

# The Buchanan Castle

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July 2006

**B**uilt in the 1800s, the Buchanan Castle must have been magnificent in its day. Perched on a wooded hill near Loch Lomond, the soaring turrets of the stately structure would have drawn the gaze of passing Scotsmen. In April 2006 one of the Buchanan's descendants, Dan Buselmeier, was exploring the ruins of the old estate along with his family (and part of mine). Modern houses had sprung up on the property along with a golf course. The house was fenced off because of the danger of its decrepit condition. Vines climbed the outer walls and trees three stories high were growing inside.

Crossing where the fence had been mashed down by vandals or other curiosity seekers like ourselves, we made our way closer to the derelict structure. Standing tippy-toed on a narrow ledge, one could peer into what was once a dining room. Fallen roof beams littered the floors, the fireplace was crumbling. It was difficult to imagine the house once giving refuge from the weather to which it was now exposed. What was it like when family laughter filled the now eerie silence? When guests basked in the glory of a now condemned eyesore? Some reflections:

1) ***"Is there anything of which it may be said, 'See, this is new?' It has already been in ancient times before us" (Ecc 1:10).*** No matter how modern or sophisticated or how fancy or opulent, a new model or later age will make the present obsolete. We can get so caught up in the present – the "new car smell," the "upscale neighborhood," the latest hairdo – that we forget the temporary nature of such things. Someone else will own it; it will be taken to the dump; it will be replaced with the newer, bigger, better. This realization should help keep the "fever" from getting too hot.

2) ***"For there is no more remembrance of the wise than of the fool forever, since all that now is will be forgotten in the days to come ..." (Ecc 2:16).*** Our family will one day consist of "ancestors." That is, if things continue normally, I will one day be someone's great-great-great grandfather. My name may be written in a family genealogy, but the day-to-day details, concerns and utensils of my life will be forgotten. What matters is what I am doing with the life that I now have, not the legacy that will be of little memory and interest to future generations.

3) ***"Then I hated all my labor in which I had toiled under the sun, because I must leave it to the man who will come after me. And who knows whether he will be a wise man or a fool? Yet he will rule over all my labor in which I toiled and in which I have shown myself wise under the sun. This also is vanity" (Ecc 2:18-19).*** It was mind-boggling to think of the amount of effort and labor that it took to build the Buchanan Castle. To haul the materials in, to carve the stonework, to plane the boards and beams, to weave the tapestries – all in vast quantities, all with primitive tools and equipment. And for what? So someone other than a Buchanan could live in it? So generations later some American tourists could poke around in the rubble? So a bulldozer could raze it for another fairway?

So much in this world reminds us that it is passing away, but God fills this depressing void with the promise of things that last forever: *"an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you"* (1 Pet 1:4). Names written in the genealogy of God's family will never be forgotten.