

CAISTAEL TIORAM - UPDATE

CONDITION 23rd JULY 2014

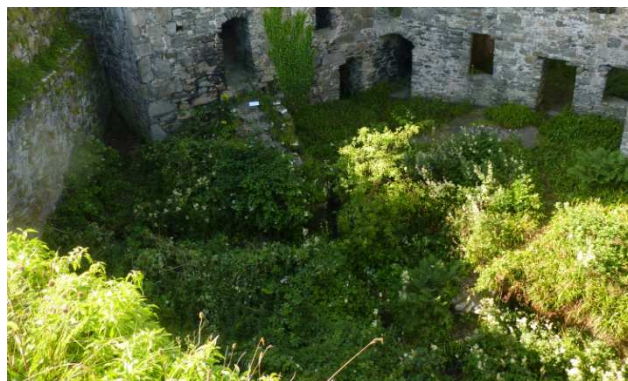


INTRODUCTION

A visit was made by Benjamin Tindall and Prof. Denis Mollison to see the current condition of the castle, last reported on by Lucy Vaughan, Historic Scotland Architect, in 2004. This report said that c.£1½m of repairs should be carried out within 2 years and a further £2+m within 10-15 years.

SUMMARY

By reference to detailed photographs taken in 1997 (when the castle was put up for sale) it has been possible to see how little loss or damage to masonry there has been. There are no more stones lying on the ground today than there were 17 years ago. The main change has been a considerable increase in vegetation, in the courtyard and on the wallheads.



PUBLIC ACCESS

Since the gate was last inspected by us (May 2013) the padlock and its hasp has been broken off and laid aside. Paths have been made by people following natural desire lines to the Keep and South Range. We cut down some of the worst bramble. During the time we were there, from dawn till mid-afternoon, the castle was visited and enjoyed by a retired architect, a couple and a family from New Zealand.



ENTRANCE

A decaying steel frame holding the door is kept in place by wire rope attached to a beam placed at a dangerously low height on the inner face of the wall.



COURTYARD

When the castle had open access the courtyard was bare; now it has become a mass of brambles, meadowsweet, wild rose, woodrush etc..

WALLS

Externally and internally, the ivy that was incipient in several places in 1997 has all grown, as might be expected, and we removed as much as we could in the time available. There has been a modest increase in grasses and spleenwort ferns, indicating damp or perhaps the time of year. The holly tree growing by the fireplace in the room above the Hall has grown but remains much as it was before. Not a single stone in the breach of the barmkin wall, on the NW side, has fallen or moved for more than 30 years, despite the ineffectiveness of the propping - see Safety, below.



SW EXTERIOR



W INTERIOR



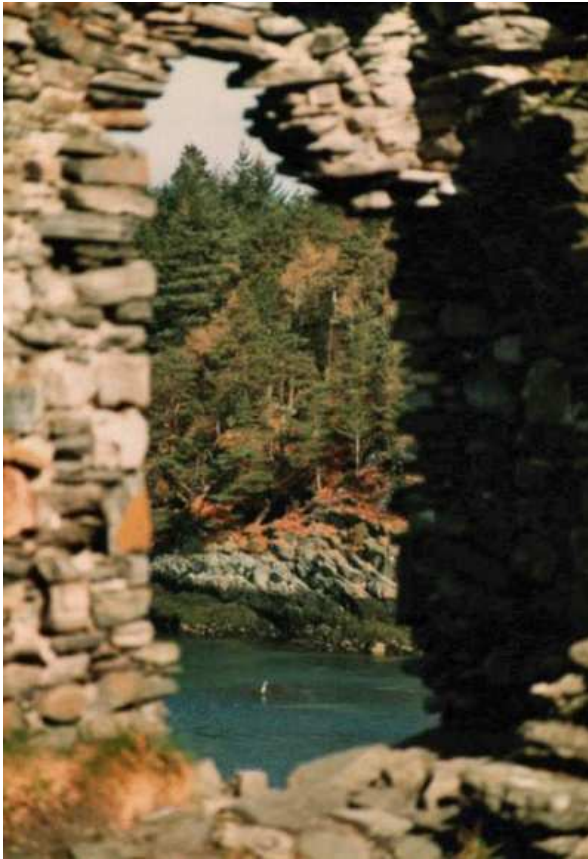
SW RANGE



Rowan tree growing on the wallhead of SW Range, showing almost no change since 1997.



SW RANGE NW INTERIOR



1984



1995



2014, showing no change to a single stone since 1984



2014, detail, showing failed loose propping & missing packing etc.

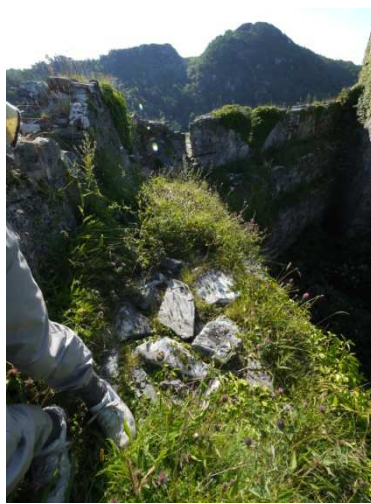
WALLHEADS

The battlements and wallwalks of the barmkin wall and the Keep & South Range wallheads were remarkable sound; the previous consolidation is almost entirely intact, without any loose stones or significant cracks. Knapweed and other herbaceous plants are growing in it. The wallhead to the South Range, facing the Courtyard has a small Rowan growing in it, the same size as it was almost 20 years ago.



SKEWS & CHIMNEYS

All considerable amount of grass, ivy, herbaceous plants and ferns is growing on the gable wallheads.



SAFETY

Externally the warning signs have been largely removed and by the entrance the steel mesh fencing is falling over. The site was littered with abandoned and broken safety helmets. The propping of the breach in NW was entirely loose, with missing packers and wedges. The steel mesh are rusting away and the scaffold bracing is largely redundant. The old steel angle-iron bars in the battlements are still in place.



PHOTOS

To look at the comparison photos online or in more detail see:

http://www.macs.hw.ac.uk/~denis/photo_comparisons

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