

## III.

NOTICE OF THE EXPLORATION OF THE CASTLE ON THE ISLE OF LOCH DOCHART, PERTSHIRE. BY MRS PLACE OF LOCH DOCHART. WITH DRAWINGS OF THE OBJECTS FOUND, BY MR GORDON PLACE, AND PLANS AND VIEW OF THE CASTLE BY MR THOMAS ROSS, ARCHITECT, F.S.A. SCOT.

This ruined castle is situated on an island in Loch Dochart, about  $1\frac{1}{2}$  miles down the river from Crianlarich Railway Station. The loch, island, and castle are all of small dimensions. The island is not much beyond a stone-throw from the level southern shore, along which the road and railway pass, and a little more from the northern, which is, however, the descent of a lofty precipitous mountain. It is fully an acre in extent, is thickly wooded, and is generally rocky and precipitous, rising perhaps about 18 feet at the highest part above the water. The landing place is on the east side, in a little bay which just holds a rowing boat. (See fig. 1.) Besides the Castle, there are on the island the ruins of two buildings, probably offices, and on the highest part the foundations of a small round structure.

Few oral traditions appear to have gathered around this castle, probably because it was long ago burned with such intent and complete finality. There is a tradition that it was once (or that there was on the island) a religious house. We have in our house at Loch Dochart a very curious old coloured print called "Loch Dochart, Western Highlands. I. Walmsley, pinxit; F. T. Sargent, Sculpt, 1718." This, although like the rocky island and possibly like the road before the railway was made, and in outline like the castle, gives large ecclesiastical Gothic windows. Now, the window in the east gable, very ruinous and broken, has been a lofty narrow one going through two storeys, and probably had a pointed form at the top, which may have given rise to the religious-house tradition. Otherwise the windows are small.

Some guide-books say that Bruce sheltered here after the battle of

Dalry, a few miles further up the glen; and quite recently photographers have begun to print views of the building as "Rob Roy's Castle, Loch Dochart," neither statement resting on any foundation—as from the *Black Book of Taymouth* (p. 35) we learn that Sir Duncan Campbell, seventh Laird of Glenorchy, "biggit the howss of Lochdochart, for the workmanship quhairof he gaiff twa thowsand markis, anno"—; the date is not filled in, and can only be fixed as between

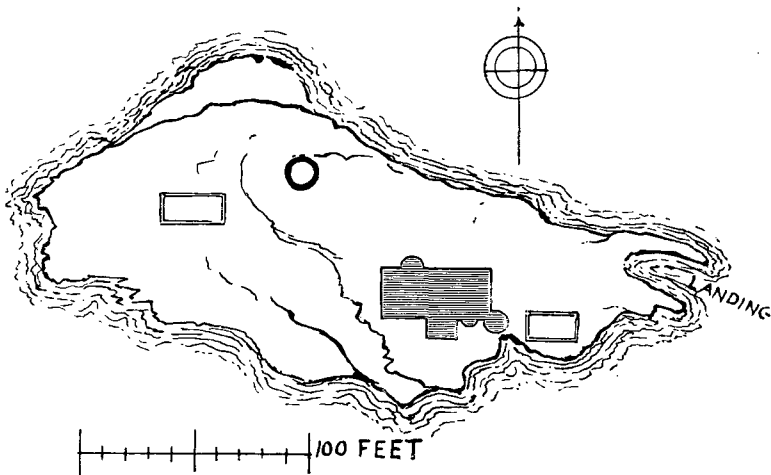


Fig. 1. Plan of the Island in Loch Dochart. By Thomas Ross, F.S.A. Scot.

the year of his succession, 1583, and the year of his death, 1631. The house cost him about £1333. The broken stone tablet with his coat of arms (fig. 2) was found near the doorway. It is quartered 1st and 4th, Campbell; 2nd, the Lordship of Lorn; 3rd, Stewart of Lorn. The ninth Laird of Glenorchy, Sir Robert Campbell, who succeeded in 1640, gave to Alexander Campbell, his fourth son, "the lands about Loch Dochart, viz.:—the Yll of Lochdochart and Loch, the port of Lochdochart, Cremlarich, Innerhariff, Gynith, Innerhaggerneybeg and Innerhaggerneyemoir, with the scheillis of Conench, Doonich, and Learagan, quhich ar holdine in feu of the house of Glenurquhay."

The estate of Loch Dochart was acquired by my husband's grandfather, Mr Edward Place, of Skelton Grange, York, after his marriage with Lady Ann Gordon in the year 1798 or 1799.

Till about the year 1890 the castle was completely buried in its own

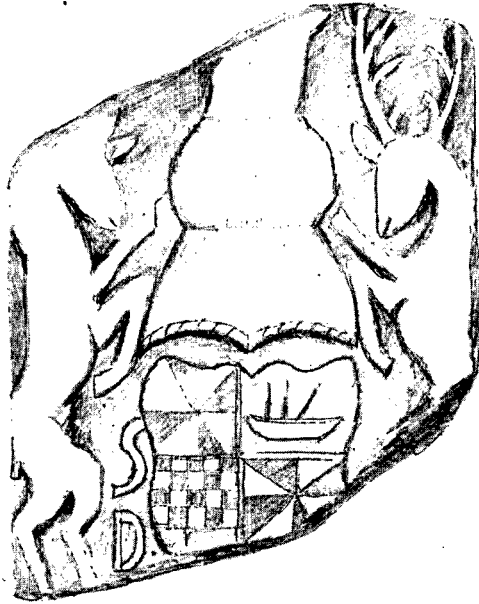


Fig. 2. Stone Tablet with Armorial Bearings of Sir Duncan Campbell of Glenorchy.

ruins. The great tower-like chimney stood up on the south, and the outer corner of the walls could be traced, and a good height of both east and west walls remained. The place was in a state of great confusion, and one had to force one's way through brushwood and midges, and somehow found oneself on a most uncomfortable and unaccountable heap of stones, greatly overgrown with nettles and garlic, wild rose bushes and rowans, with quite a large ash-tree in the middle, while a few

currant and gooseberry bushes and a real white-heart cherry-tree bore testimony to an ancient garden outside.

We used to picnic on the island, and there was only one spot where we could have luncheon free from the stinging, prickly, strong-smelling vegetation. It stood rather out to the loch, on the sunny south side, commanding a splendid view of Ben More.

Here on one occasion about the period indicated, after luncheon, the boys and girls of the party began a stone-throwing competition, and soon



Fig. 3. Earthenware Jug found in the dungeon (6 inches in height).

great blocks began to be flung into the loch. Then I spoke out the wish of my heart for many a day. "Oh, I *do* wish we could clear all these stones away, and see what the castle was really like, and put it right and take an interest in it." As happens when there is a proposal of sport being turned into work, some were willing and others were not; the latter thought they had better go a-fishing—and to fish they went. Well, we who remained and two boatmen set to work, and by the time the fishers returned to tea, what had we to show them? *A dungeon 8 feet deep, quite cleared out!* This was the projecting round tower on which we used to encamp, then a mere heap of stones clear of vegetation.

The dungeon seems strongly built on the solid rock. An iron staple fixed in the wall, and another knocked out by the falling masonry, was suggestive of the poor prisoner, as were the remains of a knife found on the floor, which had been worn into a hollow, possibly by an endeavour to file a chain; also the small pieces of a jug, of coarse ware (fig. 3), which we pieced together.

There were also quantities of bones found, charred beyond recognition of their kind. From the bottom of the dungeon there is a flue 20 inches wide by 12 inches high, which runs along below the east wall of the castle,—a contrivance not unlike what is found in connection with the dungeons at Craigmillar Castle.

After our first day's work, we consulted as to the prosecution of the undertaking, and decided that on such days as could be given up by the votaries of sport, we would take time at the castle and try to see what it had been like—and on *off* days, perhaps four in a season for ten years, we worked at it. We had men who worked splendidly, often kind and enthusiastic visitors, and always a band of busy, sharp-eyed boys and girls looking out for curios. The result of our labours is that whereas we used to climb over heaps of stones, now we walk in through a doorway which had been secured with a sliding bar, and find ourselves in a hall (see fig. 4) 28 feet long by 17 feet wide, with a projecting angle nook about 9 feet square, having a small window on each side, and one in the centre, thus commanding the whole length of the loch and the glen. There is a round arch at the back, 7 feet 6 inches above the floor, to support an intake of the wall above, shown by a dotted line on the plan. This angle nook, the hearth of which is paved, probably served as the kitchen. Leading off the hall is a private room, up one step, about 8 feet wide, with a good fireplace and a small window. There are several presses in the walls, all about 3 feet above the floor, except one, a garderobe, with a rounded end, which comes to the floor—it is situated at the door leading to the private room. Near this is a wheel stair in a projecting turret leading to the upper floors. On the south side another wheel stair in a similar turret has led to the

upper rooms at the east end of the house, and to the room in the projecting round tower at the south-east angle. There is no entrance to the prison in this tower on the ground floor, which has been reached by a trap in the floor above, to which the stair gave access, so that it may be supposed to have been a prison. It has a small window or breathing-

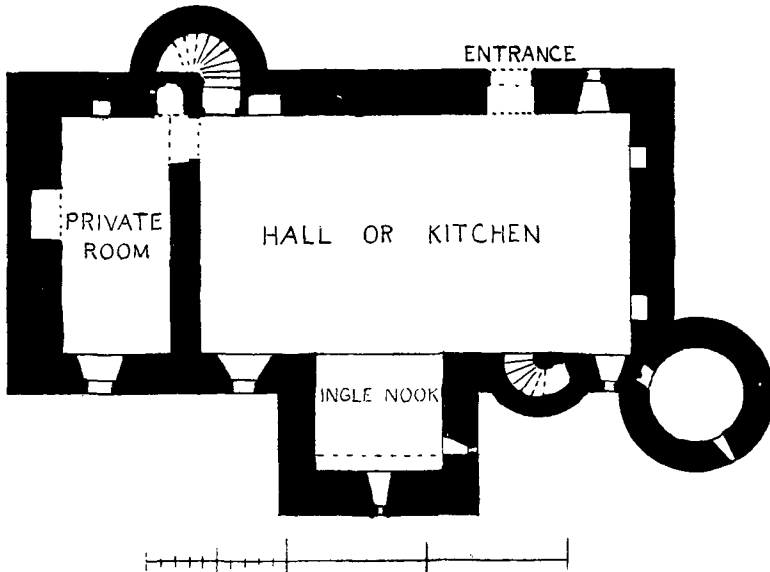


Fig. 4. Ground-plan of the Castle on the Isle of Loch Dochart.  
By Thomas Ross, F.S.A. Scot.

hole, with a kind of projecting shoot or sink in the sill. The turret reaches the edge of the rock, which is here precipitous, about 12 feet high, with deep water below. The north and south walls are now about 7 or 8 feet high. The gables are much higher, the east one being almost entire, but up the line of the recess of the windows of the two upper floors it is rent, and the northern half is tottering to its fall, and would have fallen ere this if we had not had it propped with railway rails.

The ingle nook stands nearly its full height, and has been finished as a tower-like, picturesque chimney with several intakes. The ingle nook is a frequent feature in houses after the Reformation, and this is one of the most important.

The house was three storeys high; the upper floor had dormer windows; the tympanum of one, quite entire and of good design, is lying

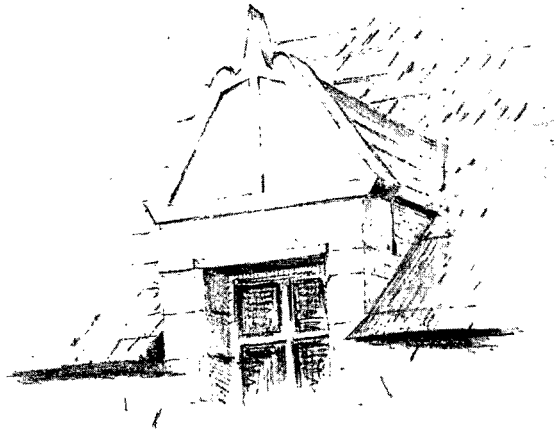


Fig. 5. Dormer Window and its Tympanum, as it would have appeared in position.

among the ruins, and is shown as it would have appeared in its original position in fig. 5.

This house has been planned as a place of residence rather than of defence—its position on a deep loch being its security. It was meant to be a comfortable, dry, and sanitary abode, and had throughout an excellent timber floor, of which we found the charred remains 2 inches thick; under this a layer of fine sand fully 18 inches deep, which must have been carried thither, there being none on the island. This was a most careful preparation for a timber floor. There were many evidences

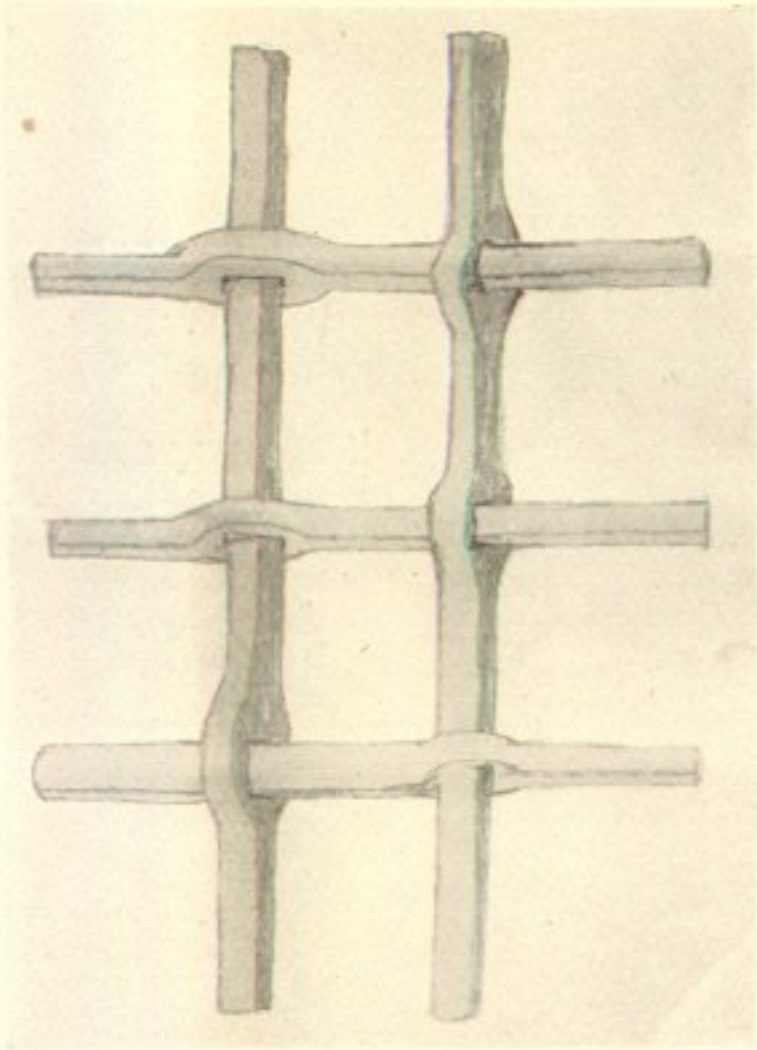


Fig. 6.

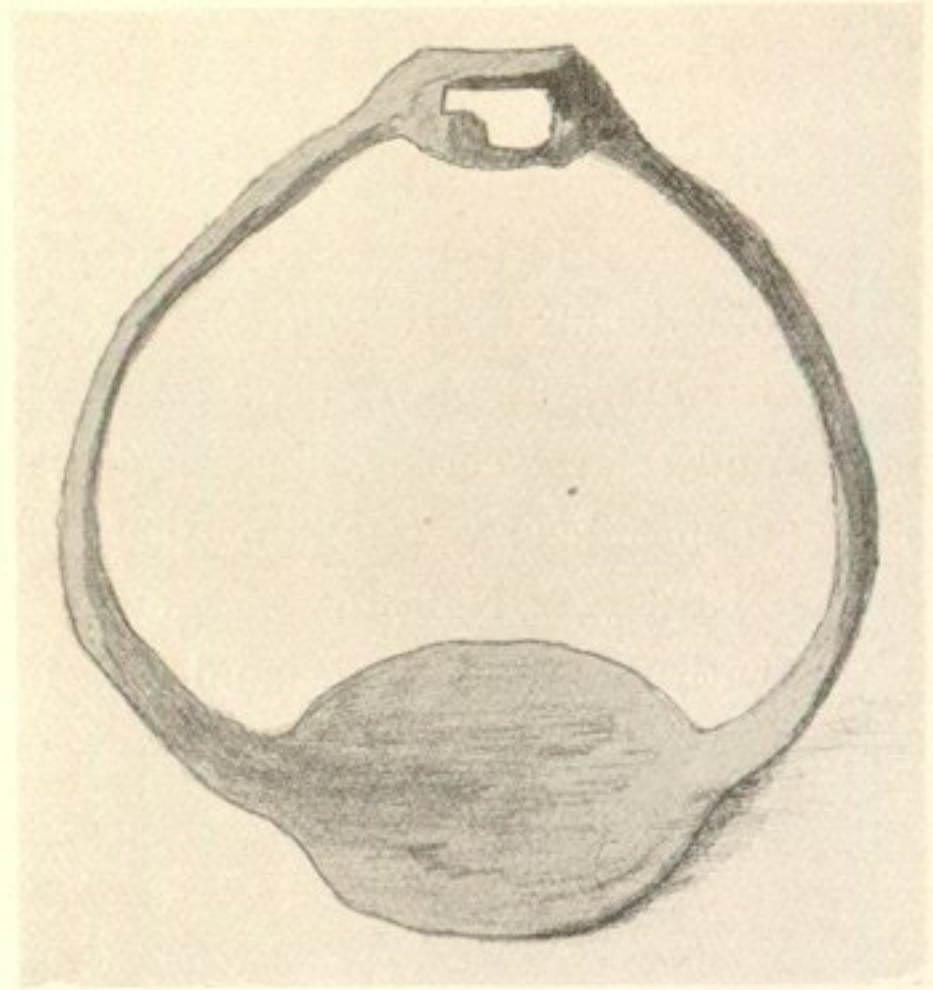


Fig. 7.

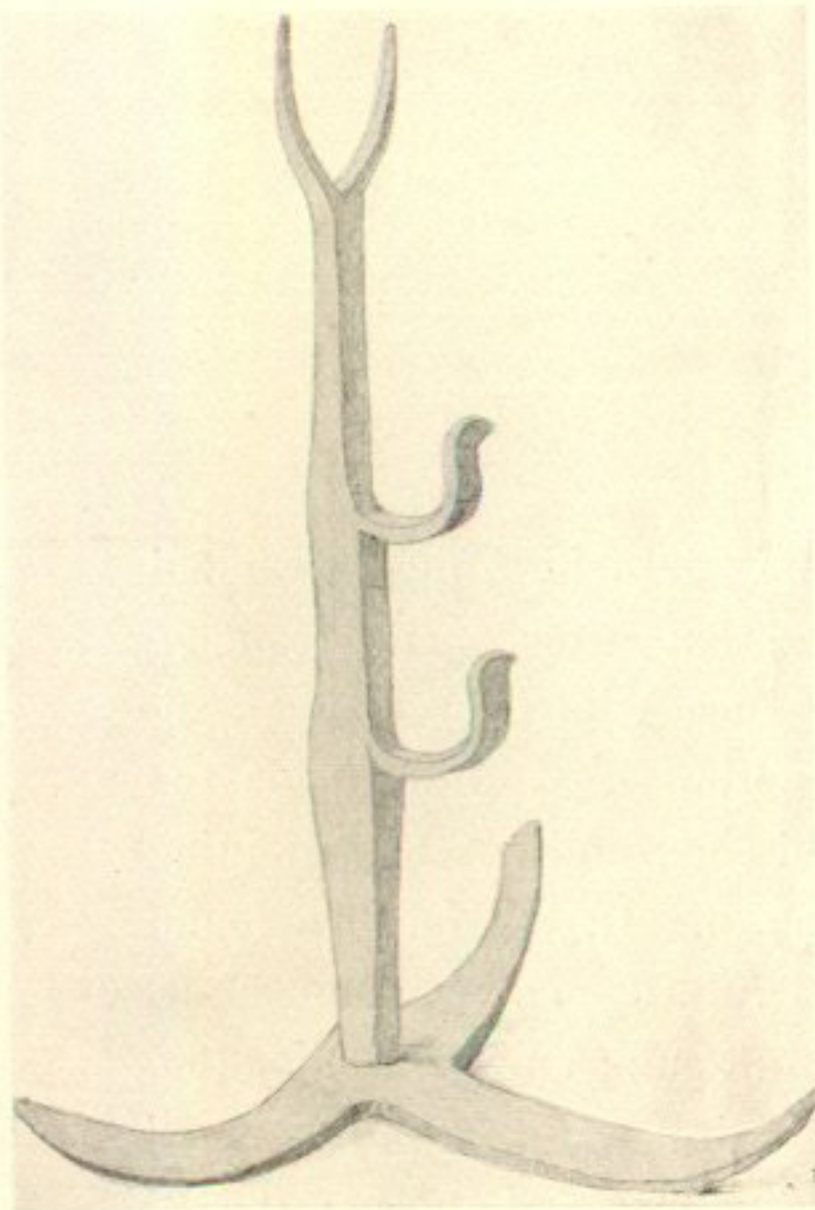


Fig. 8.

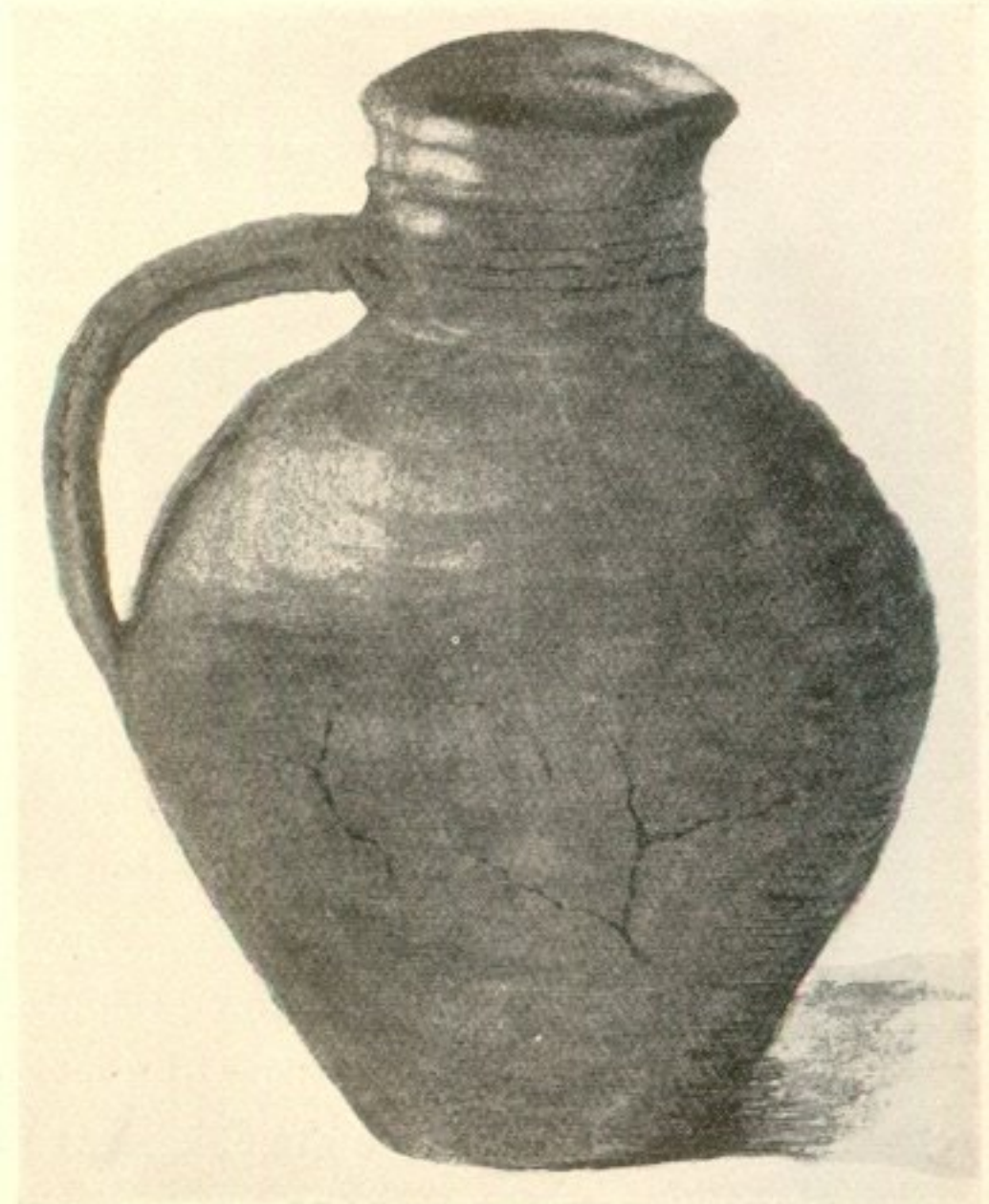


Fig. 9.

Interlocked Window-bars, Stirrup, Fire-dog, and Earthenware Jar.



of the place having been destroyed by fire, and in the *Black Book* (p. 100) we are told that in the Civil Wars of the years 1644 and 1645 the Laird of Glenurchy's whole lands were ravaged by the Royalist forces under the Marquis of Montrose, the whole cattle of the tenants taken away, and their "cornes, houses, plenishing and whole insight brunt." It is then added: "Notandum that John M'Nab fiar of Bowane, and Alexander M'Inlay M'Nab in Inshewine, with the whole of Cian Nab joynit with foresaid enemies and took in the y<sup>ll</sup> of Loch Dochart, quich y<sup>ll</sup> of

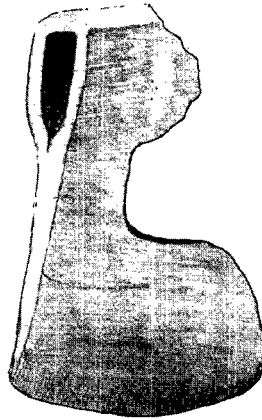


Fig. 10. Axe of Iron.

Loch Dochart was violently taken from them again in Anno 1646, and brunt thro' their default." It is evident that after such a conflagration, which fused the roof-slates and reduced the floor to charcoal, little of the plenishing could remain. In the Great Hall beside the entrance we found the great iron lock and key, and at the adjoining window the iron-barred grating shown in fig. 6. In the hall we found several locks and keys, two odd spurs, a stirrup (fig. 7), a salmon spear, part of a bridle-bit, and part of a lock of a flint gun; an iron fire-dog (fig. 8) with a forked top and hooks at the side, an iron saddle-tree, four small horseshoes, a jug like the one found in the dungeon, and another (fig. 9)

9 inches in height but in fragments, which we pieced together; two saws, two axes (fig. 10), and a steel for striking a light with a flint (fig. 11). At the doorway to the private room and garderobe there was

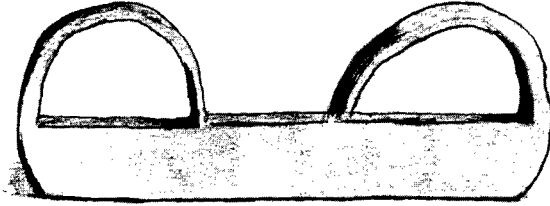


Fig. 11. Steel for striking light with a flint.

a mass of door-plates, some with their nails still in them. Inside the room we found large fragments of a "greybeard," a pair of scissors (fig. 12), and eighty-seven small copper coins of Charles I., known as turners,

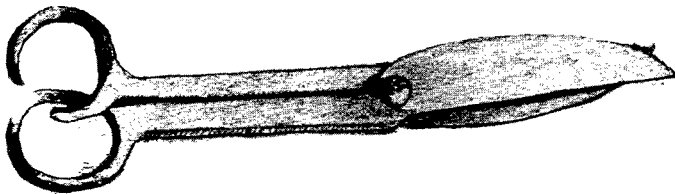


Fig. 12. Pair of Scissors found in the private room.

or Scots twopenny pieces, with the initials, C.II.R. under a crown on the obverse, and the legend round the margin, CAR. D.G. SCOT. ANG. FR. ET. HIB. R., while on the reverse is a thistle head with two leaves and the motto round the margin, NEMO ME IMPVNE LACESSIT; and close among these, fragments of what we believe to have been a brass sporrán chain, beautifully worked and chased in a plaited pattern. The coins were

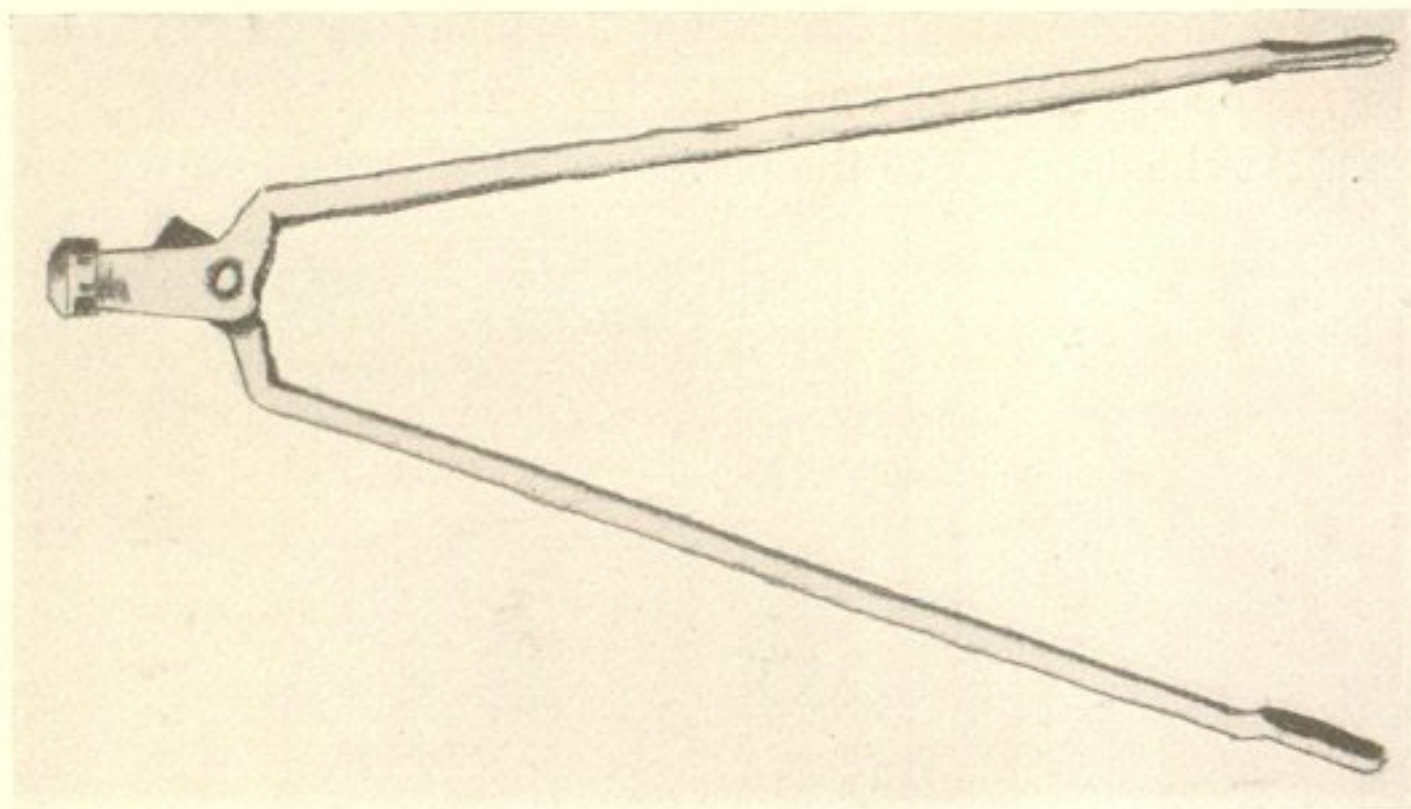


Fig. 13. Pair of Tongs found on the hearthstone.

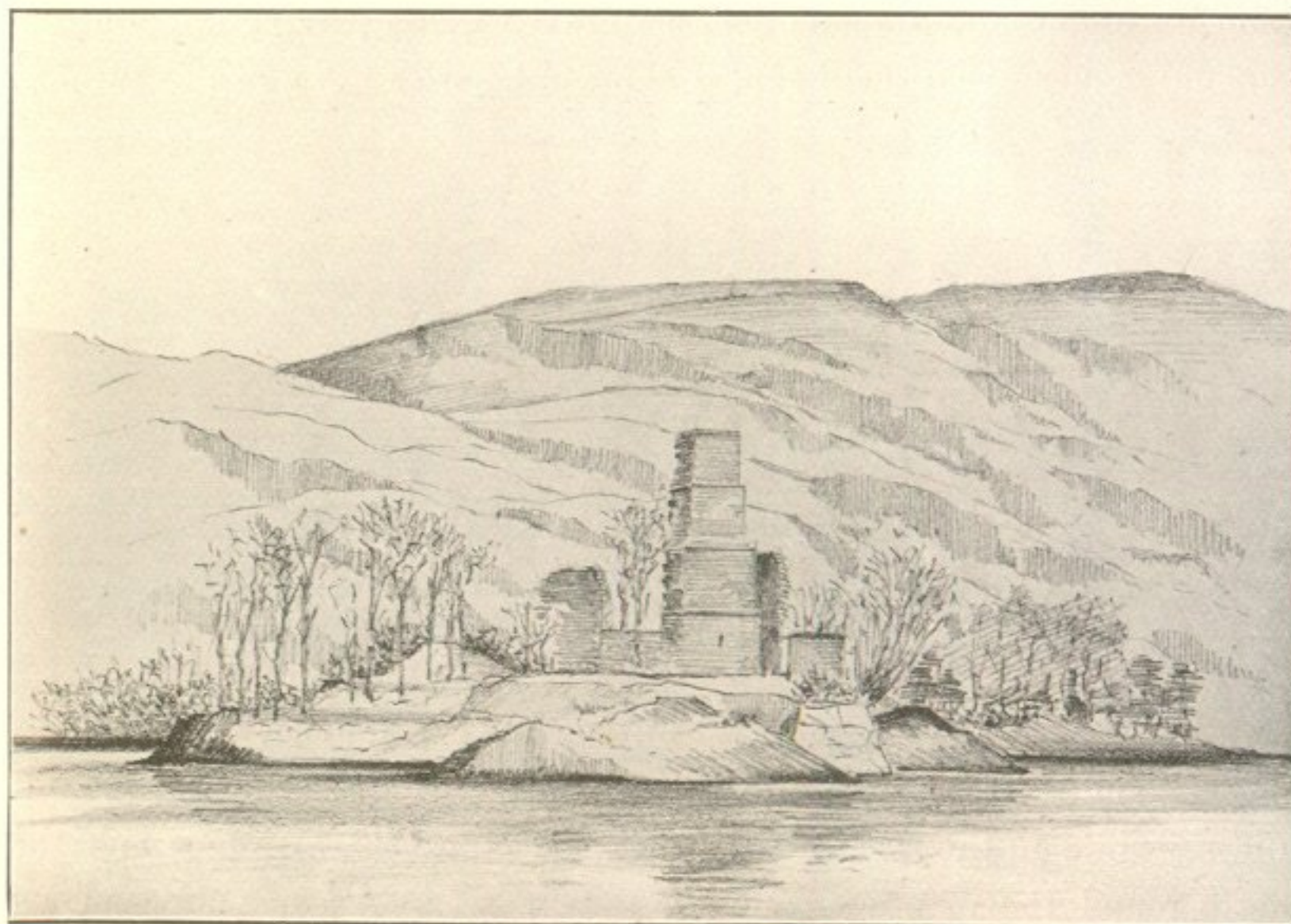


Fig. 14. View of the Castle on the Isle of Loch Dochart, as it now appears.  
By Thomas Ross, F.S.A. Scot.

probably in the sporran of one of the last occupants of the castle. An axe lay close by, but an ash-tree had sent such a strong root through it, where the shaft had been burned out, that it was split quite open. On the hearth-stone, as if in peaceful expectation of being picked up to mend the peat fire, lay an ancient pair of tongs shown in fig. 13. These are all the relics we found, and they are now safely stored away.

Throughout the whole of its progress the work of clearing out the ruins was most interesting, and now that it is finished, we have propped up the walls where necessary, and cemented loose stones and cracks, so that the castle on its little wooded island is now a picturesque object of interest and instruction; and I hope that this account may stir up other owners of castles to do their best for their preservation.