

= Dunstaffnage Castle =

Dunstaffnage Castle is a partially ruined castle in Argyll and Bute , western Scotland . It lies 3 miles (4 @. @ 8 km) N.N.E. of Oban , situated on a platform of conglomerate rock on a promontory at the south @-@ west of the entrance to Loch Etive , and is surrounded on three sides by the sea .

The castle dates back to the 13th century , making it one of Scotland 's oldest stone castles , in a local group which includes Castle Sween and Castle Tioram . Guarding a strategic location , it was built by the MacDougall lords of Lorn , and has been held since the 15th century by the Clan Campbell . To this day there is a hereditary Captain of Dunstaffnage , although they no longer reside at the castle . Dunstaffnage is maintained by Historic Scotland , and is open to the public , although the 16th century gatehouse is retained as the private property of the Captain . The prefix dun in the name means " fort " in Gaelic , while the rest of the name derives from Norse stafr @-@ nis , " headland of the staff " .

= = History = =

= = = Before Dunstaffnage = = =

Before the construction of the castle , Dunstaffnage may have been the location of a Dál Riata stronghold , known as Dun Monaidh , as early as the 7th century . It was recorded , by John Monipennie in 1612 , that the Stone of Destiny was kept here after being brought from Ireland , and before it was moved to Scone Palace in 843 . However , Iona and Dunadd are considered more likely , given their known connections with Dál Riata and Strathclyde kings . Hector Boece records that the stone was kept at " Evonium " , which has traditionally been identified with Dunstaffnage , although in 2010 the writer A. J. Morton identified Evonium with Irvine in Ayrshire .

= = = The MacDougalls = = =

The castle itself was built in the second quarter of the 13th century , as the seat of Duncan MacDougall , Lord of Lorn and grandson of Somerled . Duncan was unsuccessfully attacked by his Norwegian @-@ backed brother , Uspak , who later died in an attack on Rothesay Castle with Norse forces in the 1230s . He had also travelled to Rome in 1237 , and was the founder of nearby Ardchattan Priory . Duncan 's son Ewen MacDougall inherited his father 's title in the 1240s , and expanded the MacDougall influence , styling himself " King of the Isles " . It is probable that Ewen built the three round towers onto the castle , and constructed and enlarged the hall inside .

Following Alexander III 's repulse of the Norse influence in Argyll , the MacDougalls backed the Scottish monarchy , and Ewen 's son Alexander was made the first sherriff of Argyll in 1293 . However , they supported the Balliol side during the Wars of Scottish Independence which broke out a few years later . Robert Bruce defeated the Clan MacDougall at the Battle of the Pass of Brander in 1308 or 1309 , and after a brief siege , took control of Dunstaffnage Castle .

= = = Royal fortress = = =

Now a Crown property , Dunstaffnage was controlled by a series of keepers . James I seized the castle in 1431 , following the Battle of Inverlochy , as his enemies were hiding inside . In 1455 James Douglas , 9th Earl of Douglas stayed at Dunstaffnage , on his way to treat with John MacDonald , Lord of the Isles . This followed James II 's attack on Douglas power , and led to the signing of the Treaty of Westminster @-@ Ardtornish . A later keeper , John Stewart of Lorn , was a rival of Alan MacDougall , and was stabbed by his supporters on his way to his marriage at Dunstaffnage Chapel in 1463 , although he survived long enough to make his vows . Although MacDougall took the castle , he was ousted by James III , who granted Dunstaffnage to Colin Campbell , 1st Earl of Argyll in 1470 .

== Clan Campbell ==

The Earls of Argyll appointed Captains to oversee Dunstaffnage , and keep it in readiness , on their behalf . Changes were made to the buildings , particularly the gatehouse , which was rebuilt around this time . The Campbells were loyal allies of the royal house , and Dunstaffnage was used as a base for government expeditions against the MacDonald Lords of the Isles , among others , during the 15th and 16th centuries . James IV visited Dunstaffnage on two occasions .

Dunstaffnage saw action during the Civil War , holding out against Montrose 's army in 1644 . The castle was burned by royalist troops , following the failure of the rising of the 9th Earl of Argyll in 1685 , against the Catholic James VII . During the Jacobite risings of 1715 and 1745 , the castle was occupied by government troops . Flora MacDonald , who helped Bonnie Prince Charlie to escape from Scotland , was briefly imprisoned here while en route to imprisonment in London .

== Decline and restoration ==

The Campbells continued to add to the castle , building a new house over the old west range in 1725 . However , the rest of the castle was already decaying . In 1810 an accidental fire gutted the castle , and the Captains ceased to live here , moving to Dunstaffnage House , some 2 km to the south @-@ east , until this too burned down in 1940 . Tenants lived in the 1725 house within the castle until 1888 .

Restoration work was undertaken in 1903 by the Duke of Argyll , the castle 's owner . This was followed in 1912 by a court case , in which the Court of Session ruled that Angus Campbell , the 20th hereditary Captain , had right of residence notwithstanding the Duke of Argyll 's ownership . Works were delayed by World War I , and the planned total restoration was never completed . In 1958 , the 21st Captain and the Duke agreed to hand the castle into state care , and it remains a Historic Scotland property . Both the castle and chapel are category A listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments .

== Description ==

== Walls ==

Dunstaffnage is an irregular quadrangular structure of great strength , with rounded towers at three of the angles . It measures approximately 35 by 30 metres (115 by 98 ft) , and has a circumference of about 120 metres (390 ft) . The walls are of coursed rubble , with sandstone dressings , and stand up to 18 m (60 ft) high , including the conglomerate bedrock platform . The walls are up to 3 m (10 ft) thick , affording strong defence to this highly strategic location , guarding the entrance to Loch Etive and the Pass of Brander beyond , and today commanding a splendid view . The parapet walk , which once followed the whole of the walls , has been partially restored with new stone flags . The original parapet is now also gone . Arrow slits , later converted into gunloops , are the only openings . Brass cannon recovered from wrecked vessels of the Spanish Armada were once mounted on the walls .

== Round towers ==

Soon after the construction of the castle walls , three round towers were built on the north , east , and west towers . The north tower , or donjon , is the largest , comprising three or four storeys originally , and probably housed the lord 's private apartments . The west tower is almost internal , barely projecting beyond the rounded corner of the curtain wall , and could only be entered via the parapet walk . The basement level contains a pit prison which was accessed from above . The east tower was almost completely rebuilt in the late 15th century as a gatehouse . Each tower was

probably once topped by a conical roof .

== The gatehouse ==

The gatehouse was built by the Campbells in the late 15th century , replacing an earlier round tower in the east corner . It takes the form of a four @-@ storey harled tower house , with the entrance passage running through half the vaulted basement , the other half forming guard rooms with arrow slits facing the gate . The present approach to the gate is by a stone stair , replacing an earlier drawbridge . The tower was remodelled in the 18th century to provide reception rooms and a private suite . The dormer windows at the top are capped by the pediments from the 1725 house (see below) , and bear the date , the Campbell arms , and the initials AEC and DLC , for Aeneas Campbell , 11th Captain , and his wife Dame Lilius . The pediments were moved here during the 1903 restoration works .

== Internal ranges ==

The east range was located between the north and east towers , although only foundations remain . This was the principal range of buildings and contained a large hall above vaulted cellars . The hall had double @-@ lancet windows , decorated with carved patterns , which were later blocked up ; their outlines can be seen in the east curtain wall .

A second range stood along the north @-@ west wall , and would have been connected to the hall range by the donjon tower . The ground floor housed a kitchen . In 1725 the range was remodelled into a two @-@ storey house , accessed via a stone stair , and topped with the dormer windows which now form part of the gatehouse . The well in front is original , although the large stone surround is of 19th century date .

== Dunstaffnage Chapel ==

A ruined 13th century chapel lies around 150 metres (490 ft) to the south @-@ west of the castle . This was also built by Duncan MacDougall of Lorn , as a private chapel , and features detailed stonework of outstanding quality . The chapel is 20 by 6 metres (66 by 20 ft) , and formerly had a timber roof . The lancet windows carry dog @-@ tooth carving , and have fine wide @-@ splayed arches internally . The chapel was already ruinous in 1740 , when a burial aisle was built on to the east end , to serve as a resting place for the Captains of Dunstaffnage and their families .

== Captain of Dunstaffnage ==

Traditionally , an officer called the Hereditary Captain of Dunstaffnage is responsible for the castle and its defence . The office still exists , and to retain the title (now rather a sinecure without military significance) , the incumbent is required to spend three nights a year in the castle . No other responsibilities or privileges now attach to the post .

== Castle ghost ==

A ghost , known as the " Ell @-@ maid of Dunstaffnage " , is said to haunt the castle . A type of gruagach , the ghost 's appearances are said to be associated with events in the lives of the hereditary keepers .