

## HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL

## FIELD MONUMENTS

## ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD



4 DISTRICT		5 PARISH		1 SITE CODE		H N G 5 1 S E 0 0 1	
7 AREA STATUS		8 SITE STATUS		2 NGR		3 QUAL	
SKYE & LOCHALSH		SLEAT		N G 5 9 5 2 1 2 0 7		CE	
11 CONCORDANCE		12 FORM		6 SITE NAME		10 GENERIC TYPE	
OS NG 51 SE 1		STANDING STRUCTURES		D U N S C A I C H		CASTLE + WELL + DUN, ALLEGED	
NMR		9 REGIONAL STATUS		14 PERIOD/DATE		15 DATING METHOD	
		c.28.0m x 20.0m		IA? + EM = LM		TYP	
16 RELATIONSHIP OF ELEMENTS		17 CONDITION		18 SHAPE		19 THREAT AND DATE	
CASTLE SUPPOSEDLY BUILT ON TOP OF EARLIER STRUCTURE		INCOMPLETE					
20 LAND USE		21 GEOLOGY		26 ASPECT		27 ALTITUDE	
HEATH				360°		0 = 15m OD	
22 SOILS		23 VEGETATION		25 RELIEF		28 EXCAVATION (EXCAVATOR: DATE: EXTENT: QUALITY)	
				SUMMIT OF ROCKY PROMONTORY			
24 HYDROLOGY/DRAINAGE		29 BIBLIOGRAPHY (AUTHOR: DATE: TITLE: JOURNAL OR PUBLISHER: VOLUME: DETAIL)		30 GROUND PLAN NO.		31 GROUND PHOTO NO.	
		1. ORDNANCE SURVEY: 1903: 6" MAP				87/4/1/6+9	
		2. RCAHMS: 1928: SKYE INVENTORY: HMSO: pp186-88, No. 599 + illust.		32 SLIDES NO.		33 HR. AP. NO.	
		3. : : REGISTER OF THE GREAT SEAL OF SCOTLAND: : : No. 2873		34 NMR. AP. NO.		35 OTHER AP. NO.: SOURCE	
		4. : : REGISTER OF THE PRIVY SEAL OF SCOTLAND: : : No. 2616		36 ARCHIVE AND LOCATION			
		5. : 1847: COLLECTE ANEA DE REBUS ALBANICIS: IONA CLUB: p11		37 GEOPHYSICAL SURVEY		38 SAMPLES	
		6. MACGIBBON & ROSS: 1889: CASTELLATED & DOMESTIC ARCHITECTURE OF SCOTLAND: Vol. 3: p87		39 PALYNOLOGY		40 NUMERICAL DATES: RANGE: LAB NO.	
		7. HMB(SDD): 1985: LIST OF SCHEDULED MONUMENTS		41 SMALL FINDS		42 MUSEUM/LOCATION	
				43 OTHER			
44 NAME & ADDRESS OF OWNER		45 ATTITUDE OF OWNER		46 NAME & ADDRESS OF TENANT		47 ATTITUDE OF TENANT	
48 ACCESS & RESTRICTIONS		49 NAME & ADDRESS OF FINDER/RECORDER: DATE		50 RECORDER: DATE		51 CHECK: DATE	
				GS: 9.9.1985		DA: 9.9.1985	

52 TEXT

"NG 5952 1207. Dun Scaich. (Ruins of)."

(1)

"Dun Scaich, remains of a castle, correctly described by (2). In poor condition."

(OSFI:ASP:15.6.1961)

"See continuation card for text and illustrations."

NG 595 121 DUN SCAICH, CASTLE, TOKUVAIG (7)

6. \* "Properly known as 'Dun Sgathaic'. Traditionally known as 'Dun of Scathach.' In 1505 known as 'Dunskahay'; in 1515 as 'Dunskath'; in 1549 as 'Dunskay'; and in 1572-3 as 'Dounesceiche'."

(3) (4) (5)

52.

599. *Dun Scaich*.—This structure occupies the whole summit of an isolated rock at the north corner of Ob (bay) Gausevaig on the southern shore of the mouth of Loch Eishorr. The rock is wholly precipitous and rises some 30 to 40 feet above the sea, which washes its base all round save towards the mainland, from which it is cut off by a steep gully or trench about 20 feet wide and 15 or 16 feet deep hewn out of the natural rock and strewn with angular pieces of stone debris. This gully is crossed by two arched walls, 6 feet apart, enclosing a space for a wooden drawbridge, 8 feet in length, to which there has been a levelled approach from the mainland defined by building at the margins. The arches spring from a built wall on the west and the natural rock on the mainland (Fig. 272), the crowns rising to a height of 13 to 14 feet above the bottom of the trench, in which there is a considerable accumulation of stones directly beneath. At the inner extremity of the gap are the holes for the pivot upon which the drawbridge worked. Immediately beyond are the projecting checks for a door, which opened to a flight of stone steps turning to the left and rising 13 to 14 feet to the top. The higher part of this stair has disappeared, the upper entrance is undefined by any features, and the side walls of the staircase are much reduced at the lower levels. (Fig. 275.)

It is clear that the whole summit of the rock measuring about 30 by 22 yards was originally enclosed by walling, of which portions varying in height still cling to the cliff edge and are shown on plan. About a third is completely gone or is buried under grassy mounds. The highest part remaining is in the south-east corner, where it rises at most to 16 or 17 feet. Where complete the surrounding wall averages 5 feet thick. There are only fragments of interior walling and no features worth noticing. The whole internal area is grass-grown. An oblong building, 38 feet by 16 feet with 4½ feet walls, occupied the extreme western section, but its foundations are now defined only by grass-grown mounds. There is another but much more indefinite area on the north side. The position of a built well now filled with debris is given on plan. There seems to have been a garderobe in the north-east corner and in the south face a sea-gate.

The building is of the usual character in the western isles, random rubble roughly coursed in large irregular stones with much infilling of smaller material and plenty lime. The work on the bridge and stair looks later than that of the main structure and is not bonded into the latter at the place of junction. The building is in bad condition. As the mortar disintegrates under the influence of the sea air and wind, the stones at the foundations loosen and fall away, and the upper courses then collapse from their own weight.

*HISTORICAL NOTE*.—Properly *Dun Scaich* is *Dun Sgathaich*, which explains the form in a charter of 1505, *terrarium de Sleit una cum castro et fortalicio de Dunskahay*.<sup>1</sup> In Highland tradition it was the Dun of Scathach the martial instructress of the epic hero Cuchullin. There probably was a more ancient structure of the dun class. It was the principal seat of the Clan Huisdean or Macdonalds of Sleat. In 1515 there was a remission to Lauchlan Maclean of Dowart and Alistair Macleod of Dunvegan for assisting "in the treasonable seiging and taking of the Kingis castillis and hous of Carnebog and Dunskath."<sup>2</sup> The place was then in the King's hands by forfeiture. Monro refers to it in 1549 as "the castill of Dunskay, pertaining to the said Donald Gromsone," that is Donald Macdonald Gormson of Sleat. An obligation by "Donald McDonill gorme" (really the same Gormson, who died in 1573) of Jan. 1572-3 is dated at "Dounesceiche."<sup>3</sup> Later on the Macdonalds of Sleat made Duntulm their chief residence.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *R.M.S.* II., No. 2873.

<sup>2</sup> *Reg. Sec. Sig. L.*, No. 2610.

<sup>3</sup> *Coll. de Rob. Alb.*, p. 11.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. No. 538.

Skye li. 24 June 1921.



FIG. 275—The Approach, Dun Seach (No. 399).

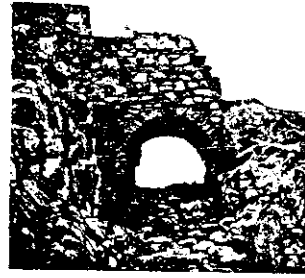


FIG. 272—The Trench and Bridge, Dun Seach (No. 399).

(2)

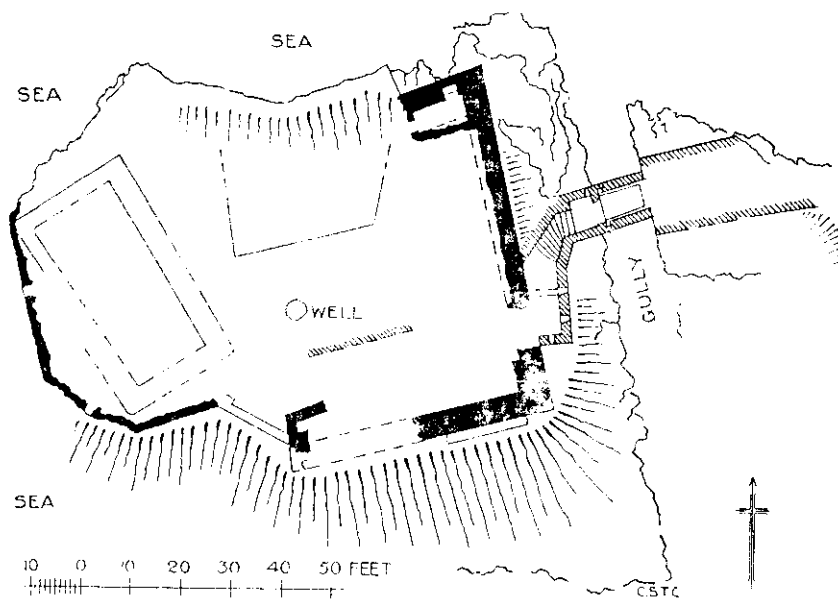


FIG. 271—Dun Seach (No. 399).


(2)

"Dunscraich has been the site of a castle from a very early time. It is frequently mentioned in Ossian's poems as the residence of Cuchullin where he left his wife "The sunbeam of Dunscraich", when he went on a campaign to Ireland. An island close to the existing castle bears the name of one of Ossian's heroes, and contains the remains of a vitrified fort, possibly the original castle of Dunscraich. (7)

"The castle, of which the ruins are now visible, was the strength of the Macdonalds of Sleat, now represented by Lord Macdonald, direct descendant of John, last Earl of Ross and lord of the Isles. It stands on an isolated rock, forming a promontory on the north side of the little Bay and Genscavaig on the west side of Sleat, and presents the remains of an oblong structure about 70 feet from north to south and 40 feet from east to west. The walls, which are now reduced to about 15 feet in height, rise on three sides above a sheer cliff 80 to 90 feet high. On the fourth side it is cut off from the land by a deep gully, across which a bridge was thrown, with side walls only, but without a roadway, which was in all likelihood supplied by ruins of a drawbridge. Beyond this the road rises steeply to the castle. Both roadway and bridge were protected by walls which still remain, and the road was further guarded by a crosswall pierced with a gateway. The naturally strong position has thus been very carefully secured by fortification. The castle seems to have been of the primitive type, consisting of four enclosing walls, to which a laird's gatehouse has been subsequently added."\* (Castellated & Domestic Architecture of Scotland: Vol. 3: p87)

\* Particulars about the above paragraph came from The Rev. Donald Mackinnon, minister of the parish, and David Murray, Esq., writer, Glasgow."

NEG/SLIDE No:	87014	10106	* DATE:	314187	NGN:	N 959521207	QUAL:	CE
DISTRICT:	SKYE+LOCHALSH	CODE:	4	PARISH:	SLEAT	CODE:	07	
SUBJECT KEYWORDS: DUN SCIACH CASTLE								
DETAIL: VIEW FROM E.								
* 87/04/1/9 - VIEW FROM S								
LOCATION: TOKAVAIG, SOUTH SKYE								

SMR No:	H	H	951	SE	001
 ARCHAEOLOGICAL SITES AND MONUMENTS RECORD PHOTOGRAPHY					
PHOTOGRAPHER:			COPYRIGHT:		
R.B. GOURLAY			HRC		





87/04/11/9

NEG. NO: 87/04/11/9 SNR. NO: H1457101011 COPYRIGHT: H.R.C.  
SUBJECT: DIN SCALCH, CASTLE  
LOCATION: TOKAUNG, SKYE  
PHOTOGRAPHER: R.B. GONREAY DATE: 1/04/1987  
TECHNICAL DATA:

