

an Irishman named Cailean Fitzgerald who was granted government of the castle.

Far more colourful is the mythical tale of the castle's origin rising indirectly from the conflict between a wealthy chief (said to be of the race of the Mathesons) and his son. As an infant the son had received his first drink from a raven's skull and this had given him the power to understand the language of the birds. As a youth he went to Rome to study and became a great linguist. One

day his father asked him to explain what the birds were saying and was told that they were talking about how, one day, his father would be waiting upon his son like a servant. This so angered his father that the son was turned out of the house to make his way in the world. Eventually he landed on the shores of France only to hear that the king there was greatly annoyed by the chirping of birds around the palace. The boy set off to offer his help in getting rid of them and soon discovered that the cause was a noisy dispute amongst the birds, which, together with the king, he was able to resolve. The king was so pleased to have peace and quiet restored that he presented the boy with a fully-manned ship. This took the boy to many distant lands.

On one such voyage he was invited by the ruler of a far-off country to dine at his palace. On arrival he found the place overrun with rats, even the dining table. The next evening the boy returned to the castle with a cat under his coat and when the rats gathered around the table he let it loose. The king was so pleased that he offered a hogshead of gold for the cat.

After an absence of ten years the young man returned to Kintail and his ship anchored at Totaig. The sight of such a royal vessel caused a considerable stir in the district and all wondered who the richly dressed and evidently wealthy young man might be. Arriving at his father's door,

EILEAN DONAN: ORIGINS OF A MEDIÆVAL CASTLE

by ROGER MIKET (Museums Officer)

Amongst the most famous and most visited of the ten castles in the district of Skye and Lochalsh is Eilean Donan.

For over 2,000 years the small tidal island at the head of Loch Duich has provided the site for a fortified residence, the first of which was a small Iron Age enclosure.

The defences protecting the handful of circular huts within was constructed in a distinctive fashion known as 'vitrified' which involved building (with stone) a rampart laced with timber. This was subsequently burned and produced a heat of such intensity that stone 'melted' to fuse the rampart into a solid mass. Fragments from the wall can still be

seen lying around the base of the later castle.

By the 6th century AD the fort had been abandoned and the deserted island offered a suitable site for a small Christian foundation named after the 6th century Irish saint, Bishop Donan.

St Donan, martyred on the Isle of Eigg with fifty six of his fellow monks, has left a rich legacy of church foundations on the West Coast (Loch Carron, Loch Broom and Kildonan on Skye).

In the 13th century a castle was built on the island (during the reign of Alexander II) to offer defence against the Scandinavians: an expedition sent by the king is said to have included

LOCHALSH ROLLER BOOTING CLUB SPRING SHOW 1990

I was there. Were you? Ach! You missed yourself! The children in this area can turn their talents to singing, pipes, drums, clarsach, fiddle, accordion, football, shinty, Highland dancing, and now... roller-booting!

Do not imagine the kids glide in circles round Kyle Hall, letting off steam: if the club ever puts on another show – go! See for yourself the dedication of the boys and girls and their tutor, Mrs Emily Bryce.

After six weeks of well-attended rehearsals and organised chaos, on the night of the Spring Show the children gave imaginative polished performances. Not an easy thing when you compare the village hall floor space with a full size 'proper' roller rink.

We wrinklies in the audience, perhaps remembering our own childhood attempts at skating,

watched in awe as the young performers stretched themselves into improvisations normally associated with Torvil & Dean. (When I was 10, I gave the scouse pigeons arranged on the window-ledges down our street a fair impression of Sonia Henie on my ancient asthmatic ball-bearing skates.)

The show was wonderful! From tiny tots (their wee bottoms fortuitously padded by nappies breaking the occasional thud to the floor) to the hilarious burlesque strip-tease displayed by the 'Char Rollettes'.

The music included classical, pop, jive and pieces from shows like 'Oklahoma'; the costumes were beautifully made. They might have been put together from granny's old curtains and a raid on the attic but the important thing is, they *looked* like they had been hired from somewhere expensive. Well done all those Mums who sat up late at night drinking gin and sewing on sequins and feathers!

The MC was Seamus MacGuire. A smooth-talking Irishman that one!

I mentioned the tiny tots and Char Rollettes mainly to illustrate the age range of the club members. The children were well-behaved and real troopers when minor hiccups did occur. During one little girl's performance she was joined by a stray dog which slipped by the bouncers. It jumped at her a few times before anyone realised what was happening. The bewildered child cut short her performance but returned later to give a flawless display – jumps and all! Adult 'professionals' have been known to sue or be rendered insensible for less!

Finally the experience had a bonus spin-off for its participants: one mum told me she was delighted that her ten year old daughter counted 'I'm gonna wash that man right outta my hair' as one of her favourite songs for 1990! The choice of music for the show widened the children's tastes considerably!

Well done everyone concerned. You should all be very proud of yourselves.

LOUISE SAUNDERS

WELCOME...

The 'new dentist' is LLOYD PARSONS, BChD. Following a "worldwide education" – his father was in the army – Lloyd trained for dentistry in Leeds.

Prior to moving to Lochcarron, which he had visited on holidays arranged to suit his interests in hill-walking and motor-cycling, he worked in Bristol. Wife Suzanne is there at present attending to the sale of their home but hopes to move North, (with the family cats) later this year.

The Community extends a sincere, warm welcome to Lloyd and Suzanne and wishes them happiness in their new surroundings.

(cf page 31 for details of all community dentists' surgery times.)



HIGHLAND REGIONAL COUNCIL :
DEPARTMENT OF LIBRARIES & LEISURE
SERVICES

CAPE BRETON –
HIGHLAND REGION:
TWINNING EXCHANGE

A small group of Regional Libraries Board members from Cape Breton is to be invited to Highland Region during 1990. The invitation has been extended to HRC's Libraries and

Leisure Services Committee and is part of a twinning programme established in 1987 between HRC Library Services and Cape Breton Regional Libraries Board.

During the visit, Highland Regional Council's Department of Libraries & Leisure Services will demonstrate how library services operate in Highland Region, particularly in rural areas; West coast communities will feature on the itinerary.

The twinning programme has proved invaluable over the last three years in allowing exchanges of books and materials across the Atlantic, enabling respective library services to establish a collection of material on each other's areas.

Staff exchanges have been a continuing part of the programme resulting in highly useful exchanges of expertise and ideas; the School PenPal programme has put numerous Highland youngsters in touch with their Cape Breton counterparts.

H.W. WILKINSON MA, MILAM
HRC Director of Libraries & Leisure
Services. (4th June 1990)

no-one recognised him and he was received with great hospitality. His father set him at the table and waited upon the young stranger himself, thereby fulfilling the prophesy of the birds. The son revealed who he was, proving his identity by a birth-mark on his shoulder. Father and son were reconciled and the son acknowledged as his heir. His son's abilities and knowledge of the world brought him into the favour of Alexander II who commissioned him to build Eilean Donan and protect his subjects against the Norwegians.

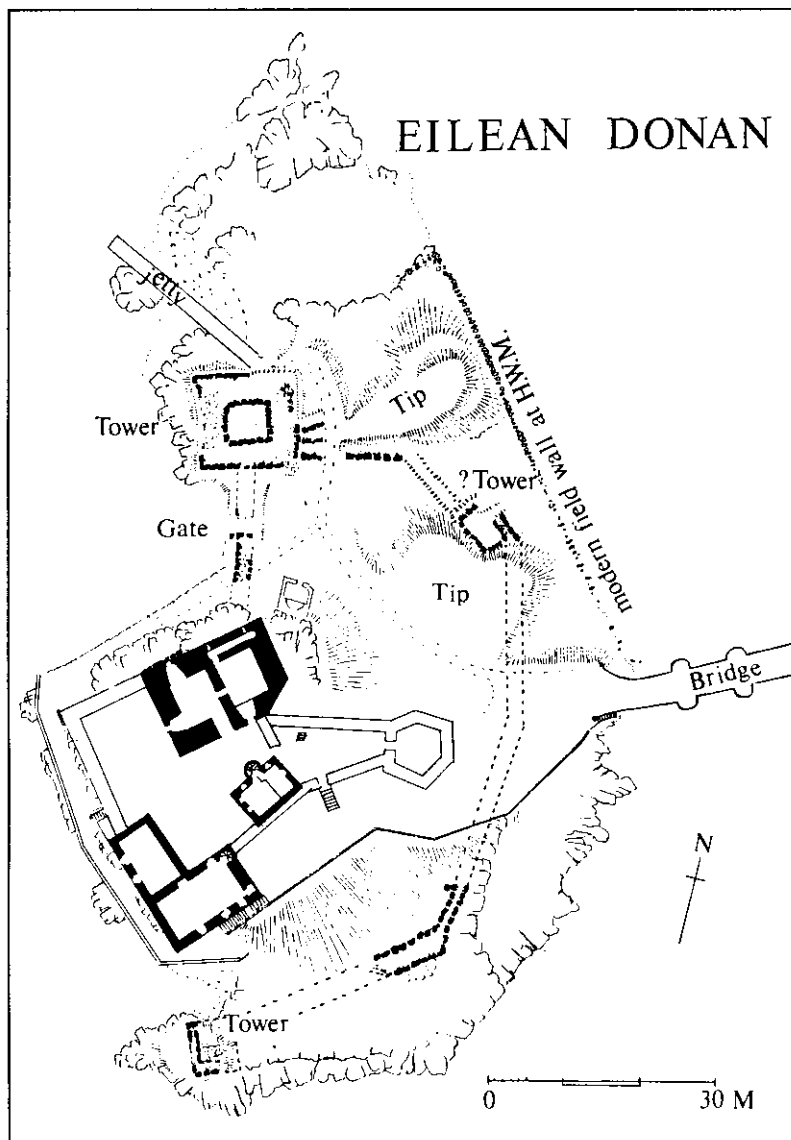
The first mediæval castle built on the island was far more extensive than the present building suggests. The castle visible today was built between 1912 and 1932 over what had survived of a later mediæval castle abandoned at the beginning of the

18th century (blown up during a localised Jacobite rising in 1719).

Visible beyond the walls of these later structures are the foundations of a substantial defensive circuit and the base of strong towers which must have given the castle an impregnable appearance.

Although the evidence for these earlier works is still clear, surprisingly until now no-one has thought to mention what is, after all, the first mediæval castle layout at Eilean Donan. This shows it to have been a much grander castle than suggested by later buildings. It would also pose the question why, sometime in the late 15th or early 16th century, was the castle reduced in size? ■

Castle illustration by CHARLENE CAMERON.



RELAXATION

by LORRAINE MARSHALL

Over the last two winters Lorraine has instructed yoga and keep fit classes at Edinbane as part of a Community Education programme. She is willing to offer advice, produce leaflets/exercise sheets if sufficient demand exists. Contact her at Community Education, Portree.

Complete relaxation brings health, vitality and creativity to those who can achieve it. Tension and its accompanying states of stress, irritability and depression can lead to many illnesses – physical and mental. Tension can occur in any part of the body: tightened jaw muscles, tense neck muscles, frowning brows, stiffened shoulder muscles...

The effects on body and personality can be shattering: sufferers begin to feel out of step with life and as pressures increase, stress becomes a normal part of life. Eventually people think they are unable to cope.

Modern medicine can offer temporary relief but the real cure lies within our own bodies.

One untapped resource within all of us is complete relaxation.

It can enhance our lives by releasing tension, self consciousness, fear and depression. In addition, the ability to concentrate is increased.

Relaxation has to be practised and the benefits may not be apparent immediately but a little will be enough to convince most people of the need for more.

Increased awareness of our subconscious helps us deal with our worries and the parts of ourselves which hinder or complicate life. On a practical level it can lead to an acceptance of the good and bad aspects and encourage our ability to make necessary changes.

Harmony ensues by assisting our relationships with others and by its regenerative abilities, relaxation allows us to give the best of ourselves.

CAOCHLADH TRANSITION

STEVE DAVIES provided this side-by-side translation to his article with assistance from MORAG CRAIG.

'Caochladh' a' tairgsinn càirdeis agus cul-taice do neach 'sam bith a tha bàsachadh, neo a tha gabhail dragh mu bhàsachadh.

'Se th'ann an Caochladh sgeime saor-thoileach anns a bheil daoine tha dèonach

- ùine a thoirt do neach 'sam bith a tha bàsachadh – neo gabhail dragh mu dheidhinn, airson adhbhar 'sam bith
- bhith còmhla ris an neach sin anns an t-suidheachadh anns a bheil e, neo i, mar charaid
- bruidhinn gu h-onarach mu rud 'sam bith co-cheangailte ris a' bhàs neo ri bhith bàsachadh

Tha sinn a' creidsinn mar sin gun teid againn air taic a thairgsinn a thaobh faireachdainnean agus gnòthaichean pearsanta. Tha cuideachadh o nursaichean neo cuideachadh am broinn-taighe ri fhaotainn a bharrachd, a rèir comais neo eòlais an fheadhainn a bhitheas a' tairgsinn a chuideachaidh.

Tha Caochladh ag amas air feumannan gach duine, agus air daoine a mhisneachadh aig an ìre seo de'm beatha mar a thogras iad fhèin.

Tha sinn a' tuigsinn gum faod bàsachadh a bhith, ann an iomadach dòigh, 'na àm ann am beatha an duine anns am faighear ciall agus fiu's toileachas. Chan eil Caochladh, ged thà, ceangailte ri aon chreideamh sònraichte neo ri feallsanachd àraid 'sam bith. Ni sinn ar dichioll cuideachadh 'sam bith a tha daoine ag iarraidh a lorg dhaibh, a thaobh nithean spioradail, neo a thaobh creideamh – neo cuideachadh nach 'eil a buntainn ri creideamh neo feallsanachd 'sam bith, ma's e sin a ni feum.

Tha sinn cuideachd ag amas air luchd-cuideachaidh fhaotainn a bhruidhneas Gaidhlig ri neach 'sam bith leis am bu mhath sin.

Bu choir do'n neach a tha a bàsachadh, neo gabhail dragh, taic iarraidh e fhein neo i fhein, ach faodaidh cairdean, neo, mar eiseimpleir, dotair, nurs, obraich-soisealta neo ministear, fios a chur thugainn cuideachd.

'S urrain dhuinn tadhal aig an dachaidh, anns an ospadal neo an àite 'sam bith anns a bheil feum oirnn. Bithidh sinn an còmhnaidh a' co-obrachadh gu dlùth leis a h-uile duine eile a bhitheas a' toirt cuideachadh is taic.

Bithidh Caochladh cuideachd a' toirt seachad fiosrachadh air gach seòrsa cuideachaidh eile a tha ri fhaotainn, agus a' fosgladh an t-slighe gu buidhnean agus seirbhisean eile a ni feum.

'Se tha fainear dhuinn

- ge be de' aois neo caithe-beatha neach 'sam bith
- co dhiù aillse cansair, AIDS, neo tinneas 'sam bith eile air, neo oirre
- co dhiù tha i, neo e, co-cheangailte ri eaglais neo nach eil,

cha leig neach 'sam bith a leas a bhith leis neo leatha fhèin neo gun taic 'sam bith a tha dhith orra. ■

'Transition' offers friendship and positive support for anyone who is dying or concerned about dying.

Transition is a voluntary scheme and consists of people who are willing to

- give time to anyone who is dying – or concerned about dying for any reason
- share their situation as a friend
- talk openly about any aspect of death or dying

We believe that in these ways we can help to provide emotional and spiritual support. Nursing, domestic and other help may also be available, depending on the abilities and experience of individual helpers.

Transition's aim is to respond to the individual needs of each person, and to enable them to live through this stage of life in the way that they choose.

We recognise that dying can, in many circumstances, be a meaningful and deeply positive period in a person's life. Transition is not, however, affiliated to any single religion nor belief. We will try to find any kind of spiritual or religious support which is requested – or non-religious help if that is the person's wish.

Our aim is also to find a Gaelic-speaking helper whenever requested.

Requests for our help should come from the dying or concerned person, but can be conveyed to us by a relative or friend or, for example, by a doctor, minister, community nurse or social worker.

We can visit at home, in hospital or wherever needed, and of course we cooperate closely with all those involved in a person's support or care.

Transition will also provide advice and information, and will put people in touch with other organisations and services they need.

Our aim is that

- whatever a person's age or lifestyle
- whether he or she has cancer, AIDS or any other illness
- whether or not he or she is religious

no-one need feel alone, nor be without whatever support he/she needs. ■