

Gaelic Introduction

Introduction

Eilean Tioram and Caisteal Tioram are of importance to the nearby community and to the whole of the Highlands. Formerly, too many projects and ideas were being created outwith the Highlands, without consideration being given to the opinions of the local community and to the issues they deemed important. This research aims at highlighting the important aspects of these historic sites although the researchers are aware that there are other diverse views in connection with the sites.

The following sections of the report will clearly show how the previous full research highlights the particular importance of Eilean Tioram and Caisteal Tioram. This has proved the value of the sites and has established principles which will lead to advances in conservation work.

The report below shows the reasons for the importance of the Castle, both historically and in the present day. The main aims of the conservation work on which the Conservation Work Plan and the decisions regarding the future of the Castle and Island are founded, are explained.

A Place in History

Caisteal Tioram was particularly important as one of the major fortifications of The Lordship of the Isles and as the residence of the MacDonalDs of Clanranald for 500 years. The research done previously has enabled us to widen our knowledge of the site, to record it and to make it available to the general public.

When Caisteal Tioram was Clanranald's residence it was in an administrative capacity, where justice was administered as well as being a centre for the Gall-Gael culture of the Highlands. This came to an end when the Crown abandoned the Castle, when it lost its status as a fort and commercial centre and when the MacDonalDs stopped using it as their residence by the end of the 17th/beginning of the 18th centuries.

When the MacDonalDs left the Castle the government used it as a fort for the royal armies for 22 years, between 1693-1715 and this reveals the political and military situation of the Highlands up to 1715. The government did not repair it in 1748 and the MacDonalDs did not return to it, thus showing how little importance it now was in military and domestic affairs.

The castle was burnt but this was part of the first small attacks made at the beginning of the 1715 rebellion and we must consider the whole history of the castle when assessing this event.

How Important is the Castle today?

The castle is important to the surrounding community and to the clan dispersed throughout the world as it is the most visual ensign of the district and of its history. The strong interest that the inhabitants show in the future plans for the castle is proof of this.

Local people and visitors enjoy the Castle and the Island for the beauty and the peace of Loch Moideart and Cùl Dòirlinn.

Many tourists visit the Castle when they are in the area but their attention is caught more by the beauty of the district than by the history and style of the building itself because very little information and explanation about it is available.

The Principal Objectives of the Conservation Work

Caisteal Tioram is one of a few remaining medieval castles such as Duart, Dun Staffnage and Mingarry that provide standing evidence of the history of the district. Although it cannot be said to be the only example it is an excellent example of this type of building. Because of this and because of its historical importance it is essential that it be preserved.

Eilean Tioram was the site of the settlement where Clanranald had their residence and it is still important today because of the archaeological traces still in existence on the island and on the bottom of the sea. These must be protected before they are destroyed or lost.

The castle itself is of archaeological importance too; archaeological traces could very well be locked under it in various places. More searching (and diggings) should be undertaken so that we will have a better understanding of the history of the Castle.

We must ensure that we get a full understanding of the historical and cultural importance of the Castle and the Island throughout the time it was inhabited and not just at one particular time.

Caisteal Tioram was at the centre of the Gaelic culture of the district at one time. Although it ceased to be culturally important at the end of the 17th century, the culture itself remained and is now being re-strengthened. We must think about what part the Island and Caisteal Tioram will play in this revival.

Cùl Dòirlinn, Eilean Tioram and Loch Moideart are particularly beautiful places, much enjoyed by the local people. While preparing for the conservation of the area there must be an assurance that this situation will continue.

Tourists visit this part of Loch Moideart and the Highland Council and the local tourist agencies are promoting it as a tourist destination. This, and other important topics, must be considered when planning for conservation work so that the site will be preserved and developed in a proper and fitting way.

The project provides a good opportunity for further research of Eilean and Caisteal Tioram and of their historical contexts. Research must be undertaken throughout the duration of the project and the results of the research must be made available to everyone through national/ local museums and by means of publications.

The local people must be given the opportunity to decide the future of Eilean Tioram and Caisteal Tioram.