

A Romantic folly to Romantic folly: the Glenfinnan Monument reassessed

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ABSTRACT

The Glenfinnan Monument, now in the care of the National Trust for Scotland, is one of the principal symbols of Highland Jacobite culture. Set at the head of Loch Shiel, it marks the place at or near which the Jacobite standard was raised in 1745 to signal the start of the uprising led by Prince Charles Edward Stuart. Despite its fame as a Jacobite symbol, other aspects of the Monument have been overlooked, including the circumstances of its patronage by a local landowner with an instinct for excess, its history as a structure, and the fact that it was the work of one of the foremost Scottish architects of the first half of the 19th century, James Gillespie Graham. More speculatively, it is also argued here that its dramatic relationship to its topographical setting marks it out as a key monument of the Romantic period.

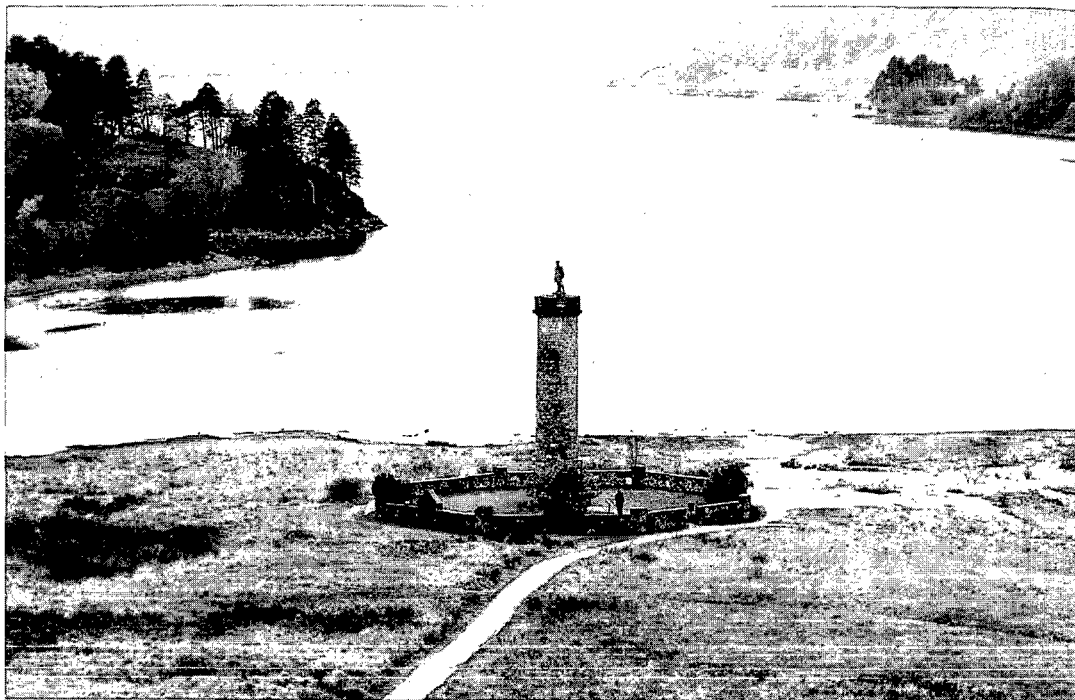
This paper emanates from a survey and research project carried out by the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) as part of its Listed Buildings Recording Programme.

INTRODUCTION

The Glenfinnan Monument is undoubtedly one of Scotland's most widely recognized structures and is regularly used as a national icon in tourist brochures and picture books. Although the building of the tower was completed in 1815, 70 years after the Jacobite standard was raised at Glenfinnan, it has become the principal architectural signifier of the Jacobite uprising. There has been much debate about whether the tower marks the exact spot of the raising of the Jacobite standard, but no conclusive evidence survives on this point. What can be said, however, is that the tower has been situated at the head of the loch with great sensitivity to the form of the surrounding landscape (illus 1). It uses the dramatic recession down the loch of the Sunart and Moidart hills as a visual framework, encapsulating the relationship of the man-made and the natural in a manner typical of the Romantic period.¹

The tower (illus 2) is a simple cylindrical structure some 18.3 m high, constructed of coursed rubble with dressed margins. There is a battered base-course, a Tudor Gothic doorway enclosed within a projecting square-headed surround (illus 3), and a crenellated parapet carried on moulded consoles. The external diameter of the structure is some 4 m at the base and 2.95 m above the base-course; it is 1.65 m internally. The tower encloses a spiral stair, lit by narrow slit

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ILLUS 1 The Glenfinnan Monument and Loch Shiel from east (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)

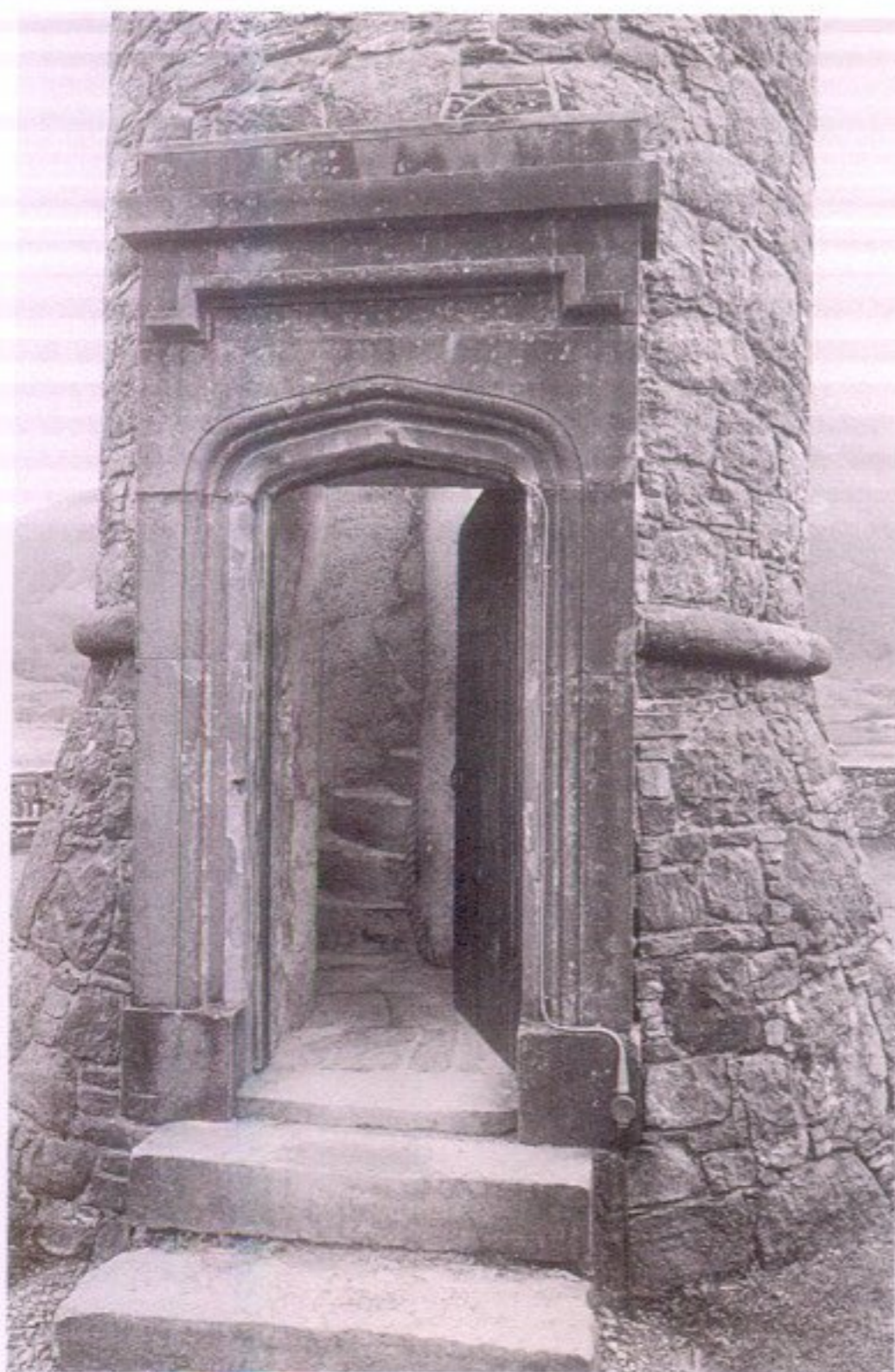
windows, which provides access to the platform on which there stands a statue of a Highlander. It is built on a slightly raised area of pebbled and sandy ground which is bounded to the east by an area of peaty marsh and to the west by the headwaters of the loch.

MACDONALD OF GLENALLADALE

A crucial but neglected aspect of the history of the Monument is its patronage. As recorded on a marble slab set into the perimeter wall (illus 4), it was built for the local laird, Alexander Macdonald of Glenalladale, but it also became a memorial to him as he died in Edinburgh on 4 January 1815 at the age of 28.² Previous accounts of the Monument refer to these simple facts, but within a collection of unpublished family documents there survives an extraordinary level of personal detail about him. This detail exists because at his death he had amassed debts of over £32,000 owed to over 80 different creditors.³ Some of the estate debts remained uncleared 10 years later,⁴ despite the selling off of part of the lands and the renunciation by his mother of her life-rent.⁵ The documents provide a valuable insight into Macdonald's personal life, allowing his patronage of the Monument to be characterized as the grand gesture of a flamboyant character who lived a prodigal life of unfettered consumption. In this he was very like his own chieftain, Macdonald of Clanranald, who dissipated his inheritance in London and was ultimately forced to sell off assets valued at over £200,000. Macdonald of Glenalladale bought from Clanranald the island of Shona along with Dalilea and other lands — perhaps to ensure that they remained within the Macdonald clan — thus contributing substantially to his own indebtedness.⁶



ILLUS 2 The Glenfinnan Monument from east, c 1900
(*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)



ILLUS 3 The Glenfinnan Monument: doorway
(*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
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One of his largest service-debts was to his solicitors, Coll Macdonald WS, to whom he owed £377 3s 10d at the time of his death. The list of creditors also shows that his own employees were sometimes not paid. His housekeeper, Mrs Margaret Macdonald, was owed £122 14s 5d, and a servant-maid, Betty Cameron, was due £21 17s. Two shepherds at Glenalladale, Angus and Alexander Macdougald, were due £63 and £23 respectively, while a ploughman, John Livingston, was owed £20, and a 'gardner', Robert Mackay, £40. On the other hand, he sought to provide credit of £10 with a Glasgow merchant on behalf of a Mrs McGregor, whose husband had died in a drowning accident.⁷ He was also celebrated locally in Gaelic poetry of the time, being the subject of a lament published in 1821 which refers to him poignantly as 'the head of the revered family/Who will be lingering in Edinburgh/In his winter-house and without the power of moving', and to his raising 'a stone and a tower . . . That were as memorials of gloom'.⁸ One of his creditors even wrote to him shortly before his death, saying 'I hope that you will soon extract yourself from being obliged to me or any other in this way by getting a Fair Lady by the hand that will set you upright'.⁹

In 1813 Bishop Chisholm of Lismore, to whom Macdonald owed over £2000, wrote to him of his reputation as 'a rake & one head & ears in debt'.¹⁰ Following a 'jaunt' to the Hebrides with Clanranald which 'did not increase your good name', he was exhorted by Bishop Chisholm to 'wash away past stains and secure . . . the grace & protection of your Creator for the remainder of your temporal existence'.¹¹ The caustic description of Macdonald as a 'rake' might have been due in part to his fathering an illegitimate child, but a number of bills also show that he purchased extremely large amounts of alcohol, even by the standards of the time; at a personal level some of his largest regular bills were from vintners.¹² From a vintner in Greenock, Archibald Campbell & Co, for example, he obtained on 21 May 1808 alcoholic drinks totalling £161 including a hogshead (50 gallons) of port-wine, alone costing £52 10s, 12 dozen bottles of sherry, 6 dozen of Madeira, 4 dozen of claret, 4 gallons of shrub (rum and fruit-juice), along with substantial quantities of 'Carcavellos', 'Lisbon', Burton ale and Brechin ale.¹³ This level of expenditure in a single day may have been due to the fact that he would have been 21 in 1808; he might well have purchased such a large amount of drink to celebrate his majority. The fact that it was purchased at Greenock suggests that it was destined for a party at his estate rather than at Edinburgh. It may have been this kind of gesture which led to his being described as 'amiable' by the Revd Archibald Clerk in the *New Statistical Account* of 1845. His sociable character is also borne out by bills for alcohol obtained in Edinburgh such as that for £61 7s run up at one merchant between 21 and 30 November 1809.¹⁴ His epicurean tastes are attested by various other bills, such as one for the delivery of dinner and various bottles of wine from Oman's Hotel in St Andrew Street to his lodgings, and at his death he owed an Edinburgh grocer, Mather Carnegie, £50 14s 10d.¹⁵ It may be in this context of conviviality that a John McG . . . was owed £2 'to carry him home'.¹⁶

Macdonald's love of clothes is also suggested by a range of bills and invoices. He had a tailor in London, John Cameron, who was a major creditor at his death, being owed £49 6s, and a tailor in Edinburgh, William Purves, was due £33 10s 9d.¹⁷ From 1813–14 he also ran up debts with John Christie, 'Breeches Maker' of South St Andrew Street, Edinburgh.¹⁸ These were for gentlemanly items such as white doeskin pantaloons, buckskin gloves, leather vests, 'shammy' [chamois] drawers and cashmere trousers. Other bills, including some from Glasgow tailors, include fashionable items such as a japanned hat with a cockade.¹⁹ From a jeweller in Edinburgh, Marshall & Sons, he was invoiced in 1809–10 for a range of items totalling £89 7s including a double-sided gold seal, a gold watch with a second hand costing £23 2s, 18 tumbler spoons, 18 teaspoons, two silver bottle-stands and a silver bread-basket — all engraved with his crest — and an amethyst brooch.²⁰ Nevertheless, this love of fine things was tempered with prosaic concerns

for the husbandry of his estates, shown, for example, by his ordering a turnip barrow and a double mouldboard plough in 1810, again items which had not been paid for before his death.²¹ There is also a range of relatively trifling but revealing documents. For example, in May 1810 he hired two violins for 5s but when he returned them in the same month he had to pay an additional 4s 6d for their repair.²² In 1813 and 1814 he failed to pay his annual subscriptions of £3 3s to the Argyllshire Meeting, leading to a stern letter from the organizers demanding immediate payment.²³ Other bills refer to prosaic matters such as the shoeing of his horse, his purchase of a second-hand saddle, and lists of the food provided at his lodgings.²⁴ Macdonald's sense of personal ceremony is underlined by his employment of a personal piper — John McGillivray — whom he had decked out in fine regalia with a kilt and tartan tunic with frogging.²⁵ He also owned a 'pleasure boat' which was repaired at Greenock in 1809 for £32 10s 5d.²⁶

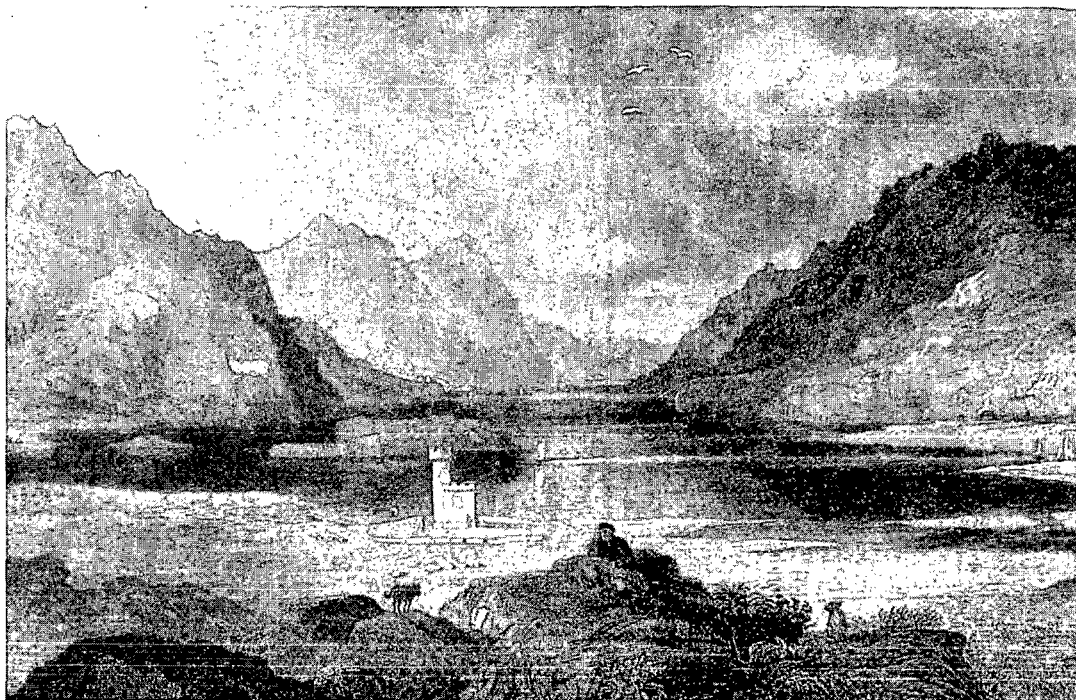
The point of listing these debts and expenses is not to indulge a prurient interest in his private affairs — although the astonishing level of historical detail which survives is interesting in its own terms — but because this material helps to characterize the nature of his patronage. There can be little doubt that Macdonald possessed the instincts for show and grand gesture made fashionable in the later 18th century and associated with the image of the Regency buck, an essential character in the Romantic firmament. Despite the earnest family and Jacobite loyalty which was the principal spur to his building the Monument, it would be naïve not to recognize that in building it he was on another level enhancing his own individual reputation. In a sense one detects here the image of an ancient cultural inheritance being appropriated to add a veneer of characterful exoticism to a foppish member of Edinburgh society.²⁷

Unlike grander landowners he lived in various lodgings and hotels when in Edinburgh as he had no permanent house there. Indeed, he paid separately on a daily basis for the use of a kitchen and drawing-room at Davidson's Lodgings, situated at 1 North St Andrew Street.²⁸ At the time of his premature death he was residing in rented rooms at 5 Princes Street, at the relatively unfashionable east end of the street. These lodgings were in the same block as Matthew Fortune's tavern which backed on to Learmonth's coach-yard and the 'meanest and most irregular' tenements of Canal Street and St Ann's Street.²⁹

Macdonald was evidently ill for much of the latter part of 1814, although the nature of his illness is not clear.³⁰ He employed the services of a Mr E Breham, 'surgeon-dentist' of 2 St David Street, from whom he ordered three bottles of a toothache analgesic; such medicines commonly contained opiates at this date.³¹ An 'apothecary' or pharmacist used by Macdonald and still owed money after his death was James Gardner, whose shop was next to the Assembly Rooms in George Street. Macdonald died on 4 January 1815, and although his death was recorded in the *Edinburgh Correspondent* dated 12 January 1815 it was merely listed along with a number of other deceased persons. He was buried in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh, on 6 January 1815, a simple inscribed wall-plaque, its inset now lost, marking the position of the grave.³² As the marble panel set into the perimeter wall at Glenfinnan describes, the Monument was also his own memorial.

THE MONUMENT AT GLENFINNAN

As with its patron, the Monument also has a more complicated history than has been recognized. The exposed character of its rugged masonry, roughly coursed and caulked, is a reflection of the aesthetics of the 1930s, as early photographic evidence (eg *illus 2*) shows that before that date it was rendered.³³ From the evidence of an engraving of Glenfinnan of c 1830 (*illus 4*), which is accurate in its representation of surviving features of the Monument, it is clear that the present

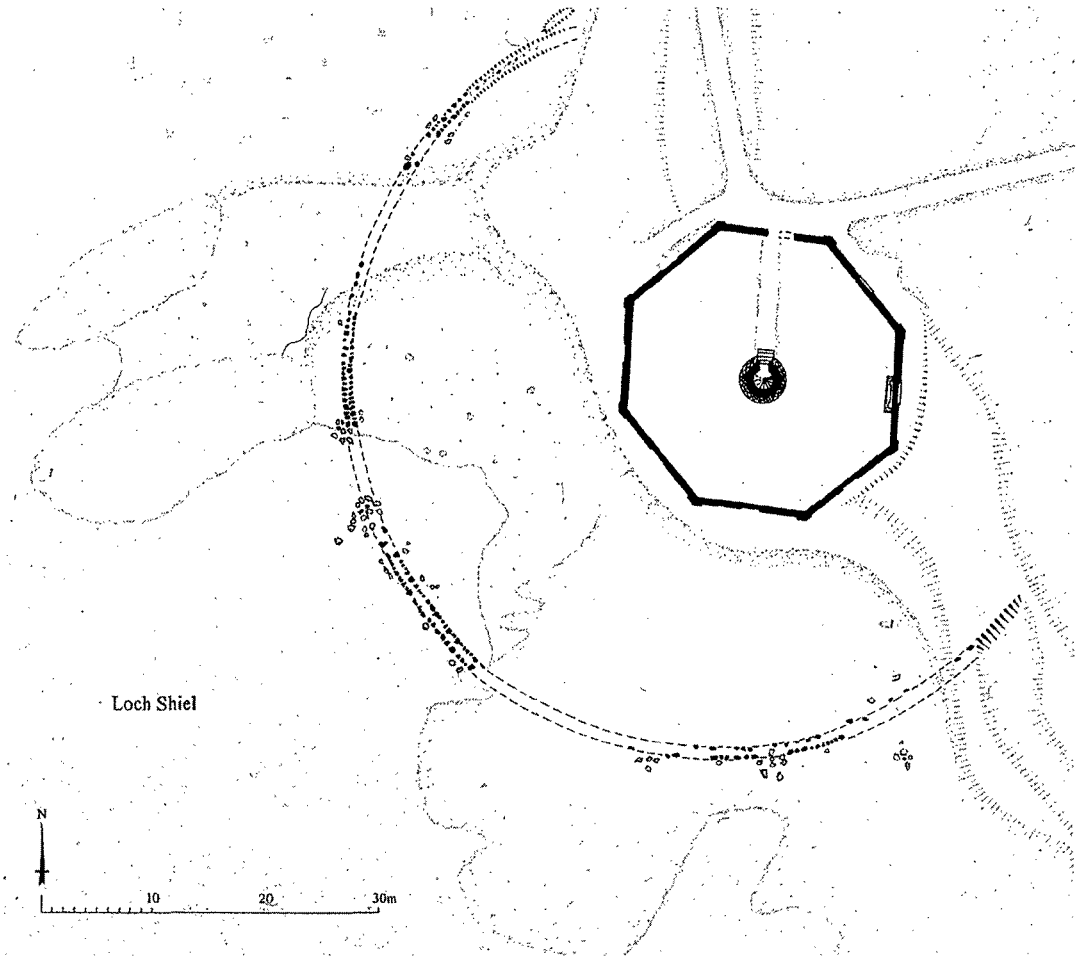


ILLUS 4 Engraving by Joseph Swan of the Glenfinnan Monument and the surrounding landscape. From Leighton 1837: *Swan's Views of the Lakes of Scotland*

octagonal perimeter wall is a secondary feature and that originally the Monument was enclosed by a low circular dyke.³⁴ Investigation on the ground shows that parts of the enclosure survive, and a ground survey by the Royal Commission has traced its line arcing around the tower towards the loch some 36 m from the centre of the structure (illus 5). Also evident on the ground is the palimpsest of rig-and-furrow field cultivation of the kind that is found extensively throughout Glenshiel and westwards along the road to Loch Eilt.

The engraving is also important in showing that abutting the tower to the west was a crenellated two-storey rectangular structure, evidently a bothy, known as the 'shooting-box'.³⁵ Interestingly, documents show that Alexander purchased a pair of double-barrel shotguns and a pair of pistols which were still not paid for at his death; presumably like many Highland lairds and tacksmen around 1800, he had a strong interest in field sports.³⁶ From the evidence of contemporaries such as Lt-Col Hawker, along with the more traditional sport of stalking, shooting duck — especially across water — was a very popular pastime around this period.³⁷ It is possible that the perimeter wall could well have functioned as a kind of permanent extended shooting butt. It might also have acted as a breakwater as the water level in the loch does vary considerably, contributing to the instability of the tower.

The primary form of the Monument was described as early as 1824 as like 'a cake house, without even the merit of containing cakes; and with a tower — tower is a profanation of such a word, since the whole building resembles a carpenter's mallet with the handle uppermost'.³⁸ A similarly negative view of the building was subsequently taken by another early commentator, who said 'It is a sort of tower, with a small house attached, displaying anything but taste in the architect, whoever he was, who unfortunately was employed to erect it; but even as it is, it has a

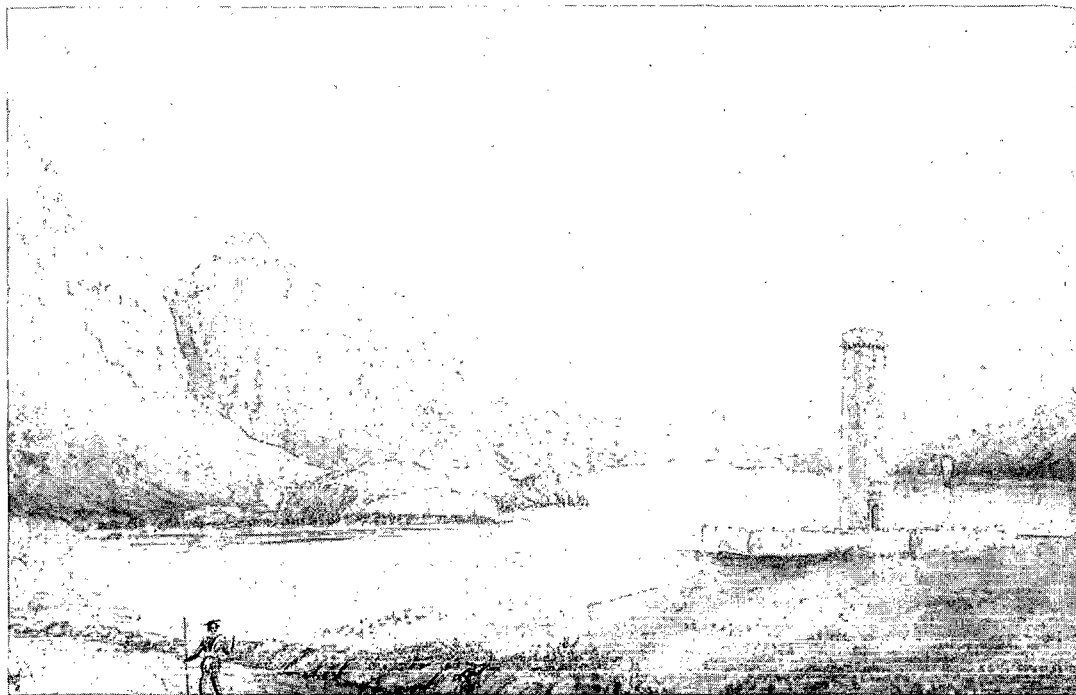


ILLUS 5 Plan of the Glenfinnan Monument (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland*
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striking effect, when associated with the romantic and unfortunate adventure it commemorates.¹³⁹ While the design of the Monument obviously did not meet with universal approval, the recognition of its poignant historical associations can be seen as typical of the Romantic period.

More specifically, the sentiments on the inscribed marble panel suggest that in its primary incarnation, the tower was essentially a private memorial to those who fell at Culloden. The inscription states:

on this spot Prince Charles Edward Stuart raised his Standard on the XIX day of August MDCCXLV when he made his daring and romantic attempt to recover a throne lost by the imprudence of his ancestors. This column was erected by Alexander Macdonald, Esquire, of Glenaladale, to commemorate the generous zeal, and the inviolable fidelity of his forefathers, and to the rest of those who fought and bled in that arduous and unfortunate enterprise. This pillar is now alas! also become the monument of its amiable and accomplished founder

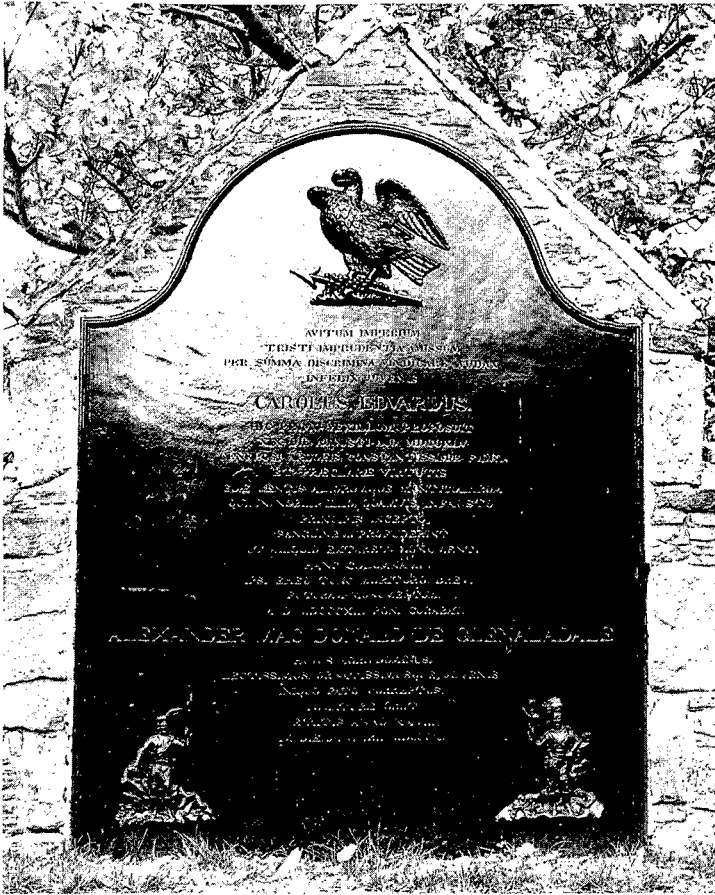


ILLUS 6 Anonymous watercolour of the Glenfinnan Monument, c 1830. Collection of the National Trust for Scotland. (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland © Crown copyright)

who, before it was finished, died in Edinburgh on the IV day of January MDCCCXV at the early age of XXVIII years.

Documents show that by 1824 the building was in disrepair, and required a range of work including new floors, door and window frames, along with shutters.⁴⁰ From these documents we can also determine that the bothy had two rooms, each with a fireplace, and that these rooms required new lath and plaster at this time. The staircase needed whitewashing, and the window frames were to be painted with two coats of white paint. This work was estimated for by John MacLean. Whether it was carried out is not clear, but in the early 1830s another phase of work was begun.⁴¹ This involved the demolition of the bothy abutting the tower and the construction of an octagonal perimeter wall. In demolishing the bothy, a functional purpose was removed and the symbolic role of the Monument was enhanced, its visual drama given fuller emphasis by reducing it to a simple columnar form. This phase, illustrated in an unpublished anonymous watercolour recently donated to the National Trust for Scotland (illus 6), was carried out by Angus Macdonald of Glenalladale.⁴²

Built into the perimeter wall at this time were three inscribed cast-iron panels (illus 7). These record, like the earlier marble panel, that the Monument commemorates Prince Charles Edward Stuart, Alexander Macdonald and his forefathers, and the dead of the Jacobite conflicts. It is here, perhaps, that we are seeing the transformation of the tower from a relatively private memorial to a public commemorative monument as the three cast-iron panels have parallel texts in Gaelic, Latin and English. It is recorded in the *New Statistical Account* (1845) that their



ILLUS 7 The Glenfinnan Monument: cast-iron panel set into perimeter wall. (Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland © Crown copyright)

romantic sentiments were ‘highly approved by the late Sir Walter Scott, and translated into Latin by the late celebrated Dr Gregory of Edinburgh’.⁴³ It is not fanciful to suggest that the use of parallel texts is reminiscent of the Rosetta Stone, where hieroglyphs, the demotic and Greek provided a key to the understanding of a distant culture.⁴⁴ The Rosetta Stone was discovered by Boussard in 1799 and it was on display in the Society of Antiquaries of London by 1802. Only in 1820 did Champollion decipher the texts, however, and at this time the fame of the Stone resonated throughout Europe. In Scotland it was heralded by the early Egyptologist Robert Hay, and by Thomas Young, a military surgeon who accompanied the Egyptian expedition led by Sir Ralph Abercromby that secured the Rosetta Stone for Britain after the capture of Alexandria in 1801.⁴⁵ The use of trilingual texts at Glenfinnan is such a distinctive gesture as to suggest some awareness of this discovery, and one that placed Gaelic on the same footing as Latin and English. It also denotes a will for Gaelic to be seen as more than the so-called language of savages, but a language appropriate to heroic sentiments, as in MacPherson’s *Poems of Ossian*.⁴⁶

The technical quality of the panels is evidently very high, and we might presume that they were obtained from an appropriate foundry based in central Scotland. It was possibly the same firm who produced a door-stop of a Highland Regiment soldier now in the collection of the Royal



ILLUS 8 Early 19th-century door-stop. Collection of the Royal Museum of Scotland (accession no HSS. 40).
(© Trustees of the National Museums of Scotland)

Museum of Scotland (illus 8); this is very similar to one of the martial figures on the Glenfinnan panels (illus 7; lower right).⁴⁷

The statue of a Highlander was added in this secondary phase (illus 9), the work of the self-taught Carlisle-born sculptor John Greenshields (c 1792–1838).⁴⁸ Interest in Highland dress had been made fashionable by Sir Walter Scott both before and after the visit of George IV to Scotland in 1822, which Scott orchestrated as a grand tartan pageant. This fashion was also inspired by the publication in 1831 of Logan's *The Scottish Gael*.⁴⁹ This described in detail for the first time (and before the better-known *Vestiarum Scotticum* of the Sobieski-Stewarts was published in 1842), the history and complexities of Highland dress before the proscriptive laws. Logan's book also included his own engravings showing Highland dress in detail, and given that there were virtually no other visual sources for Highland dress at this time, and the detail of the statue's dress and pose are so similar to the figures in Logan's frontispiece engraving (illus 10), it is very likely that Greenshields used Logan as his source.⁵⁰ Greenshields was much admired by Sir Walter Scott, as Scott's letters and Lockhart's biography show,⁵¹ and carved the well-known posthumous statue of him in Parliament Hall, Edinburgh.⁵² Given that Scott approved the text of the cast-iron panels, as described above, it is certainly possible that he could have recommended Greenshields as the sculptor of the Glenfinnan statue. With regard to the subject, the statue has



ILLUS 9 The Glenfinnan Monument: statue (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)



ILLUS 10 Engraving of two Highland Chiefs. From Logan 1831: *The Scottish Gael*. (*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)

been identified both as an archetypal Highland chief and as the Young Pretender. In the absence of compelling evidence either way, what can be said is that he is certainly dressed as a chief, with the feathered bonnet Logan identified as symbolic of that role. An oral tradition suggests that Greenshields used for his likeness a portrait in the possession of the strongly Jacobite Lockhart of Carnwath family, who lived close to his hometown of Carluke. It might be suggested that the portrait in question was that of George Lockhart of Carnwath (1673–1731).⁵³ This painting is in the collection of the National Galleries of Scotland, on loan from Major S F Macdonald Lockhart.⁵⁴ Painted by Sir John Baptiste de Medina in 1707, the facial characteristics and aspects of the pose are indeed reminiscent of the Glenfinnan figure.

As far as the overall form of the Monument is concerned, there is an extensive historical context for a columnar memorial of this type. In the broadest sense it goes back at least to Trajan's Column of the early second century AD. It was on Trajan's Column that Napoleon based his 1806 column in the Place Vendôme to commemorate Austerlitz. More specifically, however, the Nelson Monument on Calton Hill (illus 11) must surely have served as the immediate inspiration for the Glenfinnan Monument.⁵⁵ Begun as an up-ended stone telescope by the architect Robert Burn in 1807, the Nelson Monument was completed about 1814–16 with the addition of a castellated base by Thomas Bonnar, corresponding almost exactly with the years when Macdonald was living periodically in Edinburgh. Due to its conspicuous site on Calton Hill



ILLUS 11 The Nelson Monument, Calton Hill, Edinburgh c 1814. Anonymous engraving

it must have been seen by Macdonald on numerous occasions. In visual terms, its situation on a dramatic axis running down Waterloo Place and the east end of Princes Street, framed by the surrounding buildings, bears a striking resemblance to the way the Glenfinnan Monument is set on an axis running down Loch Shiel, enclosed by mountains on each side. Given what we know of Macdonald, moreover, it is easy to conjecture that he relished the grand gesture of commemorating a Scottish and indeed Highland heroism in such a splendidly Romantic fashion.

It was also the time when the deeds of a fictitious Scottish hero were published across Europe in MacPherson's *Poems of Ossian*.⁵⁶ This was said to be Napoleon's favourite book and was published in most European languages soon after it appeared in English. In this cultural context, as a Jacobite Highlander Macdonald may well have felt that the Young Pretender deserved commemoration in Scotland just as much as an English Admiral, despite the fact that Scots as well as English died at Trafalgar. It was also at this time that *Ascanius* (1812) was published, a book which celebrated the 'miraculous adventures' of the Young Pretender and enhanced the romantic image of the Highland clans.⁵⁷ Taking account of its references to Macdonald's forefathers in the inscribed panels, who contributed such an important part in the 1745 Uprising, the building of the Monument should also be seen as a direct act of homage to the Macdonalds as a clan. It was Alexander Macdonald's grandfather who had accommodated the Young Pretender in his house the night before the standard was raised at Glenfinnan, and a Macdonald who helped the arduous escape to Skye after the calamity of Culloden Moor. It is perhaps appropriate that where the Jacobite Uprising began — at Glenfinnan — there is a towered building, but where it ended — Culloden — there are stones inscribed with the names of the clans, again underlining the importance of the Monument as a physical signifier of the

Jacobite cause, one that can be encompassed visually in a single tourist photograph in a way that the Culloden moorland cannot.

THE ARCHITECT OF THE GLENFINNAN MONUMENT

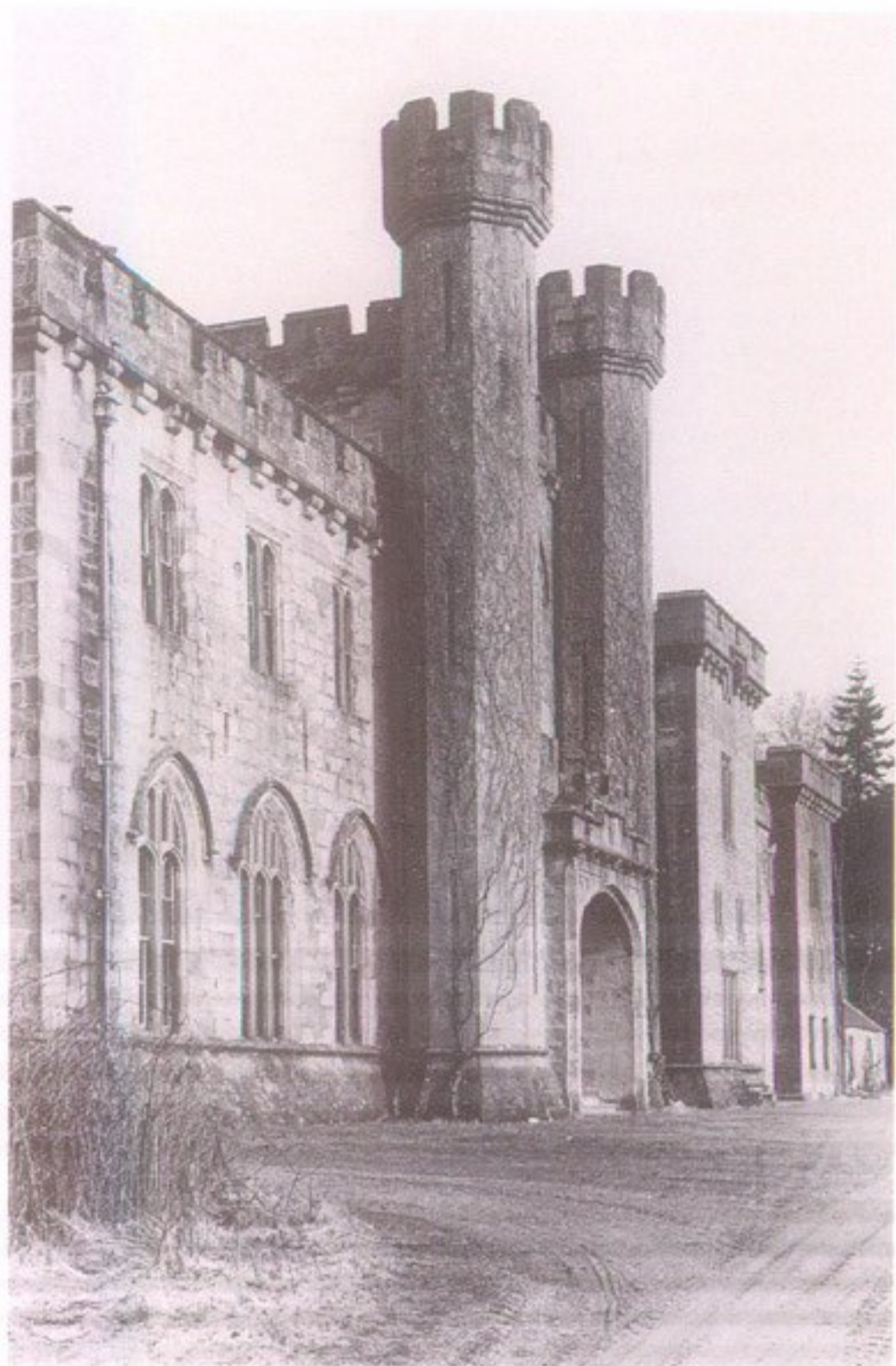
No previous study has suggested the name of the architect of the Glenfinnan Monument. Some commentators have suggested that it was the work of an unknown local builder. There is also an oral tradition that its builder — though not its designer — was a Fortwilliam mason named William Miller.⁵⁸

In documents in the Scottish Record Office, however, among the list of debts of Alexander Macdonald, is the sum of £30 9s owed in 1811 to 'James Gillespie, architect'. Undoubtedly, this reference is to one of the foremost architects of the first half of the 19th century in Scotland, James Gillespie Graham (1776–1855).⁵⁹ He became Gillespie Graham only after his father-in-law died in 1825; documents show he was occasionally referred to as plain James Gillespie well into the 1820s. There is a strong Macdonald connection as Gillespie Graham was essentially the Macdonald clan architect on Skye and North Uist, having made inroads into the West Highlands as early as 1802 when he built Achnacarry for Cameron of Lochiel. As Macaulay has shown, he worked primarily on Skye and North Uist in the first decade of the century. He also built Arisaig House, a chapel and a schoolhouse for Alexander Macdonald's friend and chieftain, Macdonald of Clanranald.⁶⁰ Incidentally, he would have passed through Glenfinnan on his way to Skye had he sailed to Armadale on Skye from Mallaig, as is probable. He is also recorded as having obtained materials from nearby Fort William when he was working on Skye.⁶¹ It is possible that Macdonald met Gillespie Graham in Edinburgh, and would certainly have been aware of his St Mary's RC Cathedral, Edinburgh, built in 1813–14. This building was acclaimed when completed and launched Gillespie Graham's career outside of the West Highland area on which he had largely depended for his early commissions.

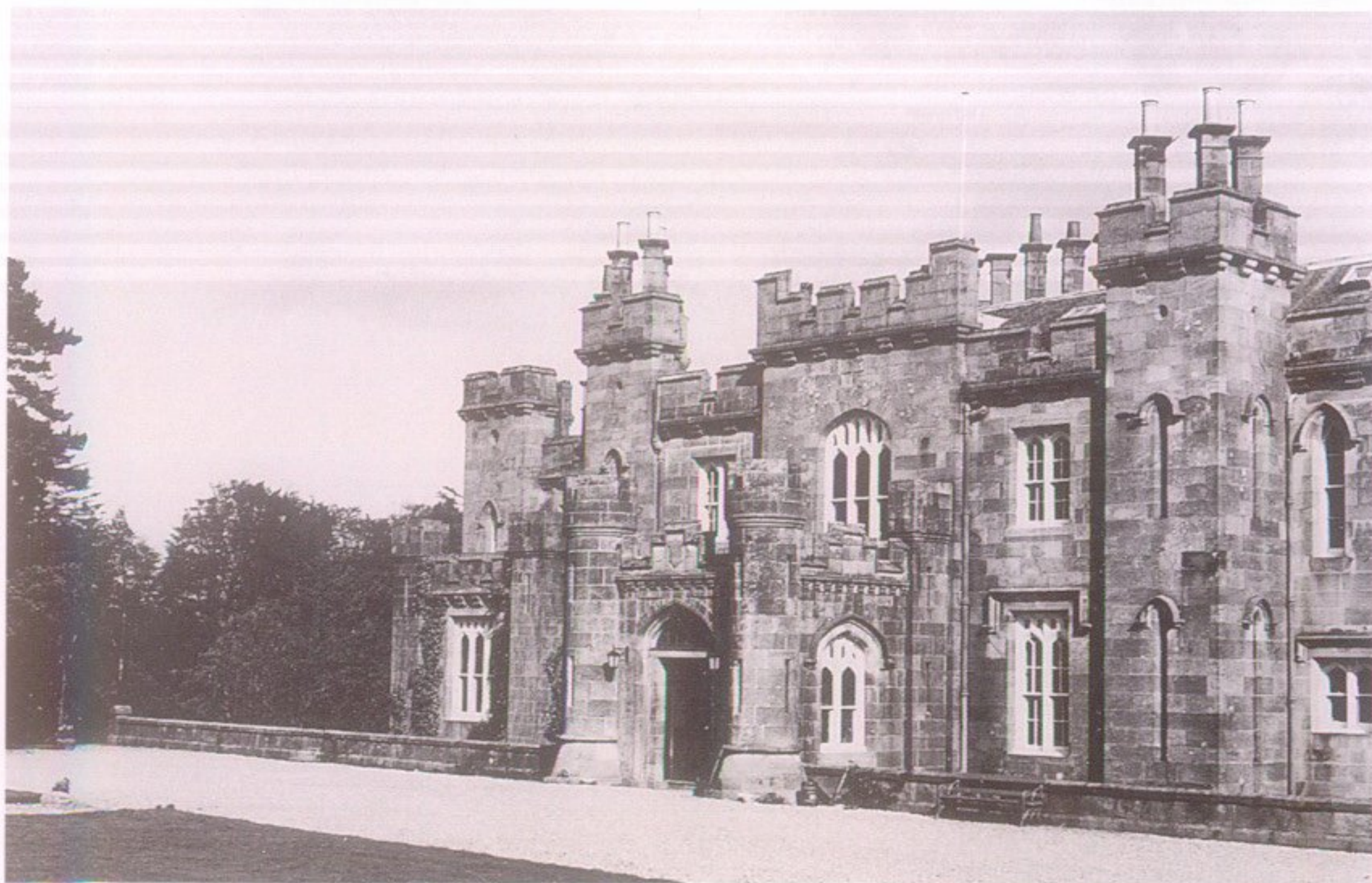
In two houses he designed on Skye — Sleat Manse and Armadale Castle (illus 12), along with other buildings of this period such as Torrisdale Castle in Kintyre (illus 13) — it is possible to see the same diagnostic features. These include battered plinths, roll-moulded string-courses, slit windows and crenellated parapets, as well as other Tudor Gothic details typical of his work at this period. If the stair turrets at Armadale and Torrisdale are taken separately from the rest of these buildings, indeed, it can be seen how very similar they are to the tower at Glenfinnan, which is effectively a stair-turret in the round. Another work — ironically, one of the most recognizable monuments in Scotland — can therefore be added to the canon of one of its best-known architects. Taking account again of the surrounding topography of the Monument, the same perceptive sense of the importance of the relationship between a building and its site shown by Gillespie Graham at, for example, Liberton Church, Edinburgh (1815), and later at Cambusnethan Priory near Motherwell (1819), can be seen at Glenfinnan. The asymmetry of the original Glenfinnan design, with the bothy set emphatically to one side of the tower, is a diminutive version of the kind of irregular composition Gillespie Graham used, for example, at Culdees Castle in Perthshire, completed shortly before the Monument was built. The medieval veneer provided by the detailing of the Monument also conveys a kind of non-specific antiquity which was obviously considered appropriate to its commemorative function.

THE MONUMENT IN ITS LANDSCAPE

The appropriation of the landscape as a visual framework for the Monument is undoubtedly the reflection of a profoundly Picturesque sensibility within the terms defined by commentators of



ILLUS 12 Armadale Castle, Skye: entrance front from south
(*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)



ILLUS 13 Torrisdale Castle, Kintyre: entrance front
(*Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical
Monuments of Scotland* © Crown copyright)

the period such as Gilpin, who said of the Scottish landscape, ‘what makes the first impression on the picturesque eye, are those vast tracts of land, which we meet with entirely in a state of nature’.⁶² Glenfinnan was off the main route of Highland tourists in the later 18th century, being beyond the well-trodden path defined as the ‘petit tour’,⁶³ and an inn was only built there at the same time as the Monument.⁶⁴ Despite this it became a well-known site in the tourist books of the earlier 19th century.⁶⁵

Nevertheless, the relationship of the Monument to its landscape has not been discussed in previous studies and is outside the terms of reference of historians of landscaping such as Tait.⁶⁶ Its situation on low ground, and its dramatic revelation from a turn in the road running around the head of the loch, provide a characteristically Picturesque ‘prospect’.⁶⁷ It has been carefully situated so that it demands to be viewed from a position, or ‘station’ in the language of the period, which places it at the centre of the succession of ziggurat-like mountains.⁶⁸ That it achieves this is demonstrated very strongly by the fact that published photographs almost invariably show it from this angle. It is in this sense that it can be seen as an architectural folly, performing an eye-catching, vista-closing function within the landscape. Its particular situation is predicated on the unusually symmetrical character of the topography to each side of the loch; the tower is centred on the distant convergence of the mountains around Loch Shiel. The widely publicized views of those who argue that the Monument does not mark the exact position of the raising of the Jacobite standard are applying largely inappropriate criteria. Attestable evidence does not survive on where exactly the standard was raised in any case. The Monument has to be considered in terms of the aesthetic and historical context of the period in which it was built, not as though it were intended as a kind of Jacobite trigonometry point. Although it has not before been recognized as such, it is arguably one of the great landscape monuments of the Romantic period in British architecture.

What also provides the Monument with a more profound significance within the Romantic aesthetic is the sense of nostalgia and loss conveyed by its valedictory function as a commemorator of the dead, a cenotaph. The heralding of the virtues of patriarchal allegiance which it conveys, so idealistically conveyed in Dorothy Wordsworth’s journal of her Highland tour with William Wordsworth and Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1803,⁶⁹ reached its literary apotheosis in *Ossian* and is a constant theme in the novels of Scott. This ideal celebrates feudal fealty, sacrifice rather than stratagem (as seen at Culloden), straightforwardness rather than subtlety, and uncritical loyalty to leader-figures.⁷⁰ This myth of the Highlands still has resonance today. It is no exaggeration to see the Glenfinnan Monument as both a physical and historical cipher in the construction of a Jacobite identity.⁷¹

In conclusion, therefore, the Glenfinnan Monument and the junction of the domestic and untamed landscape which it marks can be seen as providing — perhaps as much as any other monument of the Romantic period in Scotland — a vantage-point of the type described by Burke as typically Picturesque, offering visual succession, vastness and infinity.⁷² It appropriates the landscape in the same way as any architectural folly engages its natural surroundings as part of its idiom. It is a spirited elegy on Culloden and its aftermath. It also memorializes the folly of Alexander Macdonald’s youthful excess, and the romantic instincts which inspired its construction both as a physical entity and as a focus for historical memories of loss.

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Fuller illustrative records of the Glenfinnan Monument are available for consultation at RCAHMS (National Monuments Record of Scotland), 16 Bernard Terrace, Edinburgh EH8 9NX. All material generated by RCAHMS is Crown copyright.

NOTES

- 1 Womack (1989, 63), quotes as an exemplar the following verse from 1777: 'the contrast well displays,/ Here snows appear midst Ben's untrodden ways,/ While sephyr[sic] play along the fruitful plain.'
- 2 The marble slab was originally set above the doorway and was moved to its present position in 1964 (National Trust for Scotland file CF/64/G7). It has not been possible to determine the cause of Alexander Macdonald's death; the entry in the Old Parochial Register merely records that he was buried on 6 Jan 1815 'in his own tomb'. At his death he was residing at 5 Princes Street, Edinburgh. His grave is in Greyfriars Churchyard, Edinburgh; the inscribed marble panel of the wall-set funerary-slab is lost and only the rectangular sandstone surround survives. It was inscribed 'Sacred to the memory of Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale, who died 4th Jan. 1815, aged 28 years. This stone is erected by his disconsolate mother, Catherine MacGregor.' The slab is included in Brown (1867, 123). His funeral expenses included, along with undertaking costs and refreshments for the wake, the sum of £4 for a 'marble cutter' (SRO GD 243/4/12.12). Glenalladale and Glenaladale are both used as spellings and the former is generally used here, except where usage follows original or early sources.
- 3 SRO GD 243/4/12.12. This gives the list of Glenalladale's debts at Whit Sunday 1815 as £32,119 3s 1d.
- 4 SRO GD 243/4/2.6.
- 5 SRO GD 243/4/7. This relates that Glenalladale's Trustees 'soon found that debts were due by the deceased to a very large amount, to discharge which they found it necessary to dispose not only of the personal property but also of a part of the heritable estate.'
- 6 SRO GD 243/4/2.4; GD 243/4/2.9; GD 243/4/8; GD 243/4/12.16. See also Macdonald & Macdonald (1904, vol 3, 271–2). The lands of Dalilea cost £8960 and the island of Shona cost £6100. Many West Highland estates were temporarily buoyed up by favourable prices for kelp in the early years of the 19th century, but these fell after the end of the Napoleonic Wars. For a history of the Macdonalds of Clanranald, see Macdonald & Watts (1996).
- 7 SRO GD 243/4/3.8.
- 8 *Urain le Raoghall Donullach an Ardnis, Arasaig* (Inverness 1821), 61. I am grateful to Hugh Cheape for providing me with this reference. The reference to 'a stone' could be of relevance to the inscribed rock at NGR NM 9038 8096 which has been the subject of recent publicity in connection with arguments about the exact position at which the Jacobite standard was raised. If the inscription had been made under the patronage of Alexander Macdonald, it would help to undermine the somewhat simplistic view that the Monument is in the 'wrong' place.
- 9 SRO GD 243/4/5.12: a letter dated 24 Dec 1814 from James MacAlpin, contractor.
- 10 SRO GD 243/4/11.4. The full sum of the debt to Bishop John Chisholm was £2315 7s at 24 Jan 1815. For the description of Macdonald as a rake, see note 11.
- 11 SRO GD 243/4/11.1. In a letter dated 28 Jan 1813, Bishop Chisholm of Lismore wrote: 'I was informed yr jaunt along with Clan[rana]ld did not increase your good name in the long islands &c. [Hebrides] A rake & one head & ears in debt are names that have been bestowed on you however all that is past. I wd

fain hope you have courage enough to bear what has been falsely reported of you and sense enough & religion to repent for what you know to be true. Begin this year by a determined resolution to do what is sufficient to wash away past stains and secure you the grace & protection of your Creator for the remainder of your temporal existence.'

- 12 SRO GD 243/4/2.19; GD 243/4/2.22. A list and valuation of £26 15s 9d was made of his clothes after his death, for which see GD 243/4/12.10.
- 13 SRO GD 243/4/6.
- 14 SRO GD 243/4/6. The vintner was Inglis of Edinburgh. The bill is addressed to Macdonald at South Castle Street, Edinburgh.
- 15 SRO GD 243/4/6.
- 16 SRO GD 243/4/3.26.
- 17 SRO GD 243/4/2.19; GD 243/4/2.22.
- 18 SRO GD 243/3/16.
- 19 SRO GD 243/4/6.
- 20 SRO GD 243/4/6.
- 21 SRO GD 243/4/3/6. These items were obtained from the Leith Cart Wheel Manufactory for £5 18s 6d in April 1810.
- 22 SRO GD 243/4/6. The bill, from William Whyte, 17 South St Andrew Street, Edinburgh, is dated 16 May 1810.
- 23 SRO GD 243/4/3.10. 'Inveraray, 2 Dec. 1814 — Sir, I request you order immediate payment of your October Meeting Subscription for 1813. Your subscription for 1814 is also now due. — £3 3s each year. I am Sir, your ob. servt. D M Campbell.'
- 24 SRO GD 243/4/3 and GD 243/4/6.
- 25 An aquatint portrait of John MacGillivray by A Kay survives (Cheape 1998). MacGillivray is also referred to in a Gaelic poem entitled 'The Black One of the Glens', for which see note 26. I am grateful to Hugh Cheape for bringing MacGillivray to my attention.
- 26 SRO GD 243/4/6. It is not clear if this is the galley referred to in 'The Black One of the Glens', a Gaelic eulogy on Glenalladale by Alexander MacKinnon of Morar (1770–1814), as 'Like a royal steed over the seas/Moving out from the land with sails of dappled silk/A royal emblem of Scotland' (MacKenzie (1877, 346). I am indebted to Hugh Cheape for this reference. In a letter of 4 Nov 1817 from John Macdonald of Borrodale to Bishop Chisholm of Lismore, he refers to a fatal accident involving Macdonald's boat — which he describes as a 'wherry' — when it sank on the way to Eigg (SRO GD 243/4/11.9).
- 27 In the same way that, in a different context, aspects of oriental culture were pillaged to convey western ideas of exoticism, for which see Mannsaker (1990).
- 28 SRO GD 243/4/6. For the address of Davidson's Lodgings, see the *Post Office Annual Directory 1819–20* (Edinburgh 1819, 113). Bills for lodgings, food and drink show his route to or from the south to have been via Inveraray, Callander and Stirling.
- 29 Cowan (1908, 137–54), quoting a description of 1817.
- 30 SRO GD 243/4/11.2: In a letter of 16 August 1814 Bishop Chisholm says, 'I was exceedingly sorry to hear that your health has not been but poorly of late — but I trust now improved — I complain of my own but I trust if I got near the Strathpeffer watters [sic] I shall be the better of them'. Macdonald is said to be 'dangerously ill' in a document dated 22 Sept 1814 (SRO GD 243/4/3.25).
- 31 SRO GD 243/4/3.19. This refers to 'antiodontalgic', a word used by Coleridge (a consumer of narcotics) in 1817, for which see *The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles* (Oxford 1933, 1st vol, 77), which was on one level a toothache analgesic. Most of Macdonald's bills for medicines are unspecified, but he ordered three bottles of antiodontalgic on one occasion. He also used the services of a Mr E Breham, a 'surgeon-dentist' whose address is given as 2 St David Street in the *Post Office Annual Directory 1819–20* (Edinburgh 1819), 75. The writer Thomas de Quincey first began taking opium following a bout of toothache (de Quincey 1821). An Edinburgh-based study of opium at this period is J Leigh, *An Experimental Inquiry into the Properties of Opium, and Its Effect on Living Subjects*

- (Edinburgh 1786); see also Maehle 1995. I am indebted to Kate Bishop of the Wellcome Institute for the History of Medicine for information on the likely constituents of toothache remedies at this period.
- 32 SRO GD 243/4/11.7: Bishop Chisholm appears to have conducted the burial, as he refers in a letter to John Macdonald of Borrodale regarding Alexander Macdonald's mother, to having 'stretched her son on the cold bed, and parted from her in Edinburgh.' The burial date of 6 Jan comes from the entry in the Old Parochial Register. See also note 2.
- 33 See, for example, NMRS photographs IN/4276 and IN/4278, dating from the 1920s. They also show that the doorway to the tower was bricked up at this time. The Monument was restored in 1938 after its transfer to the care of the National Trust for Scotland, for which see NTS files EM/38/FE, EM/38/JU, CF/46-49 and CF/53/G8. The wrought-iron gate in the north face of the perimeter wall was made by Gray & Sons of George Street, Edinburgh, in 1966.
- 34 Painted by John Fleming and engraved by Joseph Swan, and published in *Swan's Views of the Lakes of Scotland* (1837, vol ii, opp 125). It is likely that the painting itself was executed some years before 1837.
- 35 MacCulloch (1939, 199-200). The upper floor of the bothy was entered from the round tower, this opening having been blocked when the bothy was removed. The lintel of this doorway, and the blocking, are still visible. The present doorway to the tower was almost certainly the original doorway to the bothy. It is reused in its present position; the RCAHMS survey shows that its lintel is above the level of the cill of the blocked doorway to the upper floor of the bothy, and stone packing is clearly visible around the surround.
- 36 SRO GD 243/4/3. He also had a pair of 'Highland pistols' repaired and engraved with his crest, for which see GD 243/4/6. An undated document (GD 243/4/12.25) refers to 'sporting arrangements'. Pittock (1991, 4), refers to the Stuart interest in hunting as a means to heroic status as stewards of nature.
- 37 Hawker (1833, 199-204).
- 38 MacCulloch (1824, 357) praised Macdonald for his erection of the monument, but went on to say 'It is very hard upon poor Scotland, that its money should be thus spent in blotting and deforming its land with such monstrosities; of which it is full from one end to the other; from Nelson's Pillar on the Calton Hill, thought that is not the worst, to the genealogical tree which I have either seen or dreamt of. Are we never to acquire a decent portion of architectural taste; yes, when the Parthenon is built; I hope so. A pillar, a cairn, even an obelisk, (and let any one invent a meaner object if he can,) would have been preferable to this unlucky mallet. Surely it must be the same Ostrogoth who has covered the country with turrets, and tower-lings and turretinis, who has intermixed castles, abbeys, churches, houses, Greek, Gothic, Chinese, Flandrikan, no one knows what, all in the same building: for it is as impossible that there should be two architects of this calibre, as that there should be two men (as the judge wisely remarked) called Richard Tittery Gillies. Let him repent as fast as he can.'
- 39 Leighton (1837, 128).
- 40 SRO GD 243/4/4.18-20. The work was estimated to cost £12 16s 6d.
- 41 Anderson & Anderson (1834, 302).
- 42 *New Stat Acc*, 1845, vol vii, 148: 'At Glenfinnan, a tower with apartments attached was erected by the late amiable and much lamented Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale, in commemoration of the event which took place there in 1745. The inscription, which he did not live to see placed, was written by Dr Donald Maclean, already alluded to, highly approved by the late Sir Walter Scott, and translated into latin by the late celebrated Dr Gregory of Edinburgh. The relative and successor of Glenaladale, Angus Macdonald, Esq. has of late improved this monument, having removed the buildings annexed, so that the tower stands singly on the plain, and erected on the summit a statue of the Prince, to whom the gentlemen of his family were ardent adherents from the day of his landing.' This text was written in 1838. Angus Macdonald became a member of the Highland and Agricultural Society of Scotland in 1827. See also Mackay (nd, 13).
- 43 *New Stat Acc*, 1845, vol. vii, 148. Dr Gregory is described in the *Edinburgh Post Office Directory* for 1831-2 as 'Secretary to the Society of Antiquaries'. Grierson (1937, vol xii, 23) notes that Gregory was a member of the Glasgow Ossianic Society, the Royal Society of Antiquaries of the North at

- Copenhagen and Secretary of the Iona Club. The inscription is described as ‘from the pen of Dr Gregory, and the very last, we believe, which that gentleman has written’ in *The Scots Magazine, and Edinburgh Literary Miscellany*, new series, vol. lxxxv, pt 1 (Jan 1820), 37.
- 44 I am grateful to Hugh Cheape for bringing his views on this matter to my attention, and to Iain Gordon Brown for discussing with me the cultural impact in England and Scotland of the discovery of the Rosetta Stone. The Well of the Heads by Loch Oich, built in 1812 by Col McDonnell of Glengarry, has inscriptions in Latin, English, French and Gaelic, and may also have been an inspiration for the use of parallel texts at Glenfinnan.
- 45 Young named his house in Peeblesshire ‘Rosetta’, RCAHMS (1967, vol 2, 305).
- 46 J MacPherson, *The Poems of Ossian* (London 1773). See also Thomson (1987) and Pittock (1991, 73–9).
- 47 Royal Museum of Scotland accession no. HSS.40.
- 48 For information on Greenshields see Gunnis (1951, 180). The statue is set diagonally on its plinth, presumably to allow the figure to be larger than an axial positioning would allow.
- 49 For George IV’s wearing of tartan, see Norman (1997, 5–15).
- 50 Interestingly, according to Scott, Greenshields carved a statue of the King ‘with only an indifferent print to work by’. (Grierson 1936, vol ix, 97).
- 51 Scott says in a letter to Lord Elgin, ‘Mr Greenshields seems to me to be one of those remarkable men who must be distinguished in one way or a nother . . . Like all heaven-born geniuses, he is ignorant of the rules which have been adopted before him’. (Grierson 1936, vol ix, 97–8).
- 52 For information on this see Brown (1987, 37).
- 53 See Szechi (1995). Greenshields’s awareness of the portrait of George Lockhart of Carnwath might have been provided by the Lockharts of Cambusnethan, from whom he obtained blocks of freestone, for which see *Naval and Military Magazines* (nd, vol iv, 43).
- 54 National Galleries of Scotland ref PGL 293.
- 55 John Hume has pointed out to me (verb comm) that there are some visual similarities between the Glenfinnan Monument and the lighthouse built in 1789 on North Ronaldsay, Orkney, for which see Hume (1977, 249).
- 56 Butler (1988, 44–5) has pointed out an important subtext to MacPherson’s writing in underlining the anti-metropolitan theme running through *Ossian*. She refers to the slight to Scotland administered in 1756 when, during the new war with France, the largely pro-Hanoverian Scottish gentry were not allowed to arm, and argues that MacPherson emphasizes the heroic and warlike character of Scotsmen, along with their claims to an ancient and independent cultural inheritance. Pittock (1991, 75) refers to Jacobitism as ‘alienated, revolutionary, nationalist, and daring and dangerous on a personal level.’
- 57 See also *Ascanio o El Jova Aventurero* (Madrid nd). The author has been shown a copy of this book which has an inscription of the 1820s in the flyleaf detailing the text of Dr Gregory’s text for the cast-iron panels at Glenfinnan, underlining these associations.
- 58 Information from Hugh Cheape.
- 59 SRO GD 243/4/2.2. Given the very strong stylistic similarities between the Glenfinnan Monument and other buildings by Gillespie Graham there can be little doubt that he was employed to design the Monument. There is no physical or documentary evidence to suggest that he worked on any other building for Glenalladale. Sundries were furnished to ‘Glenfinnan House’ in 1813 to a cost of £53 15s 8d. 4000 slates were also ordered from ‘Balicholish’ [Ballachulish] at this time, but their use is not recorded (SRO GD 243/4/5.9). For information on Gillespie Graham and his work see Colvin (1978, vol 2, 355–9) and Macaulay (nd; 1975a; 1975b; 1997).
- 60 I am indebted to James Macaulay for this information, contained in a letter to me dated 13 Aug 1998. Macaulay dates Gillespie Graham’s work at Arisaig to about 1810.
- 61 Macaulay (1975a, 5).
- 62 Gilpin (1789, 111). For more information on Gilpin’s thought see Barbier (1963, 98–147).
- 63 See Andrews (1989), Moir (1964), Ousby (1990, 130–94) and Gold & Gold (1995).

- 64 *Notes upon the accounts dated March 1815 to 1824, of Alexander Macdonald as factor to the late Alexander Macdonald of Glenaladale*, MS 1.13, Clan Donald Lands Trust, Skye, which includes accounts relating to the building of the inn in 1814. Leighton (1837, n. 24, 126), describes it as ‘One small public house, it cannot be called an Inn.’ See also SRO GD 243/4/5.13, an account for sundries on the round tower and joinery on the inn, carried out in 1813–14 by James MacAlpin of Corpach for £77 17s 5d.
- 65 Access by rail was only provided with the completion of the construction of the Glenfinnan Viaduct in 1901.
- 66 Tait (1980).
- 67 Gilpin considered that Edinburgh Castle should be viewed from directly below the rock (see Andrews 1989, 207, 219). When John Stoddart visited Rosslin Castle with Sir Walter Scott, he waded into the river Esk in order to maximize the visual effect of being as low as possible in relation to the building. It is this viewpoint which Alexander Nasmyth used when he drew the castle on his visit with Robert Burns in 1789 (Holloway & Errington 1978, fig 74). For a discussion of viewpoints see Hussey (1927, 1–17 & 109); also Barrell (1972).
- 68 Barbier (1963, 124), quoting Gilpin, refers to the compositional value of a contracted valley: ‘The sides of the valley may be high, or low; rocky or woody; smooth or full of jutting promontories; and these variations . . . may play into each other with a thousand interchanges.’
- 69 Dorothy Wordsworth in her journal quotes William Wordsworth’s poem about Rob Roy (Walter 1997, 187–90).
- 70 Brewer (1997, 658); Hook (1987, vol 2, 307–21).
- 71 It is interesting to note the recent arguments in favour of most ‘Jacobite’ glass being pastiche (Francis 1994; Nicholson 1996). Pittock (1991) deals with related issues but does not consider material evidence in any detail.
- 72 Burke (1757) in Boulton (1987, 137–43).

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