

ARDVRECK CASTLE

15TH CENTURY SEAT OF THE MACLEODS OF ASSYNT

Built by Angus Mor III in the latter half of the 15th century, Ardvreck Castle began as a simple rectangular block, three or four storeys in height. Almost a century later, Donald Ban IX enhanced the castle's accommodation by adding the tower and, in the fashion of the time, the vaulted cellars and vault over the great hall on the first floor.

The stone wall that cuts off the promontory follows the line of an earlier rampart, augmenting the castle's naturally defensive position. Even after Donald Ban's improvements, Ardvreck was still small, requiring other buildings around it to house kitchens, servant's quarters, and stables. However, a place was found for Ardvreck's most famous, although unwilling, occupant, James Graham, Marquis of Montrose, imprisoned here in 1650 after his defeat at the Battle of Carbisdale.

Throughout its life, Ardvreck was the scene of much violence, with murders, executions, and sieges by both traditional enemies and quarrelsome branches of the MacLeod family. In 1672, a 14-day siege by the MacKenzies of Wester Ross marked the end of MacLeod ownership of Assynt. Nature carried out the final act of violence on the castle in 1795 when it was struck by lightning and largely destroyed.

Many ghosts are said to haunt Ardvreck. The weeping daughter of a MacLeod chief, who drowned in Loch Assynt after marrying the Devil in a pact to save her father's castle, has been seen on the beach, but the tall man in grey, often seen in the ruins, seems to be an altogether happier ghost.

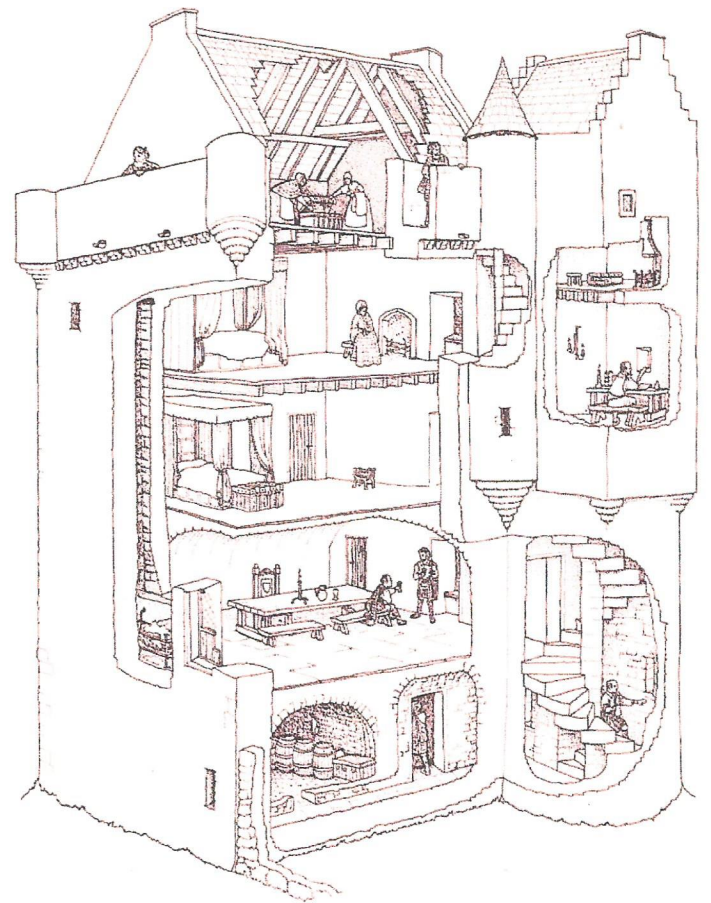
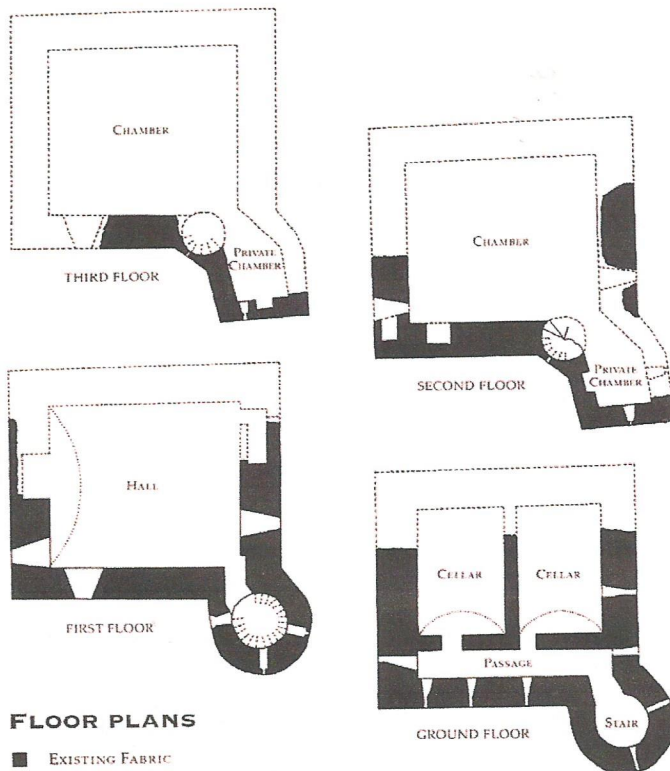
This is the only known contemporary illustration of the castle. The existence of a worn 1591 or 1597 datestone, recorded in 1794 but now lost, suggests that Pont has shown Ardvreck soon after the additions made by Donald Ban.

Sketch of Ardvreck from Timothy Pont's Map of Assynt, c.1583-96

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*"...how attractive are the stately ruins of Ardvreck, looking us straight in the face as we cross the narrow neck of the peninsula on which they stand!
It was without doubt the scene of 'Many a wassail wild and deed of blood;' but now there is not a cat to mew, nor a cock to crow, in the fortress of the Clan MacLeod."*

Sir John Sinclair, Scenes and Stories of the North of Scotland, 1890



CONJECTURAL RECONSTRUCTION C.1600

The circular part of the tower contained the stair and, above this, the square caphouse provided two extra rooms, each with a fireplace. The upper floors were reached by stairs in the small turret set in the angle between the tower and the main block.

PLEASE DO NOT CLIMB ON TO THE CASTLE
THIS CAUSES DAMAGE TO THE BUILDING AND TO THE PROTECTIVE VEGETATION.
DONATIONS WELCOME - THANK YOU.