

Urquhart Castle

What was once one of the largest castles in Scotland is now considered by many to be one of the most beautiful castle ruins. Urquhart (ur-kurt) Castle was one of the 1200 stone castles in Scotland. It was located on a rocky outcrop on the north shore of Loch Ness in the Highlands of Scotland. It was perfectly situated for views of Glen Mor (a valley), and Loch Ness (a long, narrow lake over 700 feet deep). It guarded a major route through the Highlands. Another advantage of being built on Loch Ness was that the lake led to the River Ness and then to the ocean. This made it possible to receive supplies by boat during times of battle.

There has been a castle on this important site since the 12th century, and there is some evidence of a fort being built there hundreds of years earlier. Through the years of warfare between Scotland and England, ownership of the castle moved from one king to another and even saw fighting between Scottish clans. (A clan is a large group of families with the same ancestors who follow one leader.) By the 1600s the castle was abandoned, and in 1689 soldiers blew up much of it during a civil war because they did not want their enemies to use it as a fort.

Today Urquhart Castle is a ruin. There is little left to show of the castle as it was when it was a home to a Lord and his family. The Tower House, the five-story main part of the castle, is still standing. Various servants would have been employed to watch the Lord's children and to keep the house running smoothly. Imagine them climbing the five sets of stairs to go up and down the tower.

To maintain life in the castle, Urquhart had several important service areas. They included the bake house, garden, chapel, prison, ox house, dove grove, orchard, and smithy. These areas are now in ruin also. Can you hear the voices and picture these workers as they perform their duties?

Sources

Baxter, Colin. *Castles of Scotland*. ISBN 1-84107-004-1

<http://www.aboutscotland.com/ness/urquhart.html>

Assessment Worksheet for Urquhart Castle

1. What are 2 reasons why the location of Urquhart Castle is a good place to build a castle?
2. What was the name given to the master of the castle?
3. What are three ways the workers in the castle depended on the land.
4. What are two ways the workers depended on the loch.

Match the following Scottish words to their English meanings.

- | | |
|---------------|-------------|
| 5. _____ loch | A. mountain |
| 6. _____ ben | B. valley |
| 7. _____ glen | C. lake |

Match the following workers to their tasks.

- | | |
|---------------------|--|
| 8. _____ butler | A. takes care of the birds |
| 9. _____ blacksmith | B. priest who leads the worship services |
| 10. _____ chaplain | C. carries messages for the Lord |
| 11. _____ sheriff | D. policeman for the castle |
| 12. _____ herald | E. serves the food |
| 13. _____ falconer | F. makes things from iron |

Assessment **Answer Key** for Urquhart Castle

1. What are 2 reasons why the location of Urquhart Castle is a good place to build a castle?

built on a rocky outcrop, had a view of the valley, lake provided water, river provided boat transportation, guarded a major route through the highlands, river lead to the ocean

2. What was the name given to the master of the castle? **Lord**

3. What are three ways the workers in the castle depended on the land.

farming, grazing animals, firewood, orchards for fruit, wood and stone for defensive buildings, metals for making iron

4. What are two ways the workers depended on the loch.

water, fish, transportation, means to get to the ocean

Match the following Scottish words to their English meanings.

5. ____ **C** ____ loch A. mountain

6. ____ **A** ____ ben B. valley

7. ____ **B** ____ glen C. lake

Match the following workers to their tasks.

8. ____ **E** ____ butler A. takes care of the birds

9. ____ **F** ____ blacksmith B. priest who leads the worship services

10. ____ **B** ____ chaplain C. carries messages for the Lord

11. ____ **D** ____ sheriff D. policeman for the castle

12. ____ **C** ____ herald E. serves the food

13. ____ **A** ____ falconer F. makes things from iron

Role Cards

LORD

You are the master of the castle. Everyone must obey you. You have a noble title and are sworn to serve the king. If the king goes to battle, you must fight for him. You also must take care of your own castle and people. You might have a large chair to sit upon in the castle's main hall.

CHAPLAIN

You are a priest who leads the worship services held in the castle. You are the only one who can read in the castle. You also write letters and do paperwork for the Lord. You might also teach the Lord's children.

LORD'S LADY

You are married to the LORD of the castle. You must make sure the food is bought for the kitchen, raise the children, and see that visitors have entertainment. If your husband is gone, you make the decisions for the castle.

LORD'S CHILD

You are the child of the LORD and LADY of the castle. Girls are taught manners, how to manage the household tasks of the castle, sewing, and spinning. Boys also learned manners. When the boys became teenagers, they would become pages and would train to take over the castle duties.

MUSICIAN

You play an instrument or sing in order to entertain the Lord, his family and visitors to the castle.

STEWARD

You keep track of the Lord's money and organized the farm workers for all of the Lord's property.

<p>MAN SERVANT You do any tasks that the castle needs. You might make walls for the castle, get firewood, hunt animals for meals, and wait on the Lord and Lady.</p>	<p>FALCONER You take care of the birds, called falcons, which were used to hunt small animals. The falcons were favorite pets of the Lord, so you must take very good care of these animals.</p>
<p>BAILIFF You look after the farm animals and repair the castle.</p>	<p>REEVE You help the Bailiff by taking care of the farm animals and repairing the castle. Your badge of office is a white stick that you carry.</p>
<p>SHERIFF You are chosen by the King to be the policeman and run the local government.</p>	<p>PAGE You are a young boy (about age 7) who performs personal duties for the Lord and his family such as carrying the food to the table during meals.</p>

<p>WOMAN SERVANT You do any tasks that the castle needs. You might sew clothes, cook, spin wool, or wash clothes.</p>	<p>NURSE You are the one who takes care of the Lord's children.</p>
<p>HERALD You carry messages for the Lord.</p>	<p>TREASURER You collect the rent and taxes. You also pay the workers and all of the bills for the castle.</p>
<p>KITCHEN WORKER You work in the kitchen. Your job is to clean up after the cooks and wash dishes.</p>	<p>CONSTABLE You take over the running of the castle if the Lord was away.</p>

<p>COOK You cook the meals for the Lord's family and guests. You also must bake the bread.</p>	<p>BUTLER You must serve the food to the Lord's family and the guests.</p>
<p>BLACKSMITH You make and repair the horseshoes for the horses. You also make anything that is needed from iron. You work in a small building with a hot fire and you pound the hot metal with a large hammer.</p>	<p>ARMORER You make and fix the armor that the knights will wear when they go into battle. You also take care the swords and other weapons used in war.</p>
<p>RETAINER You are the old trusted servant. You help out in the castle until you can work no more.</p>	<p>GARDENER You look after the castle garden that is growing vegetables for the Lord's meals.</p>

BEEKEEPER

You take care of the bees in their beehives. You also collect the honey that the bees make and bring it to the castle for the cook to use.

KNIGHT

You will lead the castle army into battle. You became a knight when you knelt before the lord, who knighted you by tapping you on the shoulder with a sword.

SQUIRE

You are about 14 years old when you change from being a page to a squire. You take care of the Knight's armor, his horse, and his weapons.

SOLDIER

You use a bow and arrow to fight in battles.

CHAMBERLAIN

You control all of the servants.