

Dunvegan

Isle of Skye



The Two Low Walk

A timeless track...



Birch trees in autumn sunlight

"It looks as if it had been let down from heaven by the four corners to be the residence of a Chief".

Boswell and Johnson 1773



Dunvegan Castle

THE CHURCH PATH

The sheltered section of the walk is known locally as *The Church Path*. It was used by the MacLeod Chiefs and their families when making their way to Duirinish Church for the Sunday services. Dame Flora, 28th Chief, had a favourite seat near to the viewpoint marked on the map overleaf.

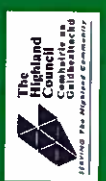


Duirinish Parish Church



Dunvegan Community Trust

Designed by The Croft Studio - Dunvegan - Isle of Skye



Supported by

Take responsibility for your own actions

Care for the Environment

Respect the interests of other people

Please follow the SCOTTISH OUTDOOR ACCESS CODE

Pamela Budge, Marjorie MacInnes and Chris Mitchell

Text

Daisy and Pamela Budge

Art Work

Heather Lyon, Chris Mitchell and Donald Budge

Photographs

Easy. Sensible footwear.



Allow 45 minutes for circular walk.

Time



MacLeod's Tables



St Mary's Church Kilmuir

During the 6th Century, the Celtic saint 'Columba' left his native Ireland to found a base of Christian learning on Iona. From this first settlement, he established a monastery and later travelled the sea roads of the west bringing Christianity and peace to Skye and the islands. His monks built shelters of stone called "bee-hive cells", and as most early Celtic churches were based on the sites of Columban monasteries, old Celtic church names usually begin with "Kil" or "Cille" meaning "cell". Several places in Skye have the name "Kilmuir" and remains of bee-hive cells can be seen at Annait on the Waterish peninsula. This has been described as one of the most important early Christian sites in the Hebrides.

Dunvegan is in Duirinish (the "deer parish") and here the ruins of St. Mary's Church stand on the site of one such early Christian "cell". Historians believe it was originally named after a Celtic saint of the Columban church, but was re-named St Mary's (*Cille Mhuire*) after AD663, when the Synod of Whitby decreed that all Celtic churches follow the rule of Rome.

Like all Columban sites the church is situated not far from the sea and with a burn running close by. The ruins are typical of pre-Reformation churches, with pointed gables, narrow pointed windows and walls which are built almost entirely of unhewn stone. The original building would have been roofed with heather thatch, a covering which if well done, would last for over 20 years.

Many old local families lie at rest here and five chiefs of clan MacLeod are buried in the north aisle and chancel of St Mary's Church. You will find memorial tablets to several other branches of the clan who are buried elsewhere. In the churchyard lie the unmarked graves of the MacCrinnons, hereditary pipers to the clan MacLeod. A memorial tablet to this famous family can be seen on the south wall of the church.



Bracken fronds



Honeysuckle



Amethyst deceiver



Primroses



Sea Eagle

Also known as the White-Tailed Eagle. This huge bird has a white, wedge-shaped tail and very broad wings held horizontally.



Golden Eagle

Easily distinguished from the Sea Eagle this bird has a squarish (not wedge-shaped) tail. When soaring, it holds its wings above horizontal with wing-tips pointed slightly upward and forward.



Buzzard

Buzzards are common on the rocky coastlines and hill-sides of Skye. They are often seen perching on fence and telegraph poles, and their plumage varies from almost black to pure white.



Sparrow Hawk

This bird is mainly found around woodland. Smaller size, longer tail and short rounded wings distinguish it from buzzards, harriers and kites.

THE TWO CHURCHES' WALK

This circular walk takes you along well made paths to various points of interest, including a viewpoint looking towards Dunvegan Castle and Loch. Depending on the season, a variety of wild flowers, ferns and lichens can be found. You may even see an eagle soaring above or perhaps catch a glimpse of a red deer. The woodland section, starting from Duirinish Church, is one of the most sheltered walks in north-west Skye - perfect on a wet or windy day!

1 St Mary's Church

The ruins of St Mary's stand on the site of an earlier Celtic holy site probably founded by Columban monks from Iona. The church gives its name to the district of Kilmuir (from *Cille Mhuire*). "Cille" or "Kil" meaning "cell" and "Mhuire" Gaelic for Mary. Several MacLeod clan chiefs and the MacCrimmons, hereditary pipers to the MacLeod clan, lie in the churchyard here.



2 The Duirinish Stone

This magnificent rock column was taken from a south Skye beach and erected here in the year 2000 by people from the Duirinish area to mark the Millennium. The stone, weighing 5 tons and standing 5 metres high, was pulled into place on the summit of Drum-na-Creige using traditional methods and a great deal of manpower! A time-capsule was buried at the base of the stone.



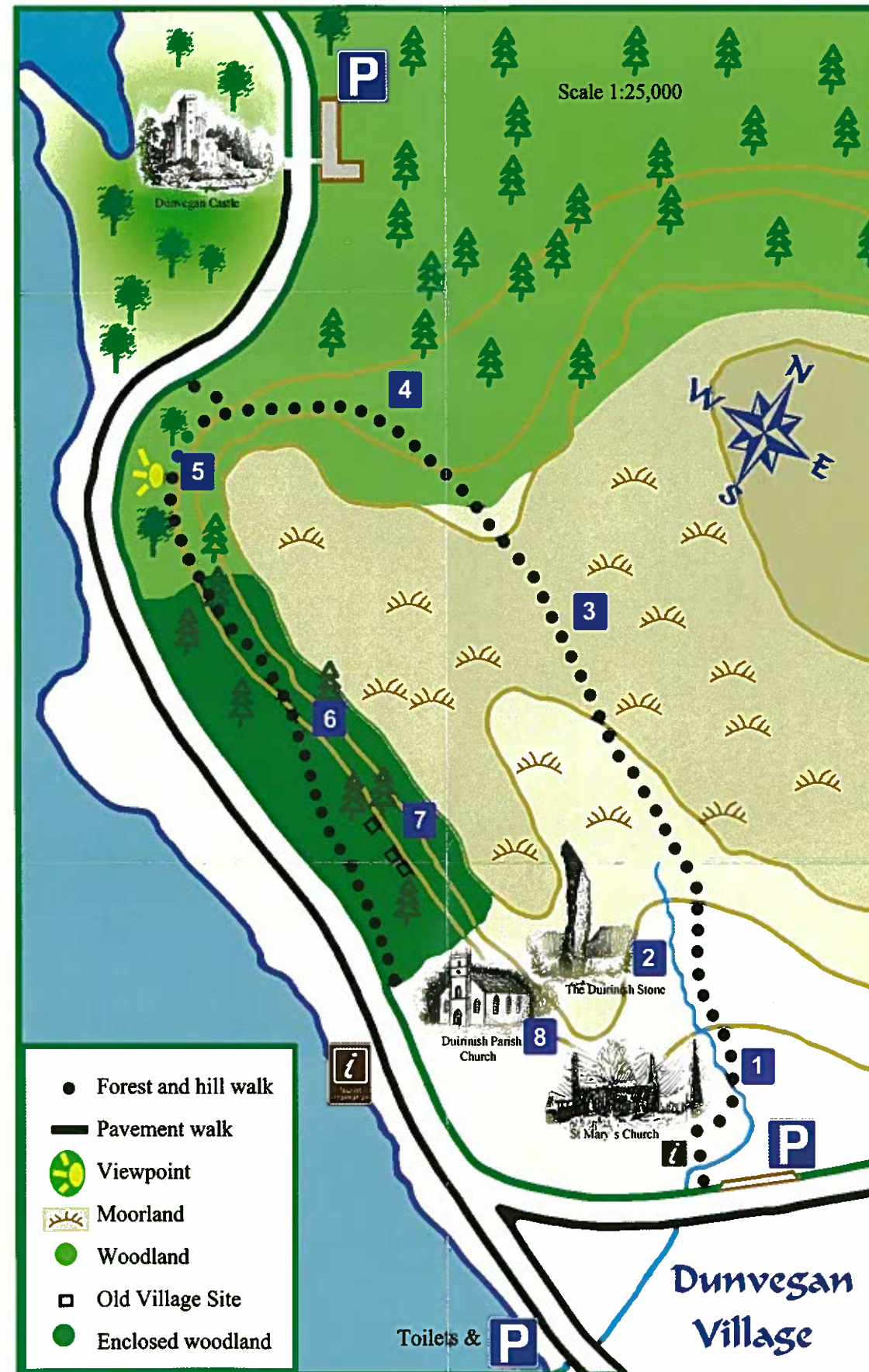
3 Moorland



The moorland here is common grazing for the township and the path follows what was the old road to the castle. In season, bright yellow gorse blooms among the heather and you will see bog-cotton, orchids, primroses, violets and mosses. You can hear skylarks singing and may see red deer on the higher ground.

4 Woods

From the moorland you enter the Castle woods. Here the path leads down through rowan, birch, beech and alder to towering conifers that follow the burn. In season, honeysuckle, azaleas, dog rose and the wild hyacinth (English bluebell) appear in the undergrowth. Foxgloves mass beneath the trees and you can also find a variety of lichens.



5 Viewpoint

The walk changes where the woodland ends and you cross an open area of hazel and birch, with bracken and bell heather. From here there are good views of Dunvegan Castle, the loch and the Outer Isles. Terns and oystercatchers nest on islands in the loch below. In summer buzzards can be seen hanging in the rising air currents. Listen to their call, a "mewing" sound, as they circle high above.



6 Enclosed Woods

This section of the path goes through a long tunnel of conifers and it becomes very much darker. Hardly any light filters down and the path is soft and deep with pine needles. Here you will find a variety of shade-loving ferns, fungi and lichens among close rows of Sitka spruce. Sycamore, birch, ash, oak, rowan and hawthorn grow here in north-west Skye's most sheltered walk.



7 Old Village Site

Concealed by the woodland and close up against the crags are the barely visible ruins of the old village of Creag-a-Clachain. This hamlet was formed by MacLeod's tenants who once lived around the old inn on the Clagan road. When the new church was built, they were given crofts in Kilmuir. Their old small-holdings are now lost within the woodland.



8 Duirinish Parish Church



This church, built in 1832 by John Norman MacLeod 24th Chief, replaced St Mary's. The pulpit here is unusual, as it is said to be one of the highest in Scotland. There is also a lovely carved sounding-box and below this a "penitent's platform" where in the old days, offenders once stood before the congregation to admit guilt and breaches of moral laws.