

# 1266 AND ALL THAT: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL APPROACH TO UNDERSTANDING THE SCOTTISH TAKEOVER OF THE KINGDOM OF THE ISLES

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## INTRODUCTION

The acquisition of the Kingdom of the Isles by the Scots in 1266 was a considerable achievement. The Kings of the Isles recognised the overlordship of the Kings of Norway, and there had been a long period in which diplomatic efforts, meddling and military interventions had been tried by the Scots to extend their control westwards.<sup>1</sup> Complete success was now finally precipitated by the failure of the naval expedition in 1263 by King Hakon IV Hakonarson of Norway and military intervention by the Scots in the Isles in 1264 and 1265, leading to the capitulation of Magnus Olafsson, King of Man, and other great men, and the annexation of some of the Isles.<sup>2</sup> The origins of the Scots and their royal house were known to lie in the west, including the Southern Hebrides, and it was natural to see the Treaty of Perth as a restoration of what had once been Scottish rather than as an acquisition of new territories. Some of the chief men in the Isles also held land in the mainland as subjects of the Kings of Scots and could therefore be expected to aid in a process of integration of the two kingdoms.

Prior to the 1260s, the complete takeover of the Isles by the Scots would not necessarily have been seen as inevitable or even likely by informed leaders elsewhere in Britain, Ireland and northern parts of Europe. Apart from the probability that King Hakon of Norway and his successors would make more of an effort to retain their dominion, there were the strong links well established between the Kings of the Isles and the Kings of England. As a youth Olaf, son of King Godred Crovan, spent several years at the English court prior to succeeding as King of the Isles about 1113.<sup>3</sup> It appears that the Kingdom of the Isles was a client kingdom of England from the early thirteenth century, if not from the late 1150s, until the death of King Rognvald Godredsson of the Isles in 1229.<sup>4</sup> Succeeding kings, Olaf Godredsson (1226-37), Harald Olafsson (1237-

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<sup>1</sup> Edward J. Cowan, 'Norwegian Sunset – Scottish Dawn: Hakon IV and Alexander III', in *Scotland in the Reign of Alexander III 1249-1286*, ed. Norman H. Reid (Edinburgh: John Donald, 1990), pp. 103-31.

<sup>2</sup> Colm McNamee, 'The Isle of Man under Scottish Rule, 1266-1333', in *A New History of the Isle of Man, Volume III, The Medieval Period 1000-1406*, eds Sean Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2015), pp. 118-50.

<sup>3</sup> George Broderick (ed.), *Chronicles of the Kings of Man and the Isles* (Douglas: Manx National Heritage, 1996), fol. 35r.

<sup>4</sup> R. Andrew McDonald, *Manx Kingship in its Irish Sea Setting 1187-1229* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), pp. 130-51.

48) and Magnus Olafsson (1254-65), went to England to be knighted by Kings of England.<sup>5</sup>

### *EVIDENCE FOR SCOTTISH ADMINISTRATION OF THE ISLES*

Historians seem generally to have supposed that the integration of the Kingdom of the Isles into Scotland took place in the later part of the thirteenth century, but the meagre documentary sources for this period do not provide a comprehensive overview of such processes.<sup>6</sup> It would be natural to think that the establishment of Scottish control would involve the appointment of local administrators, a mix perhaps of those who already served prior to 1266 along with new men. An influential account of the Treaty of Perth by Richard Lustig cites the Chronicle of Lanercost for King Alexander wasting little time before sending bailiffs into the Isles to administer his newly gained lands.<sup>7</sup> That chronicle, the only source for such a process, does not provide such a comprehensive picture as might be implied by Lustig's statement. It groups under the year 1256 (*recte* 1266) the Treaty of Perth, as well as the appointment of four named bailies in the Isle of Man, who served in succession. Their period of service is not noted, but it may be supposed that the chronicler found it remarkable that there should be four, one after the other, in quick order. That, set alongside the major rebellion by the Manxmen in 1275, which had to be suppressed by a major naval expedition, does not easily belong in a narrative of growing assimilation.<sup>8</sup> A recent study of the Isle of Man under Scottish rule from 1266 to 1333 characterises the period as unsettled and violent with Scottish overlordship being bitterly resisted by the Manx people.<sup>9</sup>

Nor does a rare snapshot of Isles' magnates, Alexander [MacDougall] of Argyll, Angus [MacDonald] and Alan [MacRuairi], participating with the rest of the barons of Scotland in a council in 1284, easily allow the conclusion that this was business as

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<sup>5</sup> Broderick, *Chronicles*, fols 46r, 49v.

<sup>6</sup> For instance, R. Andrew McDonald, *The Kingdom of the Isles: Scotland's Western Seaboard, c.1100 – c.1336* (East Linton: Tuckwell, 1997), pp 127-57. In a recent detailed study of King Alexander III, Norman H. Reid, *Alexander III 1249-1286 First Among Equals* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2019) it is assumed that integration took place, while the topic of extending systems of control and administration to new territories is not dealt with in an important study of Scottish Royal Government. See Alice Taylor, *The Shape of the State in Medieval Scotland 1124-1290* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020).

<sup>7</sup> Joseph Stevenson (ed.), *Chronicon de Lanercost*. (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1839), p. 64; Richard I. Lustig, 'The Treaty of Perth: A re-examination', *Scottish Historical Review* 58 (1979): pp. 35-57. The Chronicle of Lanercost entries are now listed by Cynthia J. Neville and Grant G. Simpson (eds), *Regesta Regum Scottorum IV Pt. 1 The Acts of Alexander III* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012), pp. 213-14.

<sup>8</sup> Alan O. Anderson, *Scottish Annals from English Chroniclers A.D. 500 to 1286* (London: Nutt, 1908), pp. 382-83; Alan Orr Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History A.D. 500 to 1286* (Stamford: Paul Watkins, 1990), pp. 672-73.

<sup>9</sup> McNamee, 'The Isle of Man under Scottish Rule', p. 145.

usual.<sup>10</sup> The meeting in question agreed that Margaret, daughter of the King of Norway, should become Queen of Scotland, a matter in which these three had a particular interest given their Scandinavian heritage and associations. The document that recorded this event lists this threesome at the very end of a long list of mainland barons, many of much lesser status.

It is instructive to look at the much more fully documented aftermath of the forfeiture of the Lordship of the Isles in 1493. These lords were the direct descendants of the Angus MacDonald encountered in 1284, also ruling the Isles with no direct input from, or in opposition to the Kings of Scots. Donald Gregory's excellent 1836 overview of the long period from 1493 to 1625 chronicles the many events, initiatives, and changes of policy by which successive monarchs and their governments attempted to pacify and, in their terms, civilise and integrate the lands and people of the Lordship into mainstream Scotland. Naval and military expeditions were mounted, castles built and garrisoned, burghs planned or erected, colonisation undertaken by Lowlanders, trade and industry encouraged, chiefs encouraged and/or forfeited. Many of these efforts were outright failures, and even by 1625 the results can at best be characterised as mixed.<sup>11</sup>

One of the key considerations for any administration in acquiring new territories is that it should be able to reap financial benefits. It has long been understood that an evaluation of lands held by Scottish tenants-in-chief, known as 'auld extent', dated back to the time of Alexander III and it for long formed the basis for the payment of rents and taxes.<sup>12</sup> A report on the Western Isles dating to 1596 lists the warriors supported by each island as well as their extents, given in marks, with few exceptions, rather than pounds. The author has argued elsewhere that the document is the work of John Cunningham, an Edinburgh merchant in the pay of the English government, tasked with assessing Lachlan Maclean of Duart's attitude to the uprising in Ireland led by the Earl of Tyrone. The author further supposes that much of the material in the report derives from much earlier sources.<sup>13</sup>

Given that the warriors were not required to work the land, which were rather maintained by the local populace, it may have been assumed that there would be an obvious relationship between the numbers of men provided by each island and their money extent. This is not the case, and perhaps suggests that the lists of fighting men and extents derive from two separate sources of different date and function. The author has suggested that the quotas of warriors would fit best in a 1260s or earlier context and the extents could also date to the 1260s or fairly soon afterwards. There is no obvious,

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<sup>10</sup> Thomas Rymer (ed.), *Foedera, Conventiones, Litterae et Cuiuscunque Generis Acta Publica* (London: Hagae Comitatus, 1705), p. 266.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Gregory, *History of the Western Highlands and Isles of Scotland from A.D. 1493 to A.D. 1625* (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1836).

<sup>12</sup> R. D. Connor and A. D. C. Simpson, *Weights and Measures in Scotland: A European Perspective* (Edinburgh: National Museums of Scotland and Tuckwell Press, 2004), pp. 659-61.

<sup>13</sup> David H. Caldwell, 'The Sea Power of the Western Isles of Scotland in the Late Medieval Period', in *Maritime Societies of the Viking and Medieval World*, eds James H. Barrett and Sarah Jane Gibbon (Leeds: Society for Medieval Archaeology Monographs, 2015), pp. 355-62.

known late sixteenth-century documentation from which Cunningham could have derived his financial information.

It seems probable that the island-by-island extents listed in the 1596 document are those established by Alexander III's administrators after the Treaty of Perth. Whereas an auld extent valuation of lands is a usual feature of grants, etc, relating to lands in mainland Scotland, the writer is not aware of such references in documents concerning island territories. There, instead, a plethora of information survives concerning land units assessed as quarterlands, pennylands, ouncelands, cowlands, and so on.<sup>14</sup> The survival of this information rather than data on the auld extent suggests that the imposition of the latter in the Isles was ineffectual.



Figure 1 - Map showing places mentioned in the text and the extent of sheriffdoms created in 1293.

Four years after the death of Alexander III in 1286, while Scotland was governed by guardians, King Edward I of England took control of the Isle of Man, appointing a keeper, Walter de Huntercombe, to exercise control on his behalf, even though about

<sup>14</sup> Alexis Easson, 'Medieval Land Assessment', in *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, eds Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (Edinburgh: The Scottish Medievalists and Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, 1996), pp. 284-85; Alan Macniven, *The Vikings in Islay* (Edinburgh: Birlinn, 2015), pp. 81-104; Gareth Williams, 'The system of land division and assessment', in *A New History of the Isle of Man*, eds Sean Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 466-83.

the same time he guaranteed the independence of Scotland in the Treaty of Birgham. The island was handed back to the Scots once John Balliol was chosen as King of Scots in 1292.<sup>15</sup> It is not known what steps, if any, were taken by King John to ensure the administration of the Isle of Man. When he created three sheriffdoms in the west in 1293, it is clear that the Isle of Man was not included. The three new sheriffs were William, Earl of Ross, Alexander MacDougall of Lorn and James Stewart [the hereditary steward of Scotland]. The areas of their sheriffdoms (Figure 1) can be deduced from the lists of lands and landowners contained in the act of parliament. Stewart's sheriffdom probably did not comprise islands which had been part of the Kingdom of the Isles as late as the 1260s. Ross was a mainland lord and the extent of MacDougall's lordship in the Isles is not certain. Significantly, two of the greatest landholders there are not mentioned by name – Dugald MacRuairi not at all, and Angus [MacDonald] of Islay only obliquely as the son of Donald of the Isles. Alice Taylor's study of Scottish royal government notes the importance of sheriffdoms as the keystone of Scottish governmental structure by 1263-66, but if this was the first Scottish attempt to impose administrators in the Hebrides it came very late and it was to have no permanence.<sup>16</sup> Nor is there any evidence that the authority and judicial activities of the two or more justiciars extended into the Isles. The courts they held for the administration of justice were a significant source of royal income.<sup>17</sup>

With the example of the post-1493 Western Highlands and Isles in front of us we should at least be cautious in assuming an orderly, peaceful and efficient integration of the Kingdom of the Isles into the Kingdom of Scotland. With so few contemporary documents to guide us an archaeological approach would appear to be the best way forward, one that is attempted in the rest of this article.

In general terms we know the location and extent of the Kingdom of the Isles acquired by the Scots in 1266. It included the Isle of Man, the Inner and Outer Hebrides. The influence and lordship of kings of the Isles had extended further afield from time to time into Ireland, the Scottish mainland, and the islands in the Firth of Clyde.<sup>18</sup> It was also the case that some prominent chiefs in the west were landholders in both the Kingdom of the Isles and the Kingdom of Scotland, especially Ewen MacDougall, Angus MacDonald and Dugald MacRuairi. All three were descended from the twelfth-century Argyll prince, Somairle [Somairle] who had usurped the kingship of the Isles. At the time of King Hakon's invasion in 1263 all three had had to decide whether to

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<sup>15</sup> Michael Prestwich, *Edward I* (London: Methuen, 1988), pp. 361-62; McNamee, 'The Isle of Man under Scottish Rule', pp. 125-26.

<sup>16</sup> Taylor, *The Shape of the State*, pp. 398, 430.

<sup>17</sup> Hector L. MacQueen, 'Justice ayres in the thirteenth century', in *Atlas of Scottish History to 1707*, eds Peter G. B. McNeill and Hector L. MacQueen (Edinburgh: The Scottish Medievalists and Department of Geography, University of Edinburgh, 1996), p. 195; Taylor, *The Shape of the State*, p. 438.

<sup>18</sup> A. A. M. Duncan and A. L. Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles in the earlier Middle Ages', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 90 (1959): pp. 192-220; David H. Caldwell, 'The Kingdom of the Isles', in *The Lewis Chessmen New Perspectives*, eds David H. Caldwell and Mark A. Hall (Edinburgh: National Museums Scotland, 2014), pp. 72-73.

support that King or King Alexander of Scotland. Only MacDougall refused to support Hakon.

### ARCHITECTURE AS EVIDENCE OF CONQUEST?

In 1263, King Hakon captured Bute and granted it to a certain Ruadri who claimed an hereditary right to it.<sup>19</sup> From a Norwegian perspective this was a reconquest although it appears that Bute had been wrested from the kingdom of the Isles by the Stewart family by 1204.<sup>20</sup> That Bute had been within a Scottish sphere of influence from the later twelfth century is demonstrated in the archaeological record by Rothesay Castle and the church of St Blane at Kingarth. The castle, circular in form with a stone enclosure wall probably replacing a timber ring-work, is a type of twelfth- and thirteenth-century monument known to castellologists as a shell-keep (Figure 2). They occur widely in England and to a lesser extent in the Scottish mainland, for instance at the Doune of Invernochty and Peel of Lumphanan, both in Grampian, and at Loch Doon in Ayrshire. There are none elsewhere in the Isles. It was undoubtedly these stone walls at Rothesay which were attacked by a Norwegian expeditionary force in 1230. The castle was captured after the walls were hewed with axes.<sup>21</sup>

St Blane's Church has a long narrow nave separated from a small square-ended chancel by a richly decorated chancel arch. It clearly belongs in a Lowland Scottish tradition of Romanesque architecture.<sup>22</sup> Expert opinions on its date have in recent times varied from about 1170 to the 1230s.<sup>23</sup> Its masonry is similar in style to the castle. Elsewhere in the Western Isles, Kintyre and Knapdale twelfth- and thirteenth-century churches mostly show Irish or Scandinavian influences.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>19</sup> Anderson, *Early Sources*, pp. 617, 620, 621, 635.

<sup>20</sup> Duncan and Brown, 'Argyll and the Isles', 203; Noel Murray, 'Swerving from the Path of Justice: Alexander II's Relations with Argyll and the Western Isles, 1214-1249', in *The Reign of Alexander II, 1214-49*, ed. Richard Oram (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 288-89.

<sup>21</sup> Denys Pringle, 'Rothesay Castle and the Stewarts', *British Archaeological Association Journal* 151, no. 1 (1998): pp. 149-69; Anderson, *Early Sources*, p. 476.

<sup>22</sup> Richard Fawcett, *The Architecture of the Scottish Medieval Church* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2011), p. 52.

<sup>23</sup> John Dunbar, 'The medieval architecture of the Scottish Highlands', in *The Middle Ages in the Highlands*, ed. Loraine Maclean (Inverness: Inverness Field Club, 1981), p. 39; Denys Pringle, 'The medieval parish churches of Bute: St Blane's, Kingarth, and St Mary's Rothesay', *Scottish Archaeological Journal* 22, no. 2 (2000): pp. 129-32.

<sup>24</sup> Dunbar, 'The medieval architecture of the Scottish Highlands', p. 40; Ronald Cant, 'Norse influence in the organisation of the Mediaeval Church in the Western Isles', *Northern Studies* 21 (1984): pp. 1-14; Andrew Fleming and Alex Woolf, 'Cille Donnain: A late Norse church in South Uist', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 122, no. 1 (1992): pp. 346-49. The excavator of the nave and chancel church of St Marnock on the small island of Inchmarnock, adjacent to Bute, suggests it might be earlier than St Blane's and have been erected for Somerled or a member of his family. Christopher Lowe, *Inchmarnock: An Early Historic Island Monastery and its archaeological landscape* (Edinburgh: Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 2008), p. 267.

Hakon also reclaimed Arran and the Cumbraes in the Firth of Clyde, awarding the former to Murchaid (a MacSween?). The ownership of Arran prior to 1263 and in the later part of the thirteenth century is not known, but a clue may be provided by the emerging evidence for a thirteenth-century stone fortress, some of it incorporated in the present-day Brodick Castle. The remains indicate a rectangular castle of enclosure with an entrance flanked by a substantial round tower with a fish-tailed crosslet arrow-slit still *in situ*. This overall form and the design of the arrow-slit suggests comparison with late thirteenth-century work at the castle at Skipness on the west coast of what is now northern Kintyre but which at the time in question was regarded as part of Knapdale.<sup>25</sup> Both Brodick and Skipness would appear to the writer to represent expansion westwards by the Stewart family. Walter Bulloch Stewart, Earl of Menteith, acquired Skipness from Dugald son of Sween by 1262 and may already have got his hands on Arran.<sup>26</sup> It remains to be seen whether archaeological evidence from Brodick will provide a firm date for its early castle.

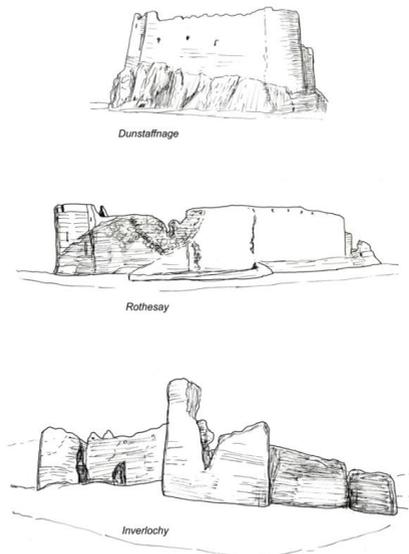


Figure 2 - Three frontier castles: Dunstaffnage, Rothesay and Inverlochy.

The position of the Kintyre peninsula *vis-à-vis* the Kingdom of the Isles is not at all certain. There is the famous story of it being claimed in 1098 as part of his island realm by King Magnus ‘Barelegs’ of Norway (acting as King of the Isles) by virtue of

<sup>25</sup> J. G. Dunbar and A. A. M. Duncan, ‘Tarbert Castle: a contribution to the history of Argyll’, *Scottish Historical Review* 50/1, no. 149 (April 1971): pp. 6-7. For an architectural analysis of Skipness Castle, see Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, *Argyll Volume 1 Kintyre*, no. 314 (1971), pp. 165-78.

<sup>26</sup> *Registrum Monasterii de Passelet* (Edinburgh: Maitland Club, 1832), 120-22.

‘sailing’ across the isthmus at Tarbert. If true, Kintyre seems soon to have reverted to the Scots.<sup>27</sup> It was apparently held by Somerled and his posterity (known collectively as MacSorleys).<sup>28</sup> In 1263 the leaders in Kintyre were Angus [MacDonald] of Islay, great grandson of Somerled, and Murchaid, who both decided to join King Hakon.<sup>29</sup>

Tarbert Castle, a stronghold guarding the portage across the Kintyre isthmus from Loch Fyne to West Loch Tarbert, has long been believed to have at its core a royal work resulting from campaigning in the region by King Alexander II in 1222. This interpretation has recently been cast in doubt by still to be fully reported archaeological research.<sup>30</sup> In 1263 Hakon sent a force to plunder Kintyre and accepted the surrender of a castle in the south of that peninsula, which he granted to Dugald [MacRuairi] before sailing for home.<sup>31</sup> This, like other grants made by Hakon at this time, had no force. It does, however, give the appearance that Hakon was reclaiming land that he believed was part of the kingdom of the Isles, and Dugald may well have had a claim to it extending back prior to 1222. The castle in question must have been Dunaverty, a sea-girt stack, a type of defended site more in keeping with castles in the Isles rather than those of the Stewarts and other mainland lords.<sup>32</sup>

Other western castles seem to mark a Scottish challenge to Isles’ power rather than its subjugation. This particularly applies to Inverlochy, Dunstaffnage and Rothesay, all with projecting round towers as well as arrow-slits (Figure 2). All three can be categorised as ‘galley castles’, built with access by sea in mind.<sup>33</sup> In a recent study Inverlochy has been compared and contrasted with Lochindorb Castle on Speyside, with a similar overall plan.<sup>34</sup> Both are deemed to date to 1260-80, and are in territories controlled by the powerful ‘Red’ Comyns of Badenoch. They may thus have been built for John Comyn I Lord of Badenoch, who died about 1277.<sup>35</sup> Inverlochy is only about two thirds of the size of Lochindorb but has thicker walls and larger towers that project more fully beyond the curtain walls. Lochindorb had substantial ranges of buildings

<sup>27</sup> R. Power, ‘Magnus Barelegs’ expeditions to the west’, *Scottish Historical Review* 65, no. 180 (1986): p. 121.

<sup>28</sup> Dunbar and Duncan, ‘Tarbert Castle’, p. 2.

<sup>29</sup> Anderson, *Early Sources*, pp. 617-18.

<sup>30</sup> Dunbar and Duncan, ‘Tarbert Castle’, pp. 2-3.

<sup>31</sup> Anderson, *Early Sources*, pp. 617-19, 635.

<sup>32</sup> Canmore Database, site 38302.

<sup>33</sup> Paula Martin (ed.), *Castles and Gallies: A reassessment of the historic galley castles of the Norse-Gaelic seaways* (Isle of Lewis: Islands Book Trust, 2017).

<sup>34</sup> I. Anderson and P. Dixon, ‘Inverlochy and Lochindorb Castles – A Comparative Study’, *Architectural Heritage* 22, no. 1 (2011): pp. 1-17.

<sup>35</sup> Alan Young, ‘Comyn, John, lord of Badenoch (d. c. 1277)’, in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, accessed 31 December 2016. At <https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-6044;jsessionid=C08BC2B6B17E305C61E3CC89659CAB86>.

appropriate for use by a great magnate household, indeed for a stay by King Edward I of England in 1302.<sup>36</sup> It is less clear that Inverlochy was so well provided.<sup>37</sup> More research and excavation might demonstrate that its primary function was to house a garrison rather than the household of John Comyn.

While Inverlochy, on the outskirts of present-day Fort William, is positioned at the gateway to the Great Glen, Dunstaffnage Castle, some 50 miles (80km) southwards guards access to inland Argyll via Loch Etive. It has a more complex building history than Inverlochy. Recent survey work and archaeological excavations have led to the conclusion that its round towers are additions.<sup>38</sup> The original castle was a quadrilateral structure with thick high walls, probably with few openings apart from a simple entrance. It occupies all of the summit of a rock outcrop and can be compared with other stone castles in the west, most obviously Mingary in Ardnamurchan, thought to have been built in the thirteenth century.<sup>39</sup> Like Dunstaffnage it belonged to descendants of Somerled.

The round towers added to Dunstaffnage by its MacDougall owners were positioned awkwardly at three of its corners, hardly flanking the exterior walls. Two of them also projected considerably into the interior. The west tower, and no doubt originally the other two, has arrow-slits and there are a further six arrow-slits, four of them in the southwest curtain wall and two in the southeast curtain wall. This author would argue that the arrow-slits in the curtain walls are also not part of the original plan. It should be noted that they and their embrasures are positioned above the level at which the curtain walls are drawn in in thickness, creating a scarcement in the internal wall faces. This may actually represent the point at which a new plan was devised for the castle. If so, the castle must still have been incomplete when the changes were introduced. This remodelling of Dunstaffnage Castle is likely to have been undertaken by Alexander MacDougall, Lord of Argyll, about the same time as his father-in-law, John Comyn, was building Inverlochy Castle. The latter castle was very probably the inspiration for the remodelled Dunstaffnage.

Dunstaffnage, not much smaller than Inverlochy, retains evidence for a relatively sophisticated suite of rooms, including a first-floor hall, appropriate for lordly use.<sup>40</sup> It

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<sup>36</sup> Anderson and Dixon, 'Inverlochy and Lochindorb Castles', p. 16.

<sup>37</sup> John Lewis and Helen Smith, 'Excavations at Inverlochy Castle, Inverness-shire, 1983-95', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 128, no. 1 (1998): pp. 619-44.

<sup>38</sup> John Lewis, 'Dunstaffnage Castle, Argyll & Bute: Excavations in the north tower and east range, 1987-94', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 126, no. 1 (1997): pp. 559-603; Colin Breen et al., 'Survey and excavation at Dunstaffnage Castle, Argyll', *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* 140, no. 1 (2011): p.168.

<sup>39</sup> RCAHMS, *Argyll Volume 3. Mull, Tiree, Coll & Northern Argyll*, no. 345 (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 1980), pp. 209-17. Other castles like Castle Tioram in Moidart, broadly of the same type, have been shown to be rather later in date. See Geoffrey Stell, 'Castles of the Western Seaboard: Some Physical Perspectives', in *Castles and Gallies: A reassessment of the historic galley castles of the Norse-Gaelic Seaways*, ed. Paula Martin (Isle of Lewis: Islands Book Trust, 2017), pp. 266-80.

<sup>40</sup> RCAHMS, *Argyll, An Inventory of the Ancient Monuments* (Edinburgh: RCAHMS, 1974), pp. 198-211.

was an important residence, probably the main one of the MacDougalls. Alexander MacDougall's father, Ewen [King John], who died about 1268, had in 1263 refused to serve King Hakon since he had sworn an oath to King Alexander and held more land from him. He therefore requested King Hakon to dispose of the dominion he had granted to him.<sup>41</sup> It has been supposed that the territories in question included the Mull group of islands, the evidence for this primarily being an agreement of 1354 by the then head of the MacDougalls with the Lord of the Isles by which the former gave up all rights in all of those lands apart from the island of Coll and a small part of Tiree.<sup>42</sup> What this document does not say is whether or when the MacDougalls actually held these island possessions after renouncing them in 1263. It is possible that at the time Dunstaffnage was remodelled it was looking out on islands that no longer belonged to Alexander MacDougall.

The shell-keep at Rothesay was captured again by the Norwegians in 1263.<sup>43</sup> It was probably only after that that it was strengthened by the addition of four round towers with arrow-slits. This was probably work undertaken for Alexander [Stewart] of Dundonald (died 1282). Apart from the obvious, its circular rather than rectangular plan, it is similar to Inverlochy. Rothesay was clearly a favoured residence of Alexander Stewart's descendants, but despite extensive restoration and clearance work evidence for substantial, high-status accommodation of the thirteenth century inside the castle has not been found. Joist pockets in the interior face of the west wall at first floor level have been taken to be evidence for, or at least the intention of building a hall there.<sup>44</sup>

Considerable recent activity in the Isle of Man by archaeologists and historians, particularly with regard to the two royal castles of Peel and Rushen, has failed to identify any architecture - military, administrative or residential - that can be associated with the Scottish takeover of that island.<sup>45</sup> Archaeological research in the rest of the Isles has been more thinly spread, and while there are several castles and churches that are well known and well-studied by architectural historians, it is difficult to identify any that can be claimed to represent significant influence from the Scottish mainland prior to the fourteenth century.

The owners of Inverlochy, Dunstaffnage and Rothesay were all at the heart of Scottish efforts to eliminate the Norwegian threat and take control of the Isles. Alexander Stewart commanded the Scottish forces in 1263 that saw off the Norwegian invasion at Largs on the coast of Ayrshire soon after Rothesay had capitulated.<sup>46</sup> John

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<sup>41</sup> Anderson, *Early Sources*, p. 617.

<sup>42</sup> Jean Munro and R. W. Munro, *Acts of the Lords of the Isles 1336-1493* (Edinburgh: Scottish History Society, 1986), pp. 5-8.

<sup>43</sup> Anderson, *Early Sources*, pp. 620-21.

<sup>44</sup> W. Douglas Simpson, 'The Architectural History of Rothesay Castle', *Transactions of the Glasgow Archaeological Society* 9, no. 3 (1939): p. 164; Pringle, 'Rothesay Castle and the Stewarts', p. 163.

<sup>45</sup> Peter Davey, *After the Vikings: Medieval Archaeology of the Isle of Man AD 1100 – 1550* (Douglas: Manx National Heritage, 2013); P. J. Davey and A. C. C. Johnson, 'Medieval archaeology and architecture', in *A New History of the Isle of Man*, eds Sean Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 484-545.

Comyn and Alexander MacDougall were amongst the leaders of the army sent to the Isle of Man in 1275 to suppress an uprising led by an illegitimate son of the last king of the Isles, Magnus, who had died in 1265.<sup>47</sup>

### *THE ISLES – OPENED UP TO TRADE AND INDUSTRY?*

Trade and industry depended on the activities of merchants and craftsmen, many of whom were based in the burghs established by kings and great lords, lay and ecclesiastical. Burghs were also important centres of administration, and their foundation often represented a significant new projection of royal power and influence. Thus, the burgh of Dumbarton on the Clyde, established by King Alexander II in 1222, may have been intended for use as a supply base for future military and naval campaigns in the west.<sup>48</sup> The royal burgh and castle previously established at Ayr at the very beginning of the thirteenth century were no doubt also seen as useful royal assets in winning the west.<sup>49</sup>

There were no towns nor large trading settlements in the kingdom of the Isles. Dublin, whether under the control of Scandinavian dynasts, Irish, English or Isles kings, must have exercised a considerable commercial pull. After 1266 there should have been significant opportunities for the Scots to develop trade and industry, but no burghs at all were founded in the Isles, either by the king, religious houses or great lords. Archaeology may yet produce evidence for patterns of trade in the west in the later thirteenth century, based on pre-existing burghs like Ayr, Glasgow and Dumbarton, but it is surely remarkable that new burghs were not founded elsewhere on the west coast between the erection of Dumbarton in 1222 and Tarbert, an initiative of King Robert Bruce in 1329.<sup>50</sup>

Kings based in the Isle of Man from about 1025 to 1065 operated their own mint for the production of silver pennies at a time when there was a strong influence from, or connection with Dublin.<sup>51</sup> These coins were always just a small element in a larger money supply, and there is as yet no evidence that they circulated elsewhere in the Isles. Two twelfth-century hoards from the Isle of Man, dated to after about 1174 and

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<sup>46</sup> G. W. S. Barrow, 'Stewart family (*per.* c.1110-c.1350)', in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, Oxford University Press, accessed 31 December 2016. At <http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/49411>.

<sup>47</sup> Anderson, *Scottish Annals*, pp. 382-83.

<sup>48</sup> E. Patricia Dennison, 'Burghs and burgesses: A Time of Consolidation?', in *The Reign of Alexander II, 1214-49*, ed. Richard Oram (Leiden: Brill, 2005), pp. 273-79. Dennison supposed that the foundation of Dumbarton went hand in hand with the king's erection of Tarbert Castle, but, as noted above, it is now less clear that building at that castle can be ascribed to Alexander II.

<sup>49</sup> George Smith Pryde, *The Burghs of Scotland: A critical list* (Oxford University Press, 1965), pp. 21-22.

<sup>50</sup> Pryde, *The Burghs of Scotland*, pp. 21-22.

<sup>51</sup> Kristin Bornholdt Collins, 'Coinage', in *A New History of the Isle of Man*, eds Sean Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 423-31.

probably after about 1165, consisted largely of Scottish coins. The former had at least five coins, one of which was English, the other four Scottish; the latter is said to have consisted of several coins of William I of Scotland. This has been seen as positive evidence for an orientation towards Scotland in the late twelfth century,<sup>52</sup> though one might wonder if it reflects the payment of dues and taxes from the rest of the Isles to the kings based in Man. If that is the case caution should be exercised in interpreting the hoard with 27 English and Scottish coins deposited in Bute about 1140. It might represent the gathering of money to pay rent rather than direct influence from mainland Britain, more specifically a takeover of the island by the Stewarts.<sup>53</sup>

Ranald, son of Somerled, who flourished in the late twelfth- and beginning of the thirteenth century and was described as Lord of the Isles (*domini Incheval*), made an initial gift to Paisley Abbey of eight cows, and also two pennies from every house in his land from which smoke issued. In future years the abbey was to receive a penny from each house. His wife also offered a tenth of her inherited property as well as of all articles she sent by land and sea for sale. Their son Donald, the eponym of Clan Donald, also made the same gift as his father, this time with the option that eight cows might be provided instead of the annual return of pennies. His son Angus [MacDonald of Islay] granted half a mark of silver annually along with a penny from every house emitting smoke.<sup>54</sup> These grants are surely evidence for the role, and availability, of coins as a medium of exchange, and also the importance of cattle as a source of wealth. The grants by Ranald and Donald, and possibly Angus, pre-dated the Treaty of Perth, and the houses that provided the money presumably included those in their island territories.

A further six coin hoards of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth century have been recovered from the Isle of Man, mostly of English coins as is generally the case throughout Britain at that time, as well as a number of stray coins. There are no coin hoards of that date from the rest of the Isles and few stray finds of coins.

Finlaggan in Islay has produced ten coins of short cross and long cross types, dating to the period from 1180 to 1278, and a further eleven single cross pennies minted in the period from 1279 to about 1314. All were individual, no doubt accidental, losses. The castle at Finlaggan, unknown from early documentary sources, was a substantial fortress with a stone rectangular tower and large bailey defended by a timberwork fortification. It is sited on two islands in a freshwater loch, connected by causeways to each other and to the loch edge. It was possibly a royal, administrative centre for the kings of the Isles before falling into the hands of Ranald son of Somerled and/or his descendants. It can be supposed to have been the main residence of Angus of Islay by the 1260s and then of his MacDonald descendants.<sup>55</sup> Finlaggan would have had a role as a rent gathering centre, which may go some way to explaining the loss of these coins, but they must also be viewed as evidence for a money economy in the years after 1266.

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<sup>52</sup> Collins, 'Coinage', p. 432.

<sup>53</sup> J. D. A. Thompson, *Inventory of British coin hoards, A.D. 600-1500* (London: Royal Numismatic Society, 1956), p. 21.

<sup>54</sup> *Registrum Monasterii de Passelet*, pp. 125-27.

<sup>55</sup> Excavations at Finlaggan, still to be fully published, were directed by the author in the 1990s.

Archaeology has so far not provided a comprehensive picture of trading activity between the Isles, on the one hand, and Britain and Ireland on the other. There are, however, areas of archaeological evidence, particularly ceramics, that deserve further attention for the light that might be shone on trading patterns. Sherds of pottery are often one of the artefact types best represented in medieval assemblages. Excavations at the castles of Peel and Rushen in the Isle of Man have produced, mainly from thirteenth- and fourteenth-century contexts, large quantities of wares imported from England, representing at least 206 separate vessels, but not one sherd which can be identified as of Scottish origin.<sup>56</sup>

This contrasts markedly with the excavations directed by the author at the castle at Finlaggan, and demands some attempt at an explanation. Some 800 sherds of Scottish white gritty pottery and redware, manufactured in kilns in the Scottish Lowlands, were recovered. Much of it comes from contexts that can be dated to the thirteenth century. The presence of sherds in later contexts can reasonably be explained by residuality in a limited area with a complex building and occupation history over hundreds of years.

There is not a great deal of understanding why the occupants of Finlaggan should have wanted to import pottery. It was clearly of better quality, technically and aesthetically, than locally handmade wares. The writer would suggest it was not so much for the sake of the vessels themselves, perhaps mostly jugs with some storage vessels, as for what they could or did contain. Ceramic jugs may have been a by-product of the importation of wine, necessary for decanting it from barrels and taking it to table, while other vessels could have been the containers for food not readily available locally. In this interpretation the imported Scottish pottery at Finlaggan represents consumption by a noble household rather than, for instance, a garrison of soldiers. To back this explanation up there are sherds of high-quality ceramic jugs from the Saintonge region of France which might be supposed to reflect the importation of claret. They have also been recovered from Castle Rushen and Peel Castle in the Isle of Man.<sup>57</sup>

As yet there is no comparable sequence of thirteenth-century wheel-made Scottish pottery from elsewhere in the Isles and a dearth even of stray finds. There have been extensive excavations of 'Late Norse' or medieval houses at Bornais and Cille Pheadair, both in South Uist, and at Coileagan an Udal in North Uist, but only local handmade pottery was recovered.<sup>58</sup> No granite-tempered wares made in the Isle of Man nor

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<sup>56</sup> P. J. Davey, 'Medieval and later pottery from the Isle of Man', *Proceedings of the Isle of Man Natural History and Antiquarian Society* 9, no. 1 (2000): pp. 93, 96; P. J. Davey, 'Ceramics', in *Excavations on St Patrick's Isle, Peel, Isle of Man 1982-88*, ed. David Freke (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2002), pp. 384-95.

<sup>57</sup> Davey, 'Medieval and later pottery from the Isle of Man'; Davey, 'Ceramics', pp. 384-95.

<sup>58</sup> Excavations at the first two sites have been thoroughly reported. See Niall Sharples, *A Norse Farmstead in the Outer Hebrides: Excavations at mound 3, Bornais, South Uist* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2005); Niall Sharples, *A Norse Settlement in the Outer Hebrides: Excavations on Mounds 2 and 2A, Bornais, South Uist* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2020); Mike Parker Pearson et al., *Cille Pheadair: A Norse Farmstead and Pictish Burial Cairn in South Uist* (Oxford: Oxbow, 2018). Information on the Udal excavations is more problematic although plans are now in place for complete publication. A useful context and explanation are provided by Niall Sharples, 'A Short History of Archaeology in the Uists, Outer Hebrides', *Journal of the North Atlantic*, Special Volume 9: 2010 Hebridean Archaeology Forum (2015): pp. 1-15.

medieval English pottery has been recognised in the Hebrides, Arran or Bute. None of the Hebridean handmade pots – ‘croggans’ – have been identified in the Isle of Man. The Isle of Man clearly has a different ceramic history from the other Isles and on present showing Finlaggan is unique in having relied so heavily on imported Scottish wheel-made pottery. It is not possible to be more precise at this stage than to indicate that the pottery in question was in use in the later thirteenth and fourteenth century. The Saintonge ware at Castle Rushen, Peel Castle and Finlaggan results from the presence at all three of high-status households. Water-logging of midden deposits at Finlaggan allowed the recovery of cherry stones and fragments of walnuts and almonds, obviously also luxury imports.

The trading arrangements that on the one hand brought English ceramics to the Isle of Man but on the other hand Scottish pottery to the Hebrides might reflect a rift in the kingdom of the Isles between an Isle of Man based line of kings and the MacSorleys whose power was located in the Islay and Mull groups of islands as well as mainland Argyll. It was a division recognised by King Hakon in 1248 when he appointed the leading MacSorley, Ewen [MacDougall] as a king, apparently to rule in areas of the kingdom not controlled by the kings in the Isle of Man.<sup>59</sup> A charter of 1256 by King Magnus (based in the Isle of Man) to the Augustinian priory at Conishead in Lancaster freed the canons from paying tolls and customs on their vessels and goods,<sup>60</sup> and we might speculate that similar concessions were made to other religious houses by both King Magnus and the MacSorleys. Since there were no burghs in the Isles with settled communities of merchants, religious houses may have played a larger role in trade and farming than would otherwise have been the case.<sup>61</sup>

Other archaeological work in Islay provides information on metal extraction in the thirteenth century. A sediment core taken by Dr Michael Cressey from Loch Lossit, in an area where there is evidence for lead mining in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, shows concentrations of lead and calcium, believed to be indicative of this activity. The bottom of the core could be dated to about 1229 by which time there was substantial mining activity. This dropped off in the late thirteenth century before rising to a new peak of effort about 1367.<sup>62</sup> Lead was important in medieval times for making trinkets and for roofing and plumbing in major buildings. There is also documentary evidence for lead mining in the Isle of Man as early as 1246.<sup>63</sup> In 1292 John Comyn,

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<sup>59</sup> D. H. Caldwell, ‘The break up of the kingdom of the Isles’, *West Highland Notes & Queries* 3, no. 14 (December 2009): pp. 7-12; Caldwell, ‘The Kingdom of the Isles’, p. 75.

<sup>60</sup> J. R. Oliver (ed.), *Monumenta de Insula Manniae or a Collection of the National Documents relating to the Isle of Man Vol. II* (Douglas: Manx Society, 1861), p. 87.

<sup>61</sup> Compare Benjamin T. Hudson, ‘The changing economy of the Irish Sea province: AD 900-1300’, in *Britain and Ireland 900-1300: Insular Responses in Medieval European Change*, ed. Brendan Smith (Cambridge University Press, 1999), pp. 53-54; David Ditchburn and Benjamin T. Hudson, ‘Economy and Trade in Medieval Man’, in *A New History of the Isle of Man*, eds Sean Duffy and Harold Mytum (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2008), pp. 377-410.

<sup>62</sup> Michael Cressey, ‘The Identification of Early Lead Mining: Environmental, archaeological and historical perspectives from Islay, Inner Hebrides, Scotland’ (PhD thesis, Edinburgh University, 1995), pp. 218-34.

Earl of Buchan, sought permission from the English administration for enough lead from the mine in the Calf of Man to cover eight turrets in his castle of Craggleton in Galloway, and it is known that two years earlier the Isle of Man was the source of lead for the building works at Edward I's Welsh castles.<sup>64</sup> A plausible explanation for the drop in lead extraction in Islay has still to be advanced but it would not have been a desired outcome for the Scots, especially with the annexation of the lead mines in the Isle of Man by the English in the late thirteenth century.

### *THE LORDSHIP OF THE ISLES – THE CONSEQUENCE OF FAILURE*

Clearly archaeological evidence for events in the west in the thirteenth century is thin and difficult to interpret but it seems to the writer that there is considerable scope in the future to gather more. At least by laying out the material currently available it should be possible to identify existing viewpoints that can be subjected to further testing and come up with new research agenda.

The author believes that there is nothing in the data reviewed above that gives a firm impression that the Scots readily and decisively took control of the Kingdom of the Isles which they acquired by the Treaty of Perth. There is no evidence that King Alexander III even visited his new territories. Knowledge of his perambulations largely depends on an analysis of the place-dates of his surviving acts. Their recent editors considered that it was noteworthy that he seldom appeared in the western reaches of his kingdom, an anomaly that they suggested might not only be due to the vagaries of documentary survival but also to changes in working practices. Perhaps the King felt able to delegate more to local subordinates while his chancellor and writing staff were more sedentary – that is less likely to be producing documents while accompanying the King in all his travels.<sup>65</sup> This is highly speculative and does not really address why the supposed changes in practice affected the western regions of the kingdom disproportionately.

Architecturally, the evidence for influence from the Kingdom of the Scots is limited, and it is difficult to identify buildings, secular or ecclesiastical, which were erected in the territories belonging to the Kingdom of the Isles as late as 1266 as the direct result of decisions made by Scottish kings and nobles. Castles like Rothesay, Skipness and Brodick in the Firth of Clyde, Inverlochy and the remodelled Dunstaffnage further north, are frontier fortresses, and may have remained such long after 1266. Evidence for the erection, or even just the occupation of earlier Isles' castles by Scottish nobles and administrators in the later thirteenth century, has not been found. It may not exist.

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<sup>63</sup> Caldwell, 'The Kingdom of the Isles', p. 84.

<sup>64</sup> J. G. Black (ed.) *Calendar of the Patent Rolls: Edward I. A.D. 1281-1292* (London: HMSO, 1893), pp. 358, 497.

<sup>65</sup> *Regesta Regum Scottorum IV Pt 1*, p. 35. For an up-dated map of the king's travels, see Reid, *Alexander III*, map 3 (p. 298).

Alexander III and his advisers may, to a large extent, have acquiesced in allowing Isles' lords and officials already in place in 1266 to carry on administering the Isles on their behalf, but such an approach was unlikely to achieve an assimilation of the Isles with Scotland to the advantage of the latter. Lack of evidence for the imposition of the new system of rental represented by auld extent does not encourage a belief that the Scots took effective control of their new territories. The creation of sheriffdoms including the Isles (but not the Isle of Man) only by 1293 raises questions about whether they replaced an earlier, post-1266 administrative system or were a first serious attempt by a Scottish administration to control the Isles.

The striking lack of royal burghs in the west and total absence of any burghs in the Isles, casts doubt on the development by King Alexander III of an effective programme for projecting royal power and fiscal control into the Isles. It also indicates that trade and industry, largely based elsewhere in burghs, developed along different lines, ones which excluded a financial return to the royal coffers from rents on burgh properties, customs, etc. Further archaeological research might help to come up with an explanation for this and some measure of the extent and financial worth of commercial activities involving the Isles in the later thirteenth century. Trade in cattle, animal products and lead from the Isles should have been lucrative, but for whom? Future archaeological research may provide answers.

Without extensive documentary records, such as survive for Scottish government interventions in the Isles in the sixteenth century after the collapse of the Lordship of the Isles, it will probably never be possible to provide a detailed picture of the problems faced by the Scots in the Isles post-1266 and how they dealt with them. A key challenge is to understand why the Isle of Man appears to have an archaeological record so distinct from the rest of the Isles. To some extent that may be attributable to a breakup of the Kingdom of the Isles prior to 1266 but does not necessarily explain the prevalence of English pottery and complete absence of Scottish wares at Manx sites and the reverse of that situation at Finlaggan in Islay.

In the early fourteenth century, in the aftermath of the Wars of Independence, John MacDonald of Islay, a direct descendant of Somerled and chief of Clan Donald, without authority from any king, Scots or otherwise, adopted the style of 'Lord of the Isles'. His lordship was as extensive, or even greater than the Kingdom of the Isles and was clearly a successor to it. He and his heirs, often at odds, if not involved in outright warfare with Scottish administrations based in the Lowlands, ruled the Isles until the end of the fifteenth century. This lordship could surely never have come into existence if the Scots had taken effective control of the Kingdom of the Isles. From a Scottish perspective the Lordship of the Isles represents the failure of King Alexander III to benefit from the Treaty of Perth.