

Scotland's Castles

by Nikoleta Katsiveli

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Dunnottar Castle



Dunnottar Castle is a ruined medieval fortress located upon a rocky headland on the north-east coast of Scotland, about 3 kilometres south of Stonehaven. The surviving buildings are largely of the 15th and 16th centuries, but the site is believed to have been fortified in the Early Middle Ages. Dunnottar has played a prominent role in the history of Scotland through to the 18th-century Jacobite risings because of its strategic location and defensive strength. Dunnottar is best known as the place where the Honours of Scotland, the Scottish crown jewels, were hidden from Oliver Cromwell's invading army in the 17th century. The castle was restored in the 20th century and is now open to the public.



Eilean Donnan Castle



The original castle was built in the early 13th century as a defence against the Vikings. By the late 13th century it had become a stronghold of the Mackenzies of Kintail (later the Earls of Seaforth). In 1511, the Macraes, as protectors of the Mackenzies, became the hereditary Constables of the Castle.



Eilean Donan is the home of the Clan Macrae. In 2001, the island had a population of just one person. This castle is most famous for appearing in many Hollywood movies, including Highlander.

Edinburgh Castle



Edinburgh Castle is an ancient fortress which dominates the skyline of the city of Edinburgh from its position atop the volcanic Castle Rock. Human habitation of the site is dated back as far as the 9th century BC, although the nature of early settlement is unclear.



The Castle is now in the care of Historic Scotland, and is Scotland's second-most-visited tourist attraction. It is also the backdrop to the annual Edinburgh Military Tattoo, and has become a recognisable symbol of Edinburgh and of Scotland.

Cawdor Castle



Originally consisting only of the large tower (or keep), the castle was expanded numerous times in the succeeding centuries, with significant additions made in the 17th century and 19th century. The iron yett here was brought from nearby Lochindorb Castle around 1455 when the Scottish Privy Council instructed the Thane of Cawdor to dismantle Lochindorb after it had been forfeited by the Earl of Moray.



Stirling Castle



Stirling Castle, located in Stirling, is one of the largest and most important castles, both historically and architecturally, in Scotland.



Stirling Castle is a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and is now a tourist attraction managed by Historic Scotland.

Glamis Castle



Glamis Castle is situated beside the village of Glamis in Angus, Scotland. It is the home of the Earl and Countess of Strathmore and Kinghorne, and is open to the public.

The castle features extensively in fiction and legend, and according to local legend has more dark secrets than any other castle in Scotland.

Legends and tales of the Glamis Castle

◉ The Monster of Glamis:

The most famous legend connected with the castle is that of the Monster of Glamis, a hideously deformed child born to the family. Some accounts came from singer and composer Virginia Gabriel who stayed at the castle in 1870. In the story, the monster was kept in the castle all his life and his suite of rooms bricked up after his death. Another monster is supposed to have dwelt in Loch Calder near the castle.

An alternative version of the legend is that to every generation of the family a vampire child is born and is walled up in that room.

There is an old story that guests staying at Glamis once hung towels from the windows of every room in a bid to find the bricked-up suite of the monster. When they looked at it from outside, several windows were apparently towel-less.

The legend of the monster may have been inspired by the true story of the Ogilvies. Somewhere in the 16-foot-thick walls is the famous room of skulls, where the Ogilvie family, who sought protection from their enemies the Lindsays, were walled up to die of starvation.

◉ Earl Beardie:

A legend tells of the 15th-century "Earl Beardie", who has been identified with both Alexander Lyon, 2nd Lord Glamis and with Alexander Lindsay, 4th Earl of Crawford.

Several versions exist, but they all involve "Earl Beardie" playing cards. However, it was the sabbath, and either his hosts refused to play, or a servant advised him to stop. Lord Beardie became so furious that he claimed that he would play until doomsday, or with the Devil himself, depending on the version. A stranger then appears at the castle and joins Lord Beardie in a game of cards. The stranger is identified with the Devil, who takes Earl Beardie's soul and, in some versions, condemns the Earl to play cards until doomsday.

◉ Other traditions

According to the official website for Glamis Castle, in 1034, King Malcolm II was mortally wounded in a nearby battle and taken to a Royal Hunting Lodge, which sat at the site of the present castle, where he died.

The late Sir David Bowes-Lyon, while taking a late stroll on the lawn after dinner, reportedly saw a girl gripping the bars of a castle window and staring distractedly into the night. He was about to speak to her when she abruptly disappeared, as if someone had torn her away from the window.

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