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DUKE MURDOCH'S CASTLE, LOCH ARD, PERTHSHIRE. BY DAVID CHRISTISON, M.D., LL.D., VICE-PRESIDENT.

Nothing authentic seems to be known of the origin of the name of this ruin, but, writing from notes taken in 1794, the Rev. Dr Patrick Graham¹ states that the castle "was said to have been built by Murdoch, Duke of Albany, uncle of James I. of Scotland." He adds, "It is said that he designed this as a place of retreat when he apprehended a prosecution on account of his ambitious attempts, for which, indeed, he was afterwards beheaded."

Mr Hutchison² says that this strong building "is locally called Murdoch's Castle," and that "it was built by this Duke of Albany as a residence." He goes on to say, "It seems, however, too small for that purpose; but it may have been a hunting-seat, or tower of refuge, for some of the earlier Earls of Menteith. There were earlier Murdochs among them." Other "local traditions," he adds, "differ as to the scene of Duke Murdoch's capture. One places it at a spot still called by the name of Murdoch's Ford, on the old road between Doune and Dunblane, where a small stream is crossed by the road not far from the farm of Anchors

¹ *Sketches Descriptive of the Picturesque Scenery of Perthshire*, 1810, p. 54.

² *The Lake of Menteith*, A. F. Hutchison, M.A., 1899, p. 250.

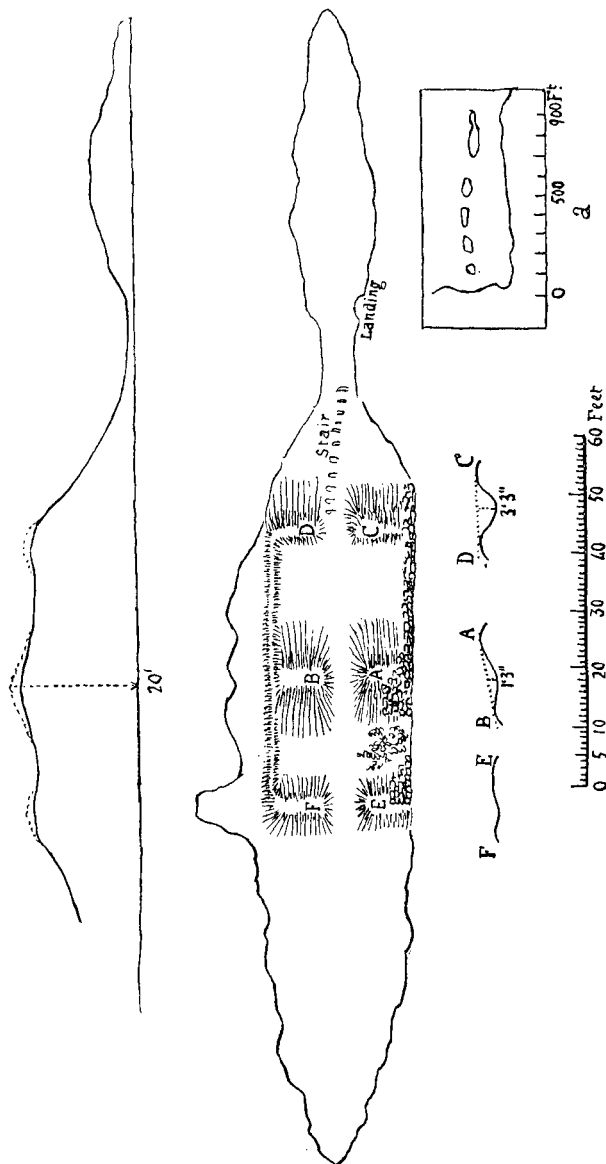


Fig. 1. Plan and Section of Duke Murdoch's Castle and Island in Loch Ard.
(Enlarged from the 6-inch Ordnance map.)

Cross, and about a mile from the town of Dunblane; while a second legend affirms that he was taken from his castle on Dundochill, a small island on Loch Ard."

All that we can safely conclude is that, probably enough, this rock fastness was constructed by the Duke of Albany in question, or possibly



Fig. 2. Remains of Duke Murdoch's Castle.

by one of his Menteith ancestors who bore the name of Murdoch, and also that it was known as Dundochill.

The site of the castle (fig. 1) is on the largest, highest, and most easterly of a chain of six rocky islets, running east and west, close to the southern shore of Loch Ard, 3 miles west of the village of Aberfoyle, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ east of the upper end of the loch. The channel between the islet and the land is 90 feet wide, 10 feet deep in the middle, and 9 feet

deep close to the rock, so that the castle was well protected from attack before the days of artillery.

The islet consists of a main part and a "tail" running eastward, separated by an isthmus 7 yards in length and 3 in width, which is covered when the loch is flooded.

The "tail," 50 feet in length, is comparatively low and narrow; but the main rock rises pretty steeply from either end to a nearly level top, 20 feet high, 60 feet long, and 24 wide, on which the castle was built. The landing-place is on the south side of the isthmus, and from it a rude stair leads up to the castle.

Until three or four years ago the castle stood to a considerable height above the rock, but a great fall then took place, and little masonry remains except the under-building, constructed in alignment with the mural cliff that rises directly out of the water, on the south side of the islet (fig. 2, from a photograph by Miss Maude C. Christison). Even of this a considerable part is in ruins, but a portion $8\frac{1}{2}$ feet in height and 5 feet 3 inches in width still survives. The masonry is carefully built throughout, but not in courses, and is arranged without any regard to the size of the stones. It is cemented with lime much mixed with gravel, and apparently apt to decay.

As far as can be judged from its present condition, the building has been a simple rectangle, without flanking towers, enclosing a space of about 45×20 feet (plan and sections, fig. 1). A wide mound, about 3 feet in height, divides the space into two compartments, the one to the east, or nearest the entrance, having been probably a square of 20 feet, and the other a rectangle of 15×20 feet, supposing that the mound conceals a transverse wall 5 or 6 feet thick and no other building.

Duke Murdoch's Castle seems to be of a somewhat unusual type, and a small amount of excavation might suffice to give a better idea of its ground-plan, and to afford some indication of its date.