

These watercolour reconstruction of Castles by David L. Roberts, (1931 - 1997), shows the structures as they may have appeared. With a background in architectural studies, he was able to combine his artistic talents and knowledge of structures to provide reconstruction paintings of historical buildings for the Highland Archive Service.



The remnants of Brochel castle stand on a sandstone stack overlooking the Inner Sound on the north east side of the Island of Raasay. Though once a traditional stronghold of the MacSweens, the castle is said to have been built by the first chief of the MacLeods of Raasay, Calum MacGillichaluim, younger son of Calum MacLeod the 9th Chief of the MacLeods of Lewis. No documentary evidence exists to confirm the date of its construction, but it is mentioned in documents in 1549 and again in a military survey of the late 16th century. The MacLeod Chiefs of Raasay remained in residence until the late 17th century, when they appear to have moved to their other tower house at Clachan

Caisteal Maol, home of the Mackinnons of Strathaird, probably dates from the late 15th century. Tradition relates that a Norwegian princess married to a Mackinnon chief held the castle and exacted tolls from passing vessels, ensuring payment by stretching a chain across the narrows. 'Saucy Mary' as she was known, is said to be buried at the top of Beinn na Caillaich where winds from her native country can fan her resting place.



The castle was originally known as Dunakin, named after King Haakon of Norway, suggesting that an earlier fort may have stood on the site. In 1263, Haakon's fleet sailed through the strait to defend the lands under Scandinavian rule, but was met with defeat at Largs. The name Dunakin seems to have survived at least until the late 16th century, and the Mackinnons abandoned their residence for more comfortable surroundings elsewhere on Skye fairly soon after. The castle assumed its present name, meaning "bare", after it had been deserted and following collapse.



Caisteal Uisdean stands now as a monument to one of Skye's more infamous characters, Uisdean MacGhilleasbuig Chlerich, nephew of Donald Gorm MacDonald, 5th Chief of Sleat. Even for these turbulent times, he had a reputation for violence and treachery, including piracy and murder. Although successful enough to build Caisteal Uisdean for himself, his lawless existence finally caught up with him when a plot to murder his chief and assume control backfired.

He planned to massacre senior members of the clan at celebrations to mark the completion of his newly constructed castle, but the plot was uncovered and Uisdean consigned to the dungeon at Duntulm. As punishment for his decades of wickedness, the story goes that he was fed salted beef but given no water, and he died in thirst-induced madness.

Legend links Dun Sgathaich with Cù Chulainn, the Ulster folk hero. Tales relate that he came to Skye around the second century AD, to learn the skills of war from the warrior queen Sgathaich who trained men at her military school, based at the castle. Many stories surround his fantastic adventures in Sleat, including one suggesting that he built Dun Sgathaich in a night.



Legend apart, the castle appears to date from the 14th century and was the residence of the MacAskills, its hereditary wardens. However like so many others, the castle was a pawn in the politics of the times. The castle passed to the MacLeods, but was raided at frequent intervals by MacDonalds until Hugh MacDonald of Sleat finally took possession, confirmed by royal charter in 1495. It was finally abandoned in the early 17th century in favour of Duntulm which became the MacDonalds main residence for a time.