. 1, No. 9, 6-7, for date and context, compare Dunbar 2002, 12 and note 42.

⁹² *RPCS* vol. 1, 390-391, 396-398, *Morton Registrum* vol. 1, Nos. 16, 26, 12-13, 24-26.

of her and cousin to her Douglas jailor. She then managed to raise an army and marched to the West.

- **13 May 1568** – Mary’s army was beaten at the battle at Langside by the army led by the Protestant lords. Mary decided to leave Scotland to beg support from her cousin Elizabeth and entered almost 20 years of captivity.
- **1569-72** – The Earl of Northumberland was imprisoned in the castle after he fled to Scotland following the failure of his northern rebellion against Queen Elizabeth I. He was eventually returned to England and executed by Elizabeth I.
- **March 1572** – Archibald Douglas, a distant cousin of the laird, generally known as the ‘parson of Douglas’, but essentially a professional intelligence agent, is also imprisoned in Lochleven.
- **1578** – The 4th Earl of Morton, a distant cousin of the Douglas of Lochleven family, resigned as Regent of Scotland. He retired to Lochleven and occupied himself with developing the formal garden in the outer court.
- **1587** – The castle was reported as being in need of repairs.
- **1588** – Sir William Douglas of Lochleven became the 6th Earl of Morton; as such, he inherited a number of properties including New House.⁹³ There is little reference to Lochleven Castle for the next hundred years, and according to a nineteenth century source, the castle was becoming ruinous by this date.⁹⁴
- **1675** – the Earl of Morton sold Lochleven Castle and the Kinross lordship to Sir William Bruce, an architect, courtier and former secret agent, who built himself a palatial modern seat on the mainland shore of Loch Leven, called Kinross House, and demolished New House. The new mansion is positioned so that the axis of the building and garden is aligned on Lochleven Castle, with the old stronghold forming the eyecatcher view from the main public rooms, and of the formal axis on which the entire landscape is now organized.
- **1690** – Sir William Bruce repaired the castle’s Glassin Tower.⁹⁵
- **1698** – The castle was reportedly ‘ane utter ruin and of a melancholie aspect’.⁹⁶
- **1729** – ‘[P]art of one of the outhouses’ was blown down in a storm.⁹⁷

⁹³ Sanderson 1987, 61.

⁹⁴ Henderson 1990.

⁹⁵ Henderson, 1990.

⁹⁶ Henderson, 1990.

⁹⁷ Henderson, 1990.

- **1775** – William Bruce’s descendants sold Kinross House and the castle to Thomas Graham.
- **1790** - The antiquarian Captain Francis Grose visited the castle and records the first detailed description of the ruins.⁹⁸ By this time the castle island had become a tourist attraction, based on its tragic association with Mary Queen of Scots.
- **1793** - a second description of the castle was made by the local minister and published in the Statistical Account.⁹⁹
- **19th century** - The site was visited by other notable tourists and cultural figures, such as the artist J.M.W. Turner and the nineteenth-century historian Agnes Strickland.
- **1820** - Sir Walter Scott published a novel, *The Abbot*, which recounts a fictionalised version of Mary Queen of Scots’ captivity and escape. Various fictionalised accounts of her captivity have been produced including in recent times.
- **1826** - A project began to lower the water level in Loch Leven, in order to improve the outflow into the river Leven at the east end of the loch, controlled by sluices and thus providing more power to watermills driving factories along its bank. Considerable farmland was also reclaimed.
- **1827** – An Act of Parliament was passed ‘for recovering, draining and preserving certain lands in the counties of Fife and Kinross; and for better supplying with water the mills, Manufactories and Bleach fields and other works situated on or near the River Leven in the said county of Fife.’¹⁰⁰
- **1836** – The project was completed and reduced the depth of the loch by four and a half feet (1.37m), thereby creating the larger, wooded island seen today.
- **1840** – Reclaimed land of the enlarged castle island was planted with trees by the factor from Kinross House.
- **1880** – Renewed tree planting and woodland management was undertaken by the Estate.
- **Late 1800s** - The factor for the Lochleven Estate, R. Burns-Begg FSA Scot, conducted excavations revealing the footings in the courtyard but only publishing his interpretation, not his findings.
- **1920/21** – The castle was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. This prompted Kinross Estates to offer it into

⁹⁸ Grose 1797, vol. 2, 225-228.

⁹⁹ Sinclair 1793, 170-1.

¹⁰⁰ Parliament 1827.

Guardianship, at which time the Ministry of Works (MoW) compiled a schedule of conservation works. The offer was rejected by MoW, however, due to the poor state of the post-First World War economy.¹⁰¹

- **1925** - Lochleven Castle was surveyed by RCAHMS and noted as being 'in good preservation, being well looked after by the proprietor'.¹⁰²
- **17 October 1934** - The castle was rescheduled.
- **1937** - proposed works by the estate to remove ivy from the ruins prompted a renewed offer of Guardianship, accompanied by an inspection report by MoW in August 1938, which concluded -'It's sentimental value is immense, but there is little to show and a desperate difficulty in showing what there is'.¹⁰³
- **1939** - Lochleven Castle was taken into State care via a Deed of Guardianship agreement. The conservation programme outlined by MoW was postponed by the outbreak of the Second World War.¹⁰⁴
- **1940s** - Further clearance works took place once the castle came into Guardianship, probably starting in the post-war period.
- **1951** - Local pressure was asserted, linked to the Festival of Britain, for Ministry of Public Buildings and Works (MoPBW, a predecessor body of HES) to provide boat access to the castle as a tourist attraction. It had been decided after the Second World War 'that the expense of providing a boat, attendant and landing stage would not be justified by demand'.¹⁰⁵ Access at this time was limited, and any visitors had to take their chances in hiring a rowing boat and two oarsmen from the angling pier. The Guardianship deed vetoed the use of motorboats which might disturb angling. The laird, Col Montgomery of Kinross Estates, continued to enforce this condition.
- **November 1963** - The Kinross Town Clerk made representations to the local MP (Prime Minister Sir Alec Douglas-Home) to put pressure on MoPBW to provide boat access and a custodian for the first time.
- **1964** - Loch Leven became a Nature Reserve, which included the island of Lochleven Castle.

¹⁰¹ NRS file MW1/563.

¹⁰² RCAHMS 1933, 298.

¹⁰³ NRS file MW1/1134.

¹⁰⁴ NRS file MW1/1134, which also contains a set of pre-Guardianship photos, showing the castle to be in surprisingly good condition.

¹⁰⁵ NRS file DD27/1705.

- **1965** – Official boat access was provided to bring visitors to the island. The first summer season (June to October) attracted 6,200 visitors.¹⁰⁶
- **1971** – Lochleven Castle was included in the List as a category A listed building.
- **1982** – Investigation of part of a small range of buildings outside the north wall of the castle was prompted by the seemingly imminent collapse of some of that range’s masonry. Limited excavation revealed a horseshoe-shaped structure, 2.5m by 1.4m inside mortar-bonded walls, believed to have been an oven or part of a bakery.¹⁰⁷
- **1995** – Short programme of excavation during September and October in advance of construction of a staircase against the north face of the main Tower. Evidence for an original staircase, now demolished to ground level, was noted on the site of the new staircase.¹⁰⁸
- **1997** – A new timber stair was installed in the tower turnpike stair to give access to an oak Viewing Gallery that was also installed in the same year on the third-floor level.
- **1998** – Lochleven Castle was re-scheduled
- **2011** – Three trenches were excavated in advance of the erection of new signs. A considerable amount of artefactual evidence was recovered from these small excavations including oyster shell, bottle glass, bone and pottery.¹⁰⁹
- **2015** – As part of the Dual Designation project, Lochleven Castle was removed from the List as category A building. The importance of the structure continues to be recognised through its designation as a scheduled monument.
- **2022** – Access to the castle was temporarily restricted as part of the High Level Masonry programme, which assesses the impact of climate change on sites as well as the scale of deterioration caused by a number of other factors, including the materials used in the building’s construction, its age and physical location.¹¹⁰
- **May 2023** – The castle re-opened to the public after inspections and necessary repairs were completed.

¹⁰⁶ NRS file DD27/1705.

¹⁰⁷ Lewis 1982, 33.

¹⁰⁸ Ewart and Stewart 1995, 100.

¹⁰⁹ Fox 2011, 154.

¹¹⁰ For more information: [Conservation works happening at our sites \(historicenvironment.scot\)](#) (accessed: 14 November 2023).

APPENDIX 2: ASSOCIATED ARTEFACTS

Objects in the collection of Historic Environment Scotland

A pair of small cannons is usually displayed at the entrance to the property (one of which is in storage at the time of writing (2025) due to its condition) appear to be 19th century in date, and according to HES Collections given by Kinross House where they had stood outside the entrance and placed on the island in 1971. According to family tradition the cannons were recovered from Loch Leven when it was partially drained in 1835, but this cannot be definitely verified.

Within the collection is also a tree stump which is a sawn section of the thorn tree stump believed to be standing at the time that Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned at Lochleven Castle. The upper surface of the stump is carved with the inscription: 'A Piece of Queen Mary's Thorn Tree Loch Leven 1849'. The stump was on display in the Birth Room at Edinburgh Castle and is currently in storage.¹¹¹

Objects in the collections of the National Museums Scotland.

Museum reference A.1905.824. Cabinet of oak, rosewood and ebony with rectangular panelling, carved masks, and ivory inlay of two Roman soldiers killing a bear, formerly in Lochleven Castle: Dutch, early 17th century.¹¹²

Museum reference H.MJ 57 Belt hook key chain with detachable key ring, and eight iron cabinet keys of various types, found in Loch Leven, Kinrossshire, 16th century. There is no way of knowing if these are associated with the castle.¹¹³

NMS hold five embroidered red wool panels supposedly from Lochleven Castle and made by Mary Queen of Scots. In fact, these were probably 17th century wall hangings for a room in the New House of Lochleven, belonging to the Earls of Morton, rather than the castle, that was part of the estate bought by Sir William Bruce before he built Kinross House.¹¹⁴

¹¹¹ [HES Tree Stump from Loch Leven Castle, Edinburgh - 3D model \(sketchfab.com\)](#)

¹¹² [NMS, Cabinet. \(Museum reference: A.1905.824\). \(nms.ac.uk\)](#)

¹¹³ [NMS, Belt hook key chain \(Museum reference: H.MJ 57\). \(nms.ac.uk\)](#)

¹¹⁴ [NMS, Wall hanging \(Museum reference: A.1921.68\). \(nms.ac.uk\)](#)