

= Loch Leven Castle =

Loch Leven Castle is a ruined castle on an island in Loch Leven , in the Perth and Kinross local authority area of Scotland . Possibly built around 1300 , the castle was the location of military action during the Wars of Scottish Independence (1296 ? 1357) . In the latter part of the 14th century , the castle was granted by his uncle to William Douglas , 1st Earl of Douglas , and remained in Douglas ' hands for the next 300 years . Mary , Queen of Scots was imprisoned here in 1567 ? 1568 , and forced to abdicate as queen , before escaping with the help of her gaoler 's family . In 1588 , the Queen 's gaoler inherited the title Earl of Morton , and moved away from the castle . It was bought , in 1675 , by Sir William Bruce , who used the castle as a focal point in his garden ; it was never again used as a residence .

Today , the remains of the castle are protected as a category A listed building , in the care of Historic Scotland . Loch Leven Castle is accessible in summer by the public via a ferry .

= = History = =

= = = Early history = = =

A castle may have been constructed on Castle Island by 1257 , when the 16 @-@ year @-@ old King Alexander III of Scotland was forcibly brought there by his regents . During the First War of Scottish Independence (1296 ? 1328) , the invading English army held the castle , then named Loch Leven Castle , which lies at a strategically important position between the towns of Edinburgh , Stirling and Perth . Parts of the present fortification , the curtain wall , may date from this time and were perhaps built by the occupying English . The castle was captured by the Scots before the end of the 13th century , possibly by the forces of William Wallace .

English forces laid siege to Loch Leven in 1301 , but the garrison was relieved in the same year when the siege was broken by Sir John Comyn . King Robert the Bruce (reigned 1306 ? 1329) is known to have visited the castle in 1313 and again in 1323 . Following Bruce 's death , the English invaded again , and laid siege to Loch Leven Castle in 1335 in support of the pretender Edward Balliol (d . 1364) . According to the 14th @-@ century chronicle of John of Fordun , the English attempted to flood the castle by building a dam across the outflow of the loch . The water level rose for a month , until the captain of the English force , Sir John de Stirling , left to attend the festival of Saint Margaret of Scotland . The defenders , under Alan de Vipont , took the opportunity to come out of the castle at night , and damaged the dam , causing it to collapse and flood the English camp . The story has , however , been doubted by later historians .

Loch Leven Castle was strengthened in the 14th or early 15th century , by the addition of the five @-@ storey tower house or keep . According to Historic Scotland , it is of the 14th century , making it one of the oldest tower houses in Scotland which still substantially survives . In 1390 King Robert II (reigned 1371 ? 1390) granted the castle to Sir Henry Douglas , the husband of his niece Marjory . From the 14th century , the castle served as a state prison . Prior to becoming king , Robert II was held here in 1369 , as was Archibald Douglas , 5th Earl of Douglas (d . 1439) in the first half of the 15th century . Patrick Graham , Archbishop of St Andrews , died in captivity at the castle in 1478 .

= = = The 16th century = = =

Mary , Queen of Scots (reigned 1542 ? 1567) first visited Loch Leven in 1565 as a guest of Sir William Douglas of Lochleven (d . 1606) . She held an interview here with the Calvinist preacher John Knox .

Mary returned to Loch Leven as a prisoner , from 17 June 1567 until her escape on 2 May 1568 . At the " battle " of Carberry Hill on 15 June , Mary surrendered to her noblemen , who opposed her marriage to the Earl of Bothwell . She was taken to Loch Leven and given into the custody of Sir William Douglas of Lochleven , spending most of her captivity living in the early 16th @-@ century

Glassin Tower , at the south @-@ east corner of the castle . Aside from Sir William , the household included his mother Lady Margaret Douglas , mother of Mary 's half brother the Earl of Moray , and his brother George Douglas , as well as Willie Douglas , a young orphaned relative . Mary fell ill on arrival , and sometime before 24 July she miscarried twins that she had conceived with Bothwell . Only a few days later she was forced to abdicate as Queen of Scots , in favour of her infant son James .

Mary recovered during the autumn and winter , and gradually won over George Douglas to her own cause . A contemporary wrote that George was " in fantasy of love wythe hir . " On the night of the escape , Willie Douglas stole the keys and let Mary , dressed as a servant , out of the castle . She was rowed across the lake to where George Douglas and others awaited her , and they fled to Niddry Castle in Lothian . The Castle is one of many in Scotland said to be haunted by Mary 's spirit .

The English Earl of Northumberland was also held here , after fleeing to Scotland following the failure of the Catholic Rising of the North in 1570 . He was captured by the Earl of Morton , and confined at Loch Leven before being sent back to England for execution . In 1588 , Sir William Douglas of Lochleven succeeded to the earldom of Morton , as the 6th earl . With the title he inherited other properties , including Aberdour Castle in Fife , and Loch Leven Castle became less frequently used .

= = = Sir William Bruce = = =

From around 1546 , Margaret Erskine and her son William Douglas built a house on the shore of the Loch which was known as " Newhouse . " The " Newhouse " replaced the island castle as the legal centre of the estate in 1619 .

In 1675 , the Loch Leven estate was bought from the Douglasses by Sir William Bruce (c.1630 ? 1710) , royal architect in Scotland . Bruce built nearby Kinross House on the lake shore from 1686 , aligning the principal axis of house and garden on the distant castle . The " Newhouse " , which was finally demolished in 1723 , was just to the north of Bruce 's site . Kinross was one of the first buildings in the classical style erected in Scotland . Thereafter Loch Leven Castle was no longer used as a dwelling , but it was preserved by Bruce as a picturesque focus for his gardens .

= = = Recent years = = =

Loch Leven Castle had fallen into ruin by the 18th century , but the ruins were conserved and rubbish removed in 1840 . The estate passed from the Bruces to the Graham family in the 18th century and then , in the 19th century , to the Montgomerys , who still occupy Kinross House .

Loch Leven Castle was given in to state care in 1939 , and is now managed by Historic Scotland . Today , the castle can be reached by a 12 @-@ person ferry operated from Kinross by Historic Scotland during the summer months . The remains of the castle are protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument , and as a category A listed building , the highest level of protection for a historic building in Scotland .

= = Description = =

The castle , and an outer enclosure of which little trace remains , originally took up almost the entire area of Castle Island . The present wooded , and considerably larger , island was formed in the early 19th century when the canalising of the outflow of the River Leven , which enters the Firth of Forth at the town of Leven , led to a substantial lowering of the water level .

The castle comprises a rectangular courtyard surrounded by a curtain wall , with a tower house , or keep , at one corner , and the round Glassin Tower projecting from the opposite corner . The foundations of demolished ranges of buildings remain around two sides of the courtyard . Of the outer court , only an earth bank shows the position of the walls , with fragmentary remains of a bakehouse the only visible structures .

=== The tower house ===

The tower house , or keep , at the west corner of the enclosure , measures 36 @. @ 5 feet (11 @. @ 1 m) by 31 @. @ 5 feet (9 @. @ 6 m) and originally had five storeys , although the roof and timber floors are now gone . The lowest level is a vaulted basement , with a vaulted kitchen above . The hall was on the next floor , with chambers above , all linked by a spiral stair .

=== The Glassin Tower ===

The Glassin Tower is a round tower , added to the south @- @ east corner of the ancient curtain wall in the 16th century . The tower has a vaulted basement , defended by a gun hole , and two small rooms above . The lower room has an oriel window .

=== Archaeological findings ===

A minor excavation in 1995 found the footings and two steps of a stone stairway that provided access to the Great Hall of the tower . 16th @- @ century pottery and animal bones were found in 0 @. @ 75 metres (2 @. @ 5 ft) of debris near the forestair .