Strome, the castle of Loch Carron: role and history

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ABSTRACT

Few major castles of the western seaboard of the Highlands and Islands have received less attention than Strome on Loch Carron. This essay attempts to rectify this by looking at its history through pursuing certain themes, under subheadings. It begins by examining the castle's importance, looking at its location and function in which symbolism and, most probably, economics played essential parts. The article then provides a record of who held the castle from 1472, the year it is first mentioned in written sources. It shows that there were times when its traditional owners, the MacDonalds, sometimes had legal title but continued, as far as can be inferred, in occupation, either directly or through constables, during periods when the castle had been sequestrated by the crown or granted to others. This reflects that the crown and its lieutenants saw Strome to be a powerful base which, in recalcitrant hands, had to be neutralised. At the same time, it shows the value placed upon it by the MacDonalds, first of Lochalsh and later of Glengarry. The analysis then moves to the castle's military role, first by looking at its place in the MacDonalds' strategy to retain control of their lands in these western areas of the earldom of Ross, then moving on to its more immediate place in warfare when it was attacked. It concludes with the confrontation with the Mackenzies of Kintail, when, despite a tenacious defence, the MacDonalds were compelled to cede the castle at the end of the 16th century. That it was not then simply taken over by the Mackenzies is significant: the castle and MacDonald hegemony of Lochcarron had come to be inseparable. Its destruction was a Mackenzie imperative and so they blew up part of it with gunpowder.[1]

OVERVIEW: THE CASTLE AND THE MACDONALDS

Strome first appears in the historical record only in 1472 (*ALI*: 162–4, no. 102; 305) and though it is clearly older, archaeology has not yet established an approximate foundation date. The first element of the castle would seem to be its hall, a rectangular structure with a sprung floor supported on joists, most likely heated by a centrally placed brazier, but roofed over in such a way as to allow the smoke to escape. Subsequently it was extended to enclose the very end of the elevated promontory, becoming then some 28m × 13.5m externally or 372m², making this hall one of the largest of its kind (cf Ardtornish (17.2m × 8.8) and Aros (25.3m × 12.5)). However, quite when these developments occurred remains to be elucidated. Fragmentary masonry remains have suggested a 15th-century date for the tower which was added to the hall's east end. This was then developed in the 16th century, possibly at the same time that the hall was shortened, perhaps back to its original length (Driscoll et al 1994; Cullen & Driscoll 1995; Nenk et al 1995: 276; Caldwell & Ruckley 2005: 112–13; Canmore ID 99579, site no. NG83NE25; Illus 1 & 2). (For Ardtornish and Aros, see RCAHMS 1980: 170–7, nos 332 and 333.)

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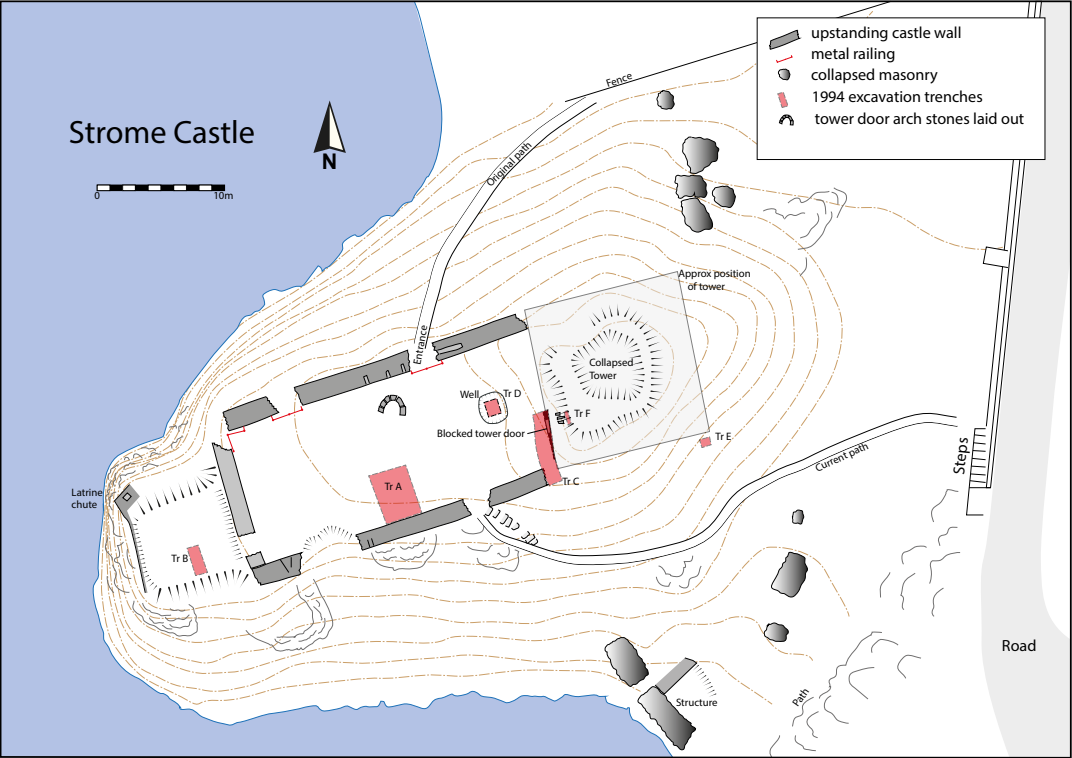
ILLUS 1   Measured survey, 2019. (By kind consent of Derek Alexander, National Trust for Scotland)

ILLUS 2   Aerial view of the castle from the National Trust for Scotland's DJI Phantom drone (May 2021). (By kind consent of Derek Alexander, National Trust for Scotland)

Some writers have speculated about its history, comparing it to Eilean Donan, to the south, which can be dated back at least into the 14th century (Dunbar 1981: 57; *ALI*: xxxiv) and, it has been argued, even the 13th century (Miket & Roberts 2007: 87, 97; Shakespeare et al 2023: 11–15).[2] However, in their layouts as they evolved, the two castles have arguably more dissimilarities than likenesses. In this respect, whereas Eilean Donan has been seen as a parallel with Urquhart (Miket & Roberts 2007: 96), Strome has instead been seen as akin to Castle Camus (Knock) on Sleat in Skye (Caldwell & Ruckley 2005: 112–13; D Caldwell & G Stell, pers comm). There are, however, difficulties in seeing Camus and Strome as wholly similar in overall design (Miket & Roberts 2007: 18–21; Thacker 2021) and while aspects of Strome's features can naturally be seen in other West Highland castles, such as Ardtornish and Aros, such a study can at best provide only vague markers as regards dating (Stell 2017: 271–2).[3]

All this said, it is not unreasonable to envisage a 14th-century phase in the building works at Strome (M Thacker, pers comm). During that period, its lord would most likely have been the Earl of Ross, for although the lands of the earldom then, properly, covered just the east of the modern county, the earl was, separately, lord of the adjacent territories, old 'North Argyll', over in the west (Munro 1986: 59; *ALI*: xxxiv–xxxv and 162–4, no. 102). In 1437, Alasdair (Alexander) MacDonald, 3rd Lord of the Isles, was recognised as earl (Brown 2000: 160), whereupon the MacDonalds appear to have absorbed North Argyll into the earldom (Munro 1986: 65). It may be ventured therefore that Strome then became a focal point of the MacDonald earldom in the west as Dingwall was its capital in the east. As this paper seeks to demonstrate, the value placed upon it by the MacDonalds did not diminish when their earldom was lost; quite the reverse. In the later 15th century and throughout the 16th century, successive heirs of the last earl and Lord of the Isles and branches of Clan Donald saw their tenure of Strome as essential in maintaining their position in the area. Their efforts to keep it are the central theme in its history until its end.

THE IMPORTANCE OF STROME: LOCATION AND FUNCTION

SEA AND LAND COMMUNICATIONS

Like numerous other Highland and Island castles, those belonging both to the MacDonalds (McNeill 2014: 216) and to many other families, Strome is situated on a promontory, in its case on the north shore of Loch Carron at a narrow point before it widens towards the sea (Illus 3, 4 & 5). There are protected inlets on either side of this promontory which could have accommodated a considerable number of vessels. This attribute was recognised many years ago when an unknown observer wrote of the castle that:

> It stood on a high rock, which extended in the midst of a little bay of the sea westward, which made a harbour or safe port for great boats or vessels of no great burden, on either side of the castle. It was a very convenient place for Alexander Mac Gillespick to dwell in when he had both the countries of Lochalsh and Lochcarron, standing on the very march between both (Mackenzie 1894: 217).

Like the great majority of landing-places associated with western seaboard castles, there is no evidence of any attempt to create a 'harbour' in the sense of stone quays or breakwaters. Instances of such features, as at Kisimul on Barra, are comparatively rare. It may be that at Strome, as elsewhere, there were wharves and barriers with their stanchions but that such timber features have long since decayed. However, at Strome, it would appear that these were quite unnecessary, the natural features being perfectly well crafted to accommodate not just the lord's own birlinn but numerous others as well (Illus 6 & 7). This is still apparent today as vessels are seen beached on the shingle and above the high-water line (Illus 8). In a period when communication, transport and warfare in the Highlands and Islands were heavily dependent on the use of vessels (MacInnes 1972–74: 518–56; Dawson 1988: 4–6; Caldwell 2016), such landing-places were of paramount importance (Martin 2014; 2017: 114–23). It is clear that the castle of Strome was located in its bay
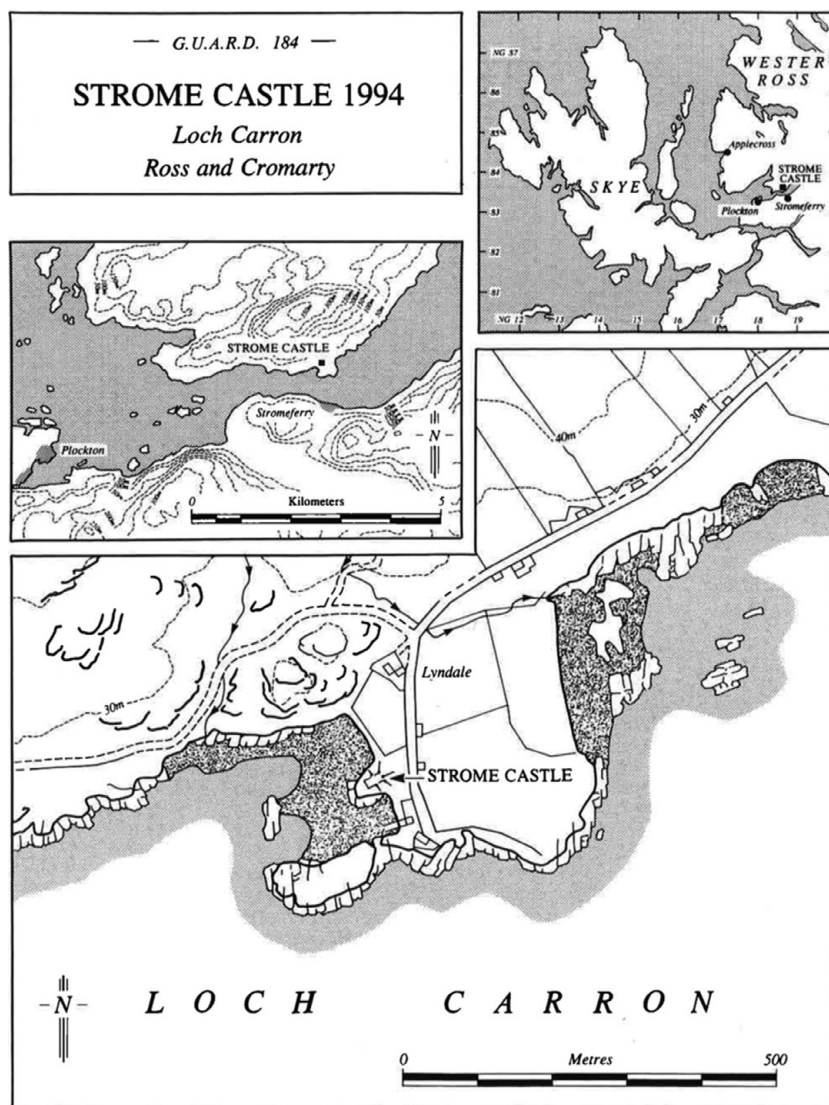
ILLUS 3 Location diagrams taken from Cullen & Driscoll (1995: 4). (By kind consent of S Driscoll)

largely because of the proximity of this convenient maritime facility. Studies of other individual West Highland seaboard castles have noted this (Stell 2006: 32–4, 83–4; Stell 2014: 284). Indeed, the articulation and interdependence of Strome and its two adjacent inlets is one of the best examples of this arrangement in Scotland. It is surprising then that this has not been highlighted in various recent, general works that deal with such complexes.

However, the castle needed to connect with the interior as well as the sea, all the more so if it was to bind with the rest of Ross and its capital at Dingwall with its one-time harbour on the east coast. The question then arises as to quite how this worked. The most obvious route lay north-east up Strath Carron and then either along Strath Conon or Strath Bran, the natural route east for those from great swathes of west Ross including Applecross (Haldane 2008: 108–9). The

ILLUS 4 The Strome peninsula between Lochs Carron and Kishorn as depicted on the map by Timothy Pont (1560?–1614?) drawn between 1580 and 1590, so presumably before the castle was destroyed. Some of the place-names surrounding the castle can be traced on a modern OS map: 'Stroncarro' = Strome Carronach; 'Slumpa' = Slumbay; 'Rango' = possibly Reraig. The castle may be indicated by the symbol beneath 'Strom C'. (https://maps.nls.uk/rec/260, accessed 10 March 2023; CC-BY National Library of Scotland)

ILLUS 5 Blaeu's Atlas of Scotland 1654: again 'Strom C' is shown where the then ruined castle lay. (CC-BY National Library of Scotland)

ILLUS 6   Detail from the bottom of a grave slab at Cill Choluim Chille (Keil), Lochaline, Morvern, depicting a birlinn/galley drawn up beside a castle: an excellent reflection of the importance of the castle–birlinn connection. (© Colin Martin; by kind consent of Colin and Paula Martin)

ILLUS 7   General view of the castle interior; looking west-south-west down the sea loch. (J S Petre, June 2022)

ILLUS 8 Strome's north bay with boats beached on the shingle and the high tide line. (J S Petre, June 2022)

connection of this track with the castle may have been referred to in an amusing verse by the Rev Lachlan Mackenzie in his contribution to the Old Statistical Account (Mackenzie 1794: 560):

> From Castle Strom there is a road,
> Straight down to Kessock Ferry.
> And by this road the men of Sky
> Do all their whisky carry.

There were undoubtedly other routes connecting the eastern hinterlands of the earldom of Ross and its associated western territories, most likely one being along Glens Elchaig, Affric and Cannich (Haldane 2008: 108–9). However, this lay far to the south of Strome, so would hardly be used when the castle was either a base or an objective. Moreover, this was in Kintail and therefore Mackenzie country. Since the Mackenzies deserted the MacDonalds and turned on them as early as the forfeiture of the MacDonald earldom in 1475–6 (MacCoinnich 2003: 187–91), from that point the MacDonalds would hardly have thought to use such a route. Furthermore, an elementary study of Ordnance Survey maps reflects that the Strath Carron route appears considerably the best. It may well be that the modern road there is a continuation of a much more historical trackway, as might be inferred from the Old Statistical Account. The linkage of castles and towers with medieval land routes, either surviving as such or superseded by modern roads, was an obvious necessity. Recently it has been discussed in respect of Irish towers (McAlister 2019: 90, 110–11, 155–8). It may be ventured, then, that Strome too had such land connections. In conclusion, it seems apparent that Strome was located where sea and land routes converged (Illus 9); it may then have been conceived as the apex of a communication and transport network, in exactly the same way as other west coast Scottish and Irish tower-castles have been envisaged (Boardman 2005: 135; McAlister 2019: 158).
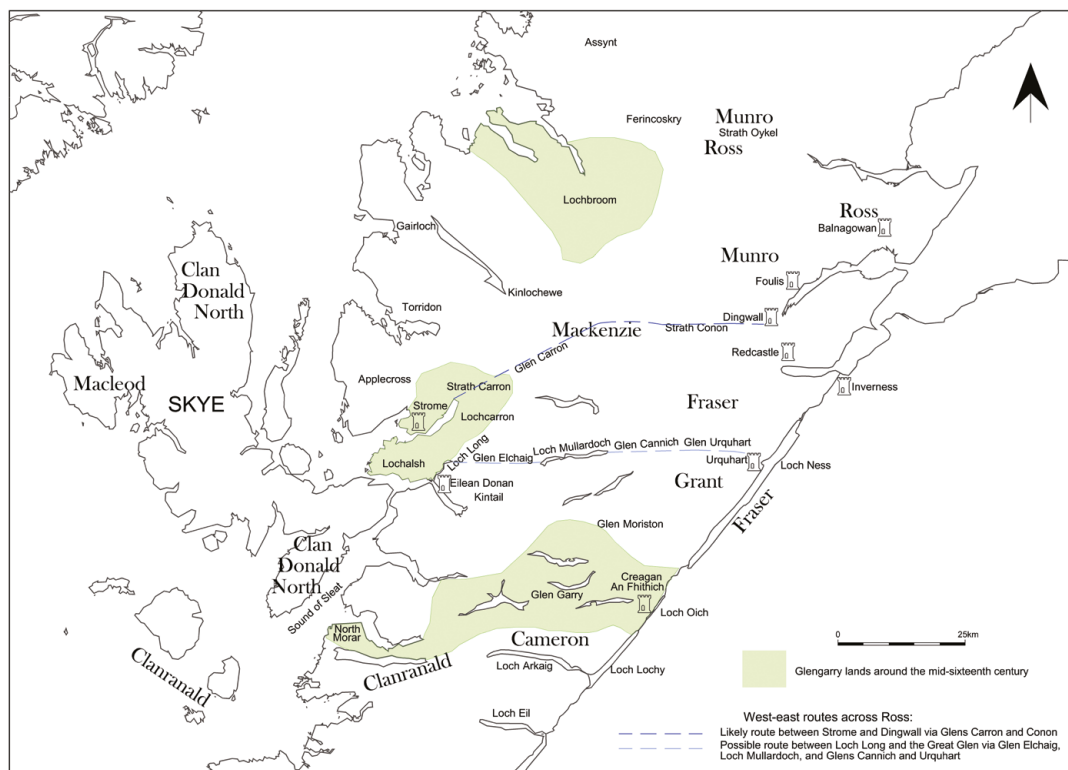
ILLUS 9 The West Highlands *c* 1550, showing MacDonald Glengarry interests. (Image by J S Petre)

STRATEGIC ROLE

The castle was a major strategic asset. Its contiguous landing-bays provided a base for Clan Donald birlinns, facilitating the conveyance of warriors from MacDonald heartlands further to the south. From Strome, their forces were well placed to travel up Strath Carron to assert their control of the earldom of Ross. Aonghas MacCoinnich has observed that Strome:

> was a key node in the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles and their beachhead in Ross. It was absolutely vital for facilitating transport between the Isles and Dingwall. There could be no MacDonald earldom of Ross or reach from the Isles into Ross without Strome (MacCoinnich, pers comm).

The castle's value to the MacDonalds would have increased when the earldom of Ross was forfeited in 1475–6 and Dingwall castle and Easter Ross were lost (Munro 1981: 32). Eventually Strome became their last toehold on the coast of the earldom. Like the Gaelic lords of contemporary Ireland who used castles to hold on to territory (McNeill 1997: 227), retaining Strome was crucial to any hope of regaining the earldom by force, a factor which became increasingly important as the Mackenzies grew in power and competed with them. As William Fraser noted so incisively, by 1600, Strome was hugely important for Donald of Glengarry (d 1645): he wanted to retain it as a base for operations against the Mackenzies and as a refuge when needed for his own clansmen (Fraser 1883, vol 1: 177). Mackenzie of Kintail grasped its importance; he knew it to be 'very useful for his enemys who made an asylum or place of refuge qn they were feared or pursued' (MacDonald 1941: 201).

RESIDENCE, ADMINISTRATION AND ECONOMICS

In general terms, it must have operated much as many a lordly castle, being the base from which to control land, 'either to command the men who lived on it, or to gather the rents and produce from it' (McNeill 1997: 235). Strome constituted the centre of a considerable area, as already noted. While the earls of Ross and their successors held old North Argyll (*ALI*: xxxiv–xxxv) or large swathes of it, this would have encompassed the adjoining territories of Lochcarron and Lochalsh. The castle would have served as a residence but not necessarily a permanent one. Highland lords, like any aristocratic caste, would have been partly peripatetic according to their means. It is noteworthy, for example, that leading contemporaries, such as the 5th Earl of Argyll (Dawson 1988: 9–10), moved continually around their estates both to exert control and also for the logistics of their own household needs. Such magnates employed constables for the more regular supervision of their residences. In the case of Strome, its constables were mainly the Camerons, during much of the MacDonald lordships. It is, then, difficult to judge quite how frequently Strome would have been occupied by its lord and lady and their household retinues. It may have been more a residence in the time of the Lochalsh MacDonalds, this being their heartland, than it was for the line of Glengarry, but it is impossible to be certain. Their old lands lay in Glen Garry and it is notable that Donald did not live in his west coast lands and only took up station in Strome in 1581–2 because of the Mackenzie threat (Gregory 1881: 218–19; MacDonald & MacDonald 1900: 394). He and his wife, Margaret of Clanranald, do indeed appear there on that occasion when they held their Christmas feast (MacDonald 1941: 189, 211). These were, however, exceptional circumstances. Yet where else did Glengarry live? We know very little of their other residences but they seem to have included structures on one, possibly two, crannogs on Loch Oich (Bridgland 2005: 91)[4] or on Creagan an Fhithich, the Raven's Rock, protruding into the loch (MacDonald 1995: 10). Their grand multi-storey castle-mansion of Invergarry on the Raven's Rock was not built until the 17th century. At any rate, they were certainly based there before they secured title to the west coast lands including Strome: in 1524, Margaret of Lochalsh is recorded as sealing a charter at Glengarry (McInnes 1940: 14, no. 46). Building work at Strome in the 16th century would, however, at least suggest that, once they had secured it, the Glengarry MacDonalds did come to consider it an important base to be occupied regularly.

In studies of towers in Ireland, both its Gaelic and Anglo-Irish parts, attention has been paid to the importance of the fish trade, emphasising a correlation of tower houses there with the control of maritime fish resources. This was especially the situation from around 1450, when herring appeared in great numbers off the coasts and in tidal estuaries, though there were other species to be caught as well, notably hake from before 1400, cod in the 15th century and the 'king of fish', the highly valuable salmon. As Victoria McAlister has noted, the lack of surviving waterfront structures for fishing settlements is not indicative of their absence as boats could be simply dragged onto the shore, as indeed is the case at Strome. Both she and Colin Breen have shown that tower houses in Ireland were even specifically sited to exploit fishing grounds, either directly or by taxing visiting fleets (Breen 2017: 214; McAlister 2019: 109–10, 113–14, 115–19, 122).

Fish were certainly a leading item of the economy in Scotland as well. As in Ireland, there is no doubt that once the herring shoals returned from about 1450 (Rorke 2005: 150–5; Boardman 2005: 145–6; 2006: 296–7, 300; Oram 2017: 259–60), the rich fishing grounds off certain parts of the west coast became highly prized. There is ample evidence for this. In his doctoral thesis, Martin Rorke commented how, in the 16th century, the 'herring fishing grounds in the North became vitally important'. In the 1570s indeed, there was an 'overplus' of herring deriving from Loch Carron among others (Rorke 2001, vol 1: 205–6, 209–11). At the same time, Atlantic salmon coming up the loch to spawn in

the River Carron would also have been there for the taking, subject to regulations made by the crown (Hoffman 2015: see especially 357, 359, 361). Highland lords were well placed to exploit these resources from their castles. In his detailed reports on Castle Tioram in Moidart, Geoffrey Stell drew attention to the importance of its proximity to fish stocks and also timber resources (Stell 2006: 57, 93; 2014: 285). The same may be postulated for Strome. We cannot go so far as to say that, as was sometimes the case in Ireland, it was sited with fishing primarily in mind. Its likely foundation most likely antedates the great increase of fish that began in the second half of the 15th century. That this only subsequently proved to be an asset seems more likely but, in any event, it is highly probable that Strome also served as a base for the conduct and control of this maritime asset.

This natural resource was such an asset that, in the reign of James V, the crown took the step of exerting direct control over the west coast fisheries. This makes the inclusion of west coast 'piscariis' in the royal charter Glengarry obtained in 1539 all the more remarkable (*RMS* III: 429, no. 1924; *OPS*: 399). As Rorke noted, in the second half of the century, fishing jurisdictions were virtually always leased and this may have led to contentions between leading families of the area. Glengarry's rights to the fishing grounds had been forfeited, along with all his lands, not long after he had received the charter, but his son Angus had retrieved these through the charter agreement with John Grant, 4th of Freuchie in 1571. In this, Grant conveyed to Angus his lands in Lochalsh and Lochcarron, 'with their salmound and herring fischingis … according to the tennour of the auld infoftmentis grantit to the predicessouris of the said Angus, lairdis of Glengarrie' (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 143–9, no. 140). Angus had good reason then, to resent their allocation elsewhere when, in January 1573, his rights were effectively overridden by the crown charter in favour of Robert Mòr Munro, 15th of Foulis. By this, for £100 a year, the king gave Munro a five-year lease of the king's 'custumes and deweteis and utheris quhatsumevir guidis, fischeis and utheris custumable' of a very

extensive marine area, including Lochbroom and Lochcarron (*RSS* VI: 342, no. 1800; McInnes 1940: 28, no. 88; Rorke 2001, vol 1: 209n48; MacCoinnich 2002: 144). The rich fishing grounds of Lochcarron were especially noted in the charter of 1584, by which John Dingwall gave lands and rights to Mackenzie of Kintail (*OPS*: 401; MacCoinnich 2019: 48–9; MacCoinnich, pers comm). It is significant that this was exactly when the Mackenzies were intensifying their campaign to wrest Strome and Lochcarron from Glengarry.

The castle's functions as regards its proximity to timber and agricultural resources are harder to elucidate but, as at Castle Tioram, timber, at any rate, would have been amply available. The lower reaches of Strath Carron at the head of the loch consisted of a considerable area of land supporting cultivation. More importantly, however, it is likely that there was a considerable focus on cattle husbandry. This was certainly the case at the time of the Old Statistical Account (Mackenzie 1794: 552–3) both here and in neighbouring glens, such as Strath Conon, where archaeological investigations have identified shielings in use in pre-improvement times when there was intensive cattle rearing (Marshall 2011: 41). There seems little reason to doubt this was any different two or three centuries earlier. Indeed, as Steven Boardman has shown in respect of the Campbell estates in later medieval times, the trade in cow-hides was probably the next most valuable market commodity after herring (Boardman 2006: 300–1). Cattle were a convenient moveable asset. Their theft was a major target in the 'spulzies' or raids of the period, and the MacDonalds and their allies, described by one antiquarian as 'cattle-lifting hordes', were among those notable for this activity (Mackay 1914: 54, 97–8). Cattle were similarly important across the North Channel in Ireland, where lords are thought to have used their towers as bases to exploit this commodity (McAlister 2019: 14, 76–7, 113, 120). Having land route connections as well as marine ones, Strome castle was perhaps an obvious operational base where the cattle trade could be overseen by the lord or his deputy.

SYMBOLISM

Strome, therefore, had administrative importance but, more than this, it also had symbolic importance (Illus 10, 11 & 12). As a statement of lordship and power, its status was of course similar to that of castles found in many places throughout the medieval and early modern periods. In particular, its tower propelled the image of successful dominion while providing secure quarters for its noble occupants (McNeill 1997: 221, 233), but castles such as Strome were significant for additional reasons. Here was the heart of what the 'clan' stood for; feasts were provided as a token of success and wealth and as a binding force and stimulus to the clan's warrior elite (Devine 1994: 10; Dodgshon 1998: 8, 14,

84–7). Such feasting would likely have been held in the hall-block, as was the customary practice in comparable castles of the Gaelic princes of Ireland (McNeill 1997: 221). The MacDonalds of Glengarry were particularly noteworthy in this respect. One claim had it that their hospitality was superior even to that of the 5th Earl of Argyll, who was conspicuous for his largesse (Gillies 1976–78: 263). The success of a lord and, by definition, his people, was enshrined in this prosperity, shared with his people and mirrored in the castle and its 'reach'. Correspondingly, the failure of a lord to maintain his clan's position, reflected in territorial attenuation and hence inability to demonstrate and provide conspicuous consumption, was also focused on the castle. Taken to its extreme, the loss and destruction

ILLUS 10   Reconstruction drawing from a watercolour painting by Andrew Spratt. The castle, as envisaged here, would represent its appearance at the close of the 16th century, when the tower was fully developed but when the masonry hall was shortened, bringing its western extremity back to the line of what had previously been an internal cross-wall. Enough remains of the hall-block's north wall to consider that this element of the castle is quite well represented. Given the complete ruination of the tower, however, here the artist based his depiction on his general appreciation of towers in the 16th century. Still, inasmuch as the tower was 'clearly massive enough to support several storeys' (Cullen & Driscoll 1995: 22), this may well be a reasonable representation. The bartizans on the angles of the tower's battlements are conjectural but typically 16th century. They are reminiscent of those once seen at the MacDonald castle of Duntulm on the north end of Skye. (By kind consent of Andrew Spratt)

ILLUS 11   Reconstruction profile of the castle by Andrew Spratt as it may have appeared just before the siege and destruction of 1602. The MacDonald banners are conspicuous. (By kind consent of Andrew Spratt)

ILLUS 12   Strome from the east: the destroyed great tower is prominent in the foreground as a grass-covered mound of demolished masonry, large fragments of which lie tumbled down the slopes to north and south. The photograph also shows the modern approach to the castle, on its south side. The original entrance was, however, from the north, into a doorway in the hall's north wall. (J S Petre, June 2022)

of the castle signalled the end of lordship, of prestige and indeed of clan occupation in the area (Crawford 2016: 53–8, 124–7). In this context, it is especially noteworthy that when the Mackenzies decided on Strome's demolition in or around 1602, it was the tower that was most savagely dealt with, for it was this element that 'most symbolised dominion, lordship, and seigniorial authority' (Coulson 1979; 2003: 85).

SEQUESTRATIONS

Strome's importance is also illustrated by instances when the crown's lieutenants, acting with or without royal authority, determined to seize the castle. These enfranchised warlords – the earls of Huntly and Argyll, were conspicuously zealous to appropriate the castle during periods of tension, when rebellion occurred or was suspected. On 19 March 1504, during the 'uprising' of Donald Dubh, Alexander, 3rd Earl of Huntly was empowered to gain control of the castles of Strome and Eilean Donan (*RPS* A1504/3/81; *OPS*: 401). (For this Donald Dubh rising, in general, see Gregory 1881: 95, 98; Macdougall 2000: 273; Cathcart 2014: 265). The two castles were probably taken later that year (Gregory 1881: 101; Macdougall 1997: 182–3). Subsequently, on 13 March 1506, it was recorded that Huntly had 'taken it upon himself to besiege and take those houses which are absolutely necessary for the subduing of the Isles ("rycht necessar for the danting of the Ilis"), that is to say the Strome and Eilean Donan', with the aid of a ship equipped with artillery and ammunition provided from the royal arsenal (*RPS* 1506/2/37; *OPS*: 401; Gregory 1881: 98, 182–3, 185; *ALI*: 164; Macdougall 2000: 273). Subsequently, in March 1517 during Donald Gallda's risings, Lochcarron was again among those places targeted for 'subduing', this time by Colin, 3rd Earl of Argyll. The earl petitioned for permission to capture Strome. His request was granted and consent given that he could 'sege [Gallda's] hous incontinent callit the Strome' (*ALC*: xxix, 79–80, fo 129; *OPS*: 401; Gregory 1881: 119–21). This was duly confirmed by the Privy Seal (*RSS* I: 449, no. 2873).

Although Huntly and Argyll clearly had their own motives for commandeering Strome, in fairness the possession of such a prominent fortress and all it stood for could make a considerable difference to the success or suppression of a Highland rebellion. In this context, it is interesting to note that when, in 1539, Donald Gorm MacDonald of Sleat failed to capture the Mackenzie castle of Eilean Donan, Donald Gregory opined that 'had the insurgents succeeded in their attempt, a formidable rising in the Isles would have been the consequence' (Gregory 1881: 145). Taking clan castles into royal, or delegated royal, custody was a pre-emptive precaution; this also appears to have been the case in 1554 or 1555 when the then (4th) Earl of Argyll took over Strome during his attempts to subdue Clanranald (Crawford 2016: 146, 153). (See Gregory 1881: 183–6 for this period when Mary of Guise authorised Argyll and Huntly to proceed against Clanranald, the MacDonalds of Sleat and the Macleods.)

Possession of the castle became all the more a matter of critical importance as the Glengarry–Mackenzie feud exploded in the last 20 years of the century. (Details of this feud extending into the next century are given in *OPS*: 400; Gregory 1881: 218–19, 264–5, 299–303; MacDonald 1941: 189–210. Extensive treatments, with alternative bias, are supplied by clan historians, notably Mackenzie 1894: 154–9, 163–8, 200–18; MacDonald & MacDonald 1900: 394–7, 400–12; MacDonald 1995: 30–9.) As already noted, in 1581–2, 'in order to better maintain his rights' (Gregory 1881: 216, 218–19), Donald of Glengarry occupied and garrisoned Strome, only surrendering it to save his life. Intervening, on 8 March 1583, James VI's Privy Council ordered that 'the Castle of Strome, the great bone of contention', was to be given up into the temporary custody of Archibald, 7th Earl of Argyll (*RPC* III: 555–7; quotation from MacDonald & MacDonald 1900: 396–7). Later, in June 1596, the crown intervened again, when it appointed Sir William Stewart of Houston as king's lieutenant in the Highlands and Islands, empowering him to requisition and garrison all West Highland and island castles. Particular castles are

mentioned, such as Breacachadh, which Lachlan MacLean of Coll had to surrender within 24 hours if so required (*RPC* V: 296–7, 309, 354). It is likely that Strome was also subject to such sanctions. Certainly, the following year, Donald of Glengarry was sufficiently chastened to appear before the king in person, undertaking to keep the peace and redress all 'heirships and stouths committed by him' or his clansmen (*RPC* V: 686). On this occasion at least, the crown had desisted from its usual resort of employing the northern earls; Stewart was the king's lieutenant and captain of the king's guard. That the responsibility for the custody of Strome was now passed to a senior member of the royal household is another indication of its perceived importance: the king now felt able to take a more direct involvement.

STROME IN CHARTERS AND BONDS

Strome features in a number of charters which also attest the importance placed upon it. As mentioned above, its first appearance in the historical record occurred in 1472, when 'Celestinus de Insulis dominus de Lochach', granted the hereditary constableship ('constabulariam castri nostri de Strome') and lands in Kishorn to Alan, the son of Donald, the Captain of Clan Cameron (*ALI*: 162–4, no. 102; 305). However, what is more significant is James IV's charter of October 1495, which confirmed the award of 1472 and two further MacDonald charters of 1492. While this document underwrote the Camerons' relationship with the line of Lochalsh for the various lands held from them, it excepted the castle: 'the King reserves only to himself the rights and services of the forsaid office of Constabulary due and usual before the granting of the said charter' (*RMS* II: 483–4, no. 2281; Munro 2000: 14, no. 1; *OPS*: 399; *ALI*: 194–5, no. 122; 197–9, no. 124; 226, no. A47; 251, 292, 297; Macdougall 1997: 116). Establishing a royal superiority over Strome while otherwise acceding to the rights of Donald MacDonald of Lochalsh is highly indicative of its perceived significance at the highest level.

James IV's subsequent revocation of 1498 (Macdougall 1997: 151) nullified this charter,

which no doubt helps explain why the Camerons joined the Donald Dubh insurrection of 1504 (Macdougall 1997: 181, 183). It seems probable, however, that the Camerons maintained their custody of the castle, leading in turn to its capture by Huntly, as mentioned above. Perhaps the Camerons subsequently purchased a reissue of the charter; certainly we know that when, in January 1528, Ewen Cameron resigned the lands originally received from the MacDonalds in order to have them re-granted by James V's government, the charter he received included the constableship, thereby reaffirming royal superiority over Strome castle (*RMS* III: 119, no. 534; *OPS*: 399; Munro 2000: 14–15, no. 3). That charter, too, was revoked, later in 1528 when James V achieved his majority (Gregory 1881: 129, 132). Despite this, most likely the Camerons retained control of the castle, coming to an understanding with George Gordon, 4th Earl of Huntly, when Donald, Ewen's son and heir, became the earl's tenant, 'for an onerous cause' in February 1534 (Munro 2000: 17, no. 12; Crawford 2016: 194).

Its importance was further recognised in subsequent arrangements, when, in 1539, 'the castle, fortalice and the lands of Strome' were included in the royal charter awarded to Margaret of Lochalsh, her husband Alexander of Glengarry and their son and heir, Angus (*RMS* III: 429, no. 1924; *OPS*: 399), and the constabulary was re-granted to Ewen Cameron (*RSS* II: 444, no. 2994; *OPS*: 399). Glengarry's title was lost in 1540 when he was forfeited for his part in the rising of Donald Gorm of Sleat the previous year (*RMS* III: 508, no. 2238; Gregory 1881: 143–8; Mackenzie 1894: 137–8; MacDonald & MacDonald 1900: 380–1; Munro 2005: 276). Later, due to their part in the battle of Blàir na Léine in 1544 and the subsequent raids on Grant and Fraser territories, the Camerons also found themselves on the wrong side of royal authority, forfeiting title to their lands and the constabulary of the castle (*OPS*: 399–400; MacDonald & MacDonald 1900: 383; Mackay 1914: 97–104; Munro 2005: 277; Cathcart 2006: 223).

However, it may well be that these royal sanctions against the MacDonalds and the Camerons made little difference as regards their

occupation of Strome and its associated lands. It appears likely that they maintained possession, even when, in due course, legal title was vested in others (Fraser 1883, vol 1: 114–15). In this, Strome is a classic example of the distinction to be drawn between *duchas/dùthcas* (unwritten, traditional, hereditary entitlement) and *oighreachd* (tenure by charter). Title was, indeed, duly granted in a charter of 1548, which specifically mentions the castle, in the award of Glengarry's and Cameron's lands to James Grant, 3rd of Freuchie. Grant was being compensated for the devastating raids carried out on his lands of Urquhart and Glenmoriston in 1544 and 1545, but it is apparent that he was also being recognised for his constant loyalty to the crown. Vesting the castle ('cum castro et fortalicio de Strome et officio constabulariatus ejusdem') with one such as Grant reflects a crown device to exercise control as an alternative to allocating it either to Argyll or Huntly (*RMS* IV: 49–50, no. 204; Fraser 1883, vol 1: 113–14; MacCoinnich 2004, vol 2: 424; Munro 2005: 277). Perhaps Regent Arran considered that the two earls were powerful enough without this additional strongpoint. In any case, at the time, Huntly was a prisoner in the Tower of London, while the 4th Earl of Argyll, who shared the ignominy for the defeat of Pinkie, was possibly known to be incompetent (Wormald 1985: 108, 121–5). James Grant was unable, however, to dislodge Glengarry, who maintained possession (Fraser 1883, vol 1: 114–15). Perhaps it was because of this that Grant quickly came to an arrangement with the Camerons over land in Lochalsh, aiming to detach them from Glengarry. That bond made no mention of the castle, suggesting no doubt that it now lay outwith Cameron interests (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 102–3, no. 103; Cathcart 2006: 138–9, 223). Subsequent crown grants made to the Earl of Huntly in 1553 of the Cameron lands in Strome, Kishorn, Lochiel and Lochaber and then, in 1554, giving John Grant, 4th of Freuchie, the relief of his late father's lands in Kishorn and Lochcarron, also did not mention the castle (*RMS* IV: 191, no. 854; *RSS* IV: 356, no. 2157; *OPS*: 400).

As noted above, the castle was taken by the 4th Earl of Argyll in 1554 or 1555. He installed his own men but it is not clear how long he retained it (MacCoinnich 2004, vol 2: 424–5; Crawford 2016: 146, 153). Legal title presumably remained with Grant though, yet again, it is not mentioned in the lengthy contract he made with Angus of Glengarry in 1571. Given the detail of this bond, Strome is conspicuous by its absence (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 143–9, no. 140). Be that as it may, it is likely that Glengarry retained possession: Grant's arrangements with Mackenzie and Glengarry in 1570 and 1571 were a recognition that he could not effect actual possession of his west Ross lands (Fraser 1883, vol 1: 142; Mackay 1914: 110). Curiously, there is a Privy Seal grant of 'the nonentry of the lands of Lochcarron, Kishorn and the fortalice of Strome', dated May 1575, in favour of John Dingwall of Kildun, the heir of Janet, the other co-heiress of the Lochalsh MacDonalds. According to this, Dingwall was recognised as the lawful possessor of these lands and the castle, which had been in the king's hands since the death of John's father, Thomas in 1573 (*RSS* VII: 1575, no. 178; *OPS*: 400). This is particularly interesting because in the year before this grant, 1574, Angus of Glengarry had managed to retrieve his standing with the crown, receiving a charter to his lands in Glengarry, Morar, Lochalsh and Lochcarron, but not Strome. It appears then, that title to the strongpoint had been excluded (*RMS* IV: 603–4, no. 2270; MacDonald & MacDonald 1900: 389). Title and possession were different things of course, and it is likely that John Dingwall was no more able than Grant to dislodge Glengarry from occupation of the castle.

In 1579, Dingwall decided to relinquish his lands in Lochcarron – the last vestige of his Lochalsh inheritance – in a transaction with the Mackenzies. Once again, however, the castle was not mentioned in this charter (*RMS* IV: 203, no. 665; Munro 2005: 276–7). Thus, apart from the 1575 Privy Seal grant, there appears to be no other indication of Dingwall's title to the castle. Was the 1575 assignment a Privy Council error? Strome features repeatedly in Privy Council records in 1582–3 in Glengarry's complaint over its capture by Mackenzie and in respect of orders to Mackenzie and bonds he took out over

its possession (*RPC* III: 505, 506, 533, 541–3, 548, 555–6). In his dialogue with the Council, in January 1583, he reported that he had had a contract with Glengarry to have the castle until Glengarry had fulfilled certain obligations. He went on to state that, in addition, he had been ordered by the Lords of Session to convey it to Grant. He claimed that he was therefore confused as to whom it should be rendered, quite possibly an attempt at evasion (*RPC* III: 541–3). The Earl of Argyll also had to take a bond as regards the castle upon its passing into his custody (*RPC* III: 557). Certainly in 1586, title was in Grant hands once more, when John Grant, 5th of Freuchie, included its constabulary in an agreement with Lachlan MacIntosh (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 158–65, no. 150; Cathcart 2006: 156). That arrangement was nullified by agreement in 1593 (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 176n1). In fact, Grant had already, in 1589, passed his Kishorn lands, including the castle, to his brother Patrick, a charter confirmed by the crown in 1593 (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 402–3, no. 322). In 1597, John Grant effectively renewed the arrangement made in 1571 between his father and Glengarry's father. This conceded that the heritable rights to the lands of Strome and Kishorn were debatable but, as in 1571, no mention was made of the castle (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 189–92, no. 167). Once again, however, there appears little doubt that these legalities did not reflect the position on the ground and that Glengarry retained possession. Certainly, the castle was mentioned in another agreement made between Grant and Donald of Glengarry in 1600, reaffirming the substance of the 1597 agreement (Fraser 1883, vol 3: 196–7, no. 172). Given the intensification of Glengarry's feud with the Mackenzies, tenure of the castle was now of the utmost importance; the right to occupy it was clearly Donald's priority.

The last occasions on which it features in charters or bonds were those regularising Mackenzie possession after they captured it. The castle and manor were mentioned in the royal charter of 1607, which confirmed the Mackenzie acquisition of Glengarry's interests in Lochalsh and Lochcarron (*RMS* VI: 683, no. 1879; Fraser 1883, vol 1: 178; vol 3: 201–2, no. 176 and 405–6,

no. 324), and again in 1633 when various lands, 'with the pertinents of the castle of Strome', were conveyed by the Earl of Seaforth to his brother, George Mackenzie (*OPS*: 401).

STROME IN WARFARE AND ITS DESTRUCTION

It is likely that the castle featured in warfare, first as a springboard from which the MacDonalds sought to retrieve their position in Easter Ross, and certainly later as a retreat and a bastion at the end of the 16th century, when it was besieged. Two 'campaigns' towards the end of the 15th century may reflect the castle's use as a campaign base. The information available is limited but some assumptions as to the role of Strome may be proposed. The first occasion was the raid that culminated in the fight at Lag a' Bhrèid, (otherwise Lagebreda, Lagebread or Logiebraid), probably in 1480–1. Although there is no information on MacDonald manoeuvres, given the likely location of the site of this 'battle' (Clancy 2016: 67), it is apparent that their route to and from it would have been via Strome and Strath Carron (*HP* I: 49). The second occasion, probably in 1491, was when the MacDonalds were defeated at Blàir na Pàirc. They subsequently withdrew through Mackenzie lands and were pursued up Strath Conon to Inverchoran, where there was another fight (*HP* I: 55; *HP* II: 24; MacCoinnich 2011: 30). From there, it appears likely that the MacDonalds carried on past Scardroy, cut across through to Strath Carron and went on down to Strome.

War effectively came to Strome's very gates in 1582, when it was besieged by the Mackenzies 'with twa-handit swordis, bowes, darlochis, hagbuttis, pistollettis, prohibite to be worne or usit, and other wappinnis invasive'. Glengarry, who had been captured earlier, had to order his garrison to surrender to save his life (*RPC* III: 505; also Gregory 1881: 219; Mackenzie 1894: 156–8). It is unlikely the Mackenzies would have been able to capture Strome merely with such hand-weapons, had they not had this bargaining advantage.

The role and importance of the castle came to a climax at the very end of the century. Around 1600 the MacDonald–Mackenzie feud intensified, evolving into a series of raids, counter-raids and vengeance killings (*HP* II: 47–8; Gordon 1813: 248; Gregory 1881: 299–302; Mackenzie 1894: 200–19 MacDonald 1941: 190–201; MacCoinnich 2002: 153; MacCoinnich 2015: 221; Crawford 2016: 127). As the MacDonalds lost ground, it is likely that their sphere of control shrank to the immediate area of the castle itself. There they stationed a small garrison, as it was palpably clear that it had to be held if they were to maintain any status in their old western territories. Later, probably in 1602, the castle was besieged. Led by Ruairidh Mòr of Ardfaillie, the Mackenzies and their allies eventually succeeded in capturing the castle. There is some account of this siege in the Applecross MS, which shows how resolutely it was defended:

> Shortlie aft. M'Kenzie's return from Mull he beseedged ye Castle of Stroim and used manie ingines in wining of it. The beseedged had ane response in qch they believed [viz.] that ye castle of Stroun would never be rendered till Rorie moire were at ye sedge qlk qn Rorie moire heard he came to ye seidge, but yr ruine was y^t God had a contraversie agt. ym y^t hindered ym from doing any thing rightlie, ffor amongst all yr mischances the day befor M Kenzie wes to raise ye seidge for a time; ther women that were carieing water from ye well y^t was at ye yet did cast ye water in amongst ye barrels of powder qlk raised a great clamour amongst ym; one of ye Lord Kintailes men being prisoner w^{t}in lap from ye wall head of ye castle to ye middin yt wes at ye yet and told his m^r ye condi^{o}ne of ye house; the man's name was Duncan m'can ve Gillichallum, a Kintail man qo caused M'Kenzie continow ye seidge. The beseidged knowing that M'Kenzie got notice of q^t had befallen ye house and hearing that Rorie Moire was at ye seidge they rendered upon condi^{o}n to let ym pass w^t y^r lives to Glengarrie (*HP* II: 47).[5]

The account continues that one of the Mackenzies' principal followers, a Munro of Novar, was wounded by a gunshot from the castle, while two Mackenzie common soldiers were killed

(HP II: 48). Another account tells much the same story, indicating that the well which was used by 'the silly women' of the Glengarry garrison lay just outside the entrance. Consequently, these women had had to steal there in the silence of the night (Mackenzie 1794: 557–8). The alternative claim, that the castle was surrendered 'by treason of the captain unto whom Glengarrie had committed the custody thereof' (Anon 1780: 71; Crawford 2016: 126 who accepts this version of events), would thus seem unfair. Clearly the defenders had little choice but to treat for their lives. The victorious Mackenzies subsequently blew up part of the castle with gunpowder: 'After deliverie of ye castle he caused blow it up w^t powder in ye aire qrbe it might no more breid a contraversie or a defence to anie man' (*HP* II: 48).

The deliberate use of a large quantity of gunpowder had a devastating effect. As noted above, it is clear enough that the principal target was the tower. The damage wrought was so comprehensive that only shattered fragments have allowed archaeologists to make proposals about its anatomy. It also accounts for the loss of the east end of the hall, which has not been located. Unlike damage caused by bombardment in time of siege, this destruction of much of the castle was a post-event, symbolising the success of the Mackenzies' military operations and the eradication of what they deemed the Glengarry power base and emblem of their presence. Comparison can be drawn with Eilean Donan when, in 1719, the Royal Navy secured the capture of the castle and then went on to reduce it to a ruin by placing and igniting 27 barrels of powder.[6]

Given allusions to the castle in 1607 and 1633, as related above, it may be that parts of the hall survived in some measure for a while. This has led one clan historian to infer that the triumphant Mackenzies could not have caused its total destruction as early as 1602 when they captured it (MacDonald 1995: 37). An unreferenced, undated source in A Mackenzie's *History of the Mackenzies* observed that 'the rooms are to be seen yet' (Mackenzie 1894: 217), though for some time prior to the publication of the Old Statistical Account of 1794, all that was to be seen were 'remains there in heaps' (Mackenzie 1794: 558).

ILLUS 13   'Strome Ferry and Castle Loch Carron', *c* 1878. J Valentine and Son/Valentines of Dundee. (© Courtesy of HES, J Valentine and Sons)

By 1878 an early, perhaps the first, photographic image shows the castle very much as it is today (Illus 13), as reflected in A Mackenzie's own time (1893), when he commented that there were no traces of chambers, merely 'a considerable portion of the walls' (Mackenzie 1894: 217). In 1939 the castle site and surrounding ground, part of the Lochcarron estate, were donated by a local man, Charles Wadworth Murray of Couldoran (Strath Carron), to the National Trust for Scotland, in order to prevent them from being built over. The NTS has managed it ever since.

In conclusion, it is manifestly clear that possession of Strome castle was quintessential in the MacDonald tenure of west Ross. It was their capital there just as Dingwall had been in the east. Dingwall was lost with the earldom in 1475/6 but possession of Strome endured as a central node of the great Lochalsh inheritance. It is apparent that in the course of the 16th century there were times when the MacDonalds held it, despite the fact that legal title lay in the hands of others, notably the Grants. It is also apparent that there were times when the MacDonalds did not have possession but, transparently, they sought its return. Indeed, they must have perceived it as fundamental to their position in the area. Some understanding of its building history helps amplify this value they placed upon it, for, as mentioned above, it went through various stages of development, emerging as one of the greatest castles of the western Highlands and Islands. It is hoped that that will be the subject of another publication as more investigations on site enhance our knowledge of the ruins.

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NOTES

1 The history of Strome is a focal point to be set on the broader canvas of the MacDonald earldom of Ross and more especially the period of their tenure of lands in the area after the end of their earldom through to their expulsion in or around 1602. (See Petre forthcoming.)

2 https://scarf.scot/regional/higharf/highland-archaeological-research-framework-case-studies/eilean-donan-castle/ (accessed 10 March 2023).

3 While some excellent work on the castle's archaeology has already taken place (Cullen & Driscoll 1995), that has been limited. The site's owner, the National Trust for Scotland (NTS), has more recently arranged some conservation and repair work, leading to a condition report (2019), and subsequently Derek Alexander, NTS archaeologist, drafted a survey report (2022), both these being internal NTS documents. Prior to these unpublished observations on the fabric of the castle, its history and archaeology had attracted minimal attention. It was not included in in the *magnum opus* of MacGibbon & Ross of 1887–92 (*The Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland from the Twelfth to the Eighteenth Century*, 5 vols), nor in Stewart Cruden's *The Scottish Castle*, which reached its 3rd edition in 1981, nor in John Dunbar's classic analysis of medieval castles of the Highlands, also of 1981 (Dunbar 1981). Moreover, there was no RCAHMS Inventory for Ross-shire. Neither Miket & Roberts, *The Medieval Castles of Skye and Lochalsh*, 2nd edition of 2007, nor Mary Miers in her useful *The Western Seaboard: An Illustrated Architectural Guide* of 2008 ventured to the north of Loch Carron and beyond.

Where the castle is mentioned, it is in general analyses and gazetteers and hence necessarily merely in the slightest of detail (Gifford 1992: 455–6; Salter 1995: 162–3; Caldwell & Ruckley 2005: 112–13; Coventry 2006: 590). It is not the author's intention in this paper to explore in detail or in any way anticipate the investigations that have already happened, beyond what is given in the text above. Rather, it is hoped that this present article, concentrating on the castle's role and history, will help stimulate and inform further archaeological analysis, leading to a full report in the near future.

4 Bridgland (2005: 91) notes Timothy Pont's identification of these buildings on Eilean Drynachan and 'ylen Innergarry', now known as Eilean na H-Ealaidh. Glengarry tradition has it that one of these may be 'the house of Sleismenane' on 'the island of Sleismenane'. The name 'Sleismenane', or Sleismein, has now entirely disappeared from the topography of the district. (Anon, no date: *Invergarry Castle*. Glengarry Castle Hotel.)

5 Ruairidh Mòr (d 1614–15) was clearly the Mackenzie war-chief at this time. In the early 1570s he had led the Mackenzie forces in their feud with the Munros (Mackenzie 1894: 152). Possibly the castle was an issue in this feud, for it might have been now that a Hector Munro I of Erribol served as Constable of Strome for Glengarry (Mackenzie 1898: 350 but no date given for such a constableship). However, the Munros, along with the Gordons of Sutherland and Rosses of Balnagowan, aligned themselves with the Mackenzies at the time of the final siege and may even have been among the besiegers (Macdonald 1941: 197–8; MacCoinnich 2015: 222).

6 HMS *Flamborough* and HMS *Worcester* naval logs: Greenwich Royal Museums & The National Archives, accessed 12 October 2022. Greenwich Naval Logs: Royal Museums Greenwich Navy Board, Lieutenants' Logs. https://www.rmg.co.uk/collections/archive/rmgc-object-461652 (HMS *Worcester*); https://www.rmg.co.uk/

collections/archive.rmgc-object-527075 (HMS *Flamborough*). The National Archives, Naval Captains' Logs: https://discovery. nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C4460329 (HMS *Flamborough*).

ABBREVIATIONS

ALC: *Acts of the Lords of Council in Public Affairs, 1501–1554: Selections from the Acta dominorum concilii; introductory to the Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*. Ed. R K Hannay. 1932. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

ALI: *Acts of the Lords of the Isles 1336–1493*, 4th series, vol 22. Ed. J Munro & R W Munro. 1986. Edinburgh: Scottish History Society.

HP I: *Highland Papers*, I, Scottish History Society 2nd series, vol 5. Ed. J R N MacPhail. 1914. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

HP II: *Highland Papers*, II, Scottish History Society 2nd series, vol 12. Ed. J R N MacPhail. 1916. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

OPS: *Origines Parochiales Scotiae: The Antiquities Ecclesiastical and Territorial of the Parishes of Scotland*, vol 2, part 2. Ed. C N Innes et al. 1855. Edinburgh: Bannatyne Club.

RMS II: *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum: The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, AD 1424–1513*. Ed. J B Paul. 1882. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RMS III: *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum: The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, AD 1513–1546*. Ed. J B Paul & J M Thomson. 1883. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RMS IV: *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum: The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, AD 1546–1580*. Ed. J M Thomson. 1886. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RMS VI: *Registrum Magni Sigilli Regum Scotorum: The Register of the Great Seal of Scotland, AD 1593–1607*. Ed. J M Thomson. 1890. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RPC III: *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol 3: *(1578–1585)*. Ed. D Masson. 1880. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RPC V: *The Register of the Privy Council of Scotland*, vol 5: *(1592–1599)*. Ed. D Masson. 1882. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RPS: *The Records of the Parliaments of Scotland to 1707*. Ed. K Brown. University of St Andrews. https://www.rps.ac.uk/. Accessed 31 May 2020.

RSS I: *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol 1: *1488–1529*. Ed. M Livingstone. 1908. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RSS II: *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol 2: *1529–1542*. Ed. D H Fleming. 1921. Edinburgh: HM General Register House.

RSS IV: *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol 4: *1548–1556*. Ed. J Beveridge. 1952. Edinburgh: HMSO.

RSS VI: *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol 6: *1567–1574*. Ed. G Donaldson. 1963. Edinburgh: HMSO.

RSS VII: *Registrum Secreti Sigilli Regum Scotorum. The Register of the Privy Seal of Scotland*, vol 7: *1575–1580*. Ed. G Donaldson. 1966. Edinburgh: HMSO.

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