



The
KIST

THE KIST

The Magazine of
The Natural History & Antiquarian Society
of Mid Argyll

NUMBER ONE

WINTER 1971

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EDITORIAL

Marion Campbell of Kilberry FSA, FSA Scot

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As President of your Society, I am pleased and proud that we now have our own magazine; as chairman of the Editorial Sub-Committee, I can only apologise for my own shortcomings, and especially to contributors whose work has been ruthlessly tailored to fit our present modest format.

This is a new venture, as our Secretary explains in his review of our activities. Its future is in your hands; it can be altered in any way you care to suggest, and its aim is to publish your news of your discoveries, observations, memories, traditions - everything that is of interest to you all. Mr Davis makes a plea for contributions for future numbers; I should like to add my own here. Please do not feel that you have nothing worth recording; of course you have. All discoveries, both in natural history and in archaeology, begin with small scale local observations. The big statistical surveys fail when they lack details for some part of their area (we can all think of published maps with disastrous blanks in the corners we personally know best). One osprey - or quern-quarry, or flint knife, or rare plant - is interesting; half a dozen of any of these would make a major "happening" in its own sphere. So let's be hearing from you all.

This first number will be sent to all members; further copies can be ordered from Mr Davis, and it will be a great help to the Editorial Committee if you can let us know if you want extra copies of future numbers. Why not send them to friends outwith Argyll?

Please keep your contributions short

- 500 words is ideal for our purpose, and shorter items (proverbs, local sayings, notes on place names, or natural history notes) will be very welcome and can be used to fill pages and make the best use of our paper. If you can possibly type out your contributions (double spaced and on one side of the paper only) you will lighten the editor's labours somewhat, but please do not be deterred if you have no typewriter handy.

Don't forget, too, that I am always delighted to hear of any archaeological find you may encounter, and that between us we can muster experts in botany, ornithology and other subjects; what these "other subjects" may include, we hope to learn as your contributions come in. If we cannot produce an "expert" from within our own ranks, we can always appeal to Museums or other authorities for their help, which has always been most generously given.

My warmest thanks are due to all our contributors to this first number of The Kist.



THE QUERN-STONE QUARRY AT MINARD, LOCH FYNE

Colonel P F Fane Gladwin, OBE FSA Scot

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The finding of a quarry for quern-stones at Minard was first reported in Discovery and Excavation 1968. Excavation continues, and has already given some idea of the scope of the work.

Opinions vary as to the date when rotary querns replaced prehistoric saddle-querns (flat grinding-slabs for making grain into coarse flour); probably the earliest rotary querns were brought to Britain in the last centuries BC, perhaps by refugees from Caesar's conquest of Gaul - or a little earlier.

Rotary hand-mills were essential equipment for the Roman Army, whose daily wheat ration was issued as grain to be ground by the troops themselves. Therefore, rotary querns would be in use all along both Hadrian's and the Antonine Wall, and could be adopted by nearby native settlements.

Throughout England and lowland Scotland, hard sandstones and gritstones were used to make querns, but in the Highlands the readily available garnet-mica-schist was used in their place. Quarries at Bruniachan, in Glen Roy, and on the isle of Gigha, as well as the Minard site, consist of this type of rock.

At Minard the rock outcrops in ledges near the shore, and from four small areas so far uncovered it is estimated that about fifty circular "blanks" have been quarried. The hollows left in the rock, and some broken and discarded stones found nearby, suggest an average size of around 15" diameter and 3" in thickness. Quern-stones have varied in shape and decoration during

the long period of use (roughly 2nd century BC to 18th century AD); unfortunately Minard has not yet yielded a closely dateable finished stone.

An interesting feature of the site is that stones can be seen in almost all stages of cutting, so that the techniques used can be clearly followed. The process began with the "pecking" of small holes about 1" apart in a circle of about 18" diameter. These were then joined into a circular groove a little over 3" deep, wide enough to allow wedges to be inserted, and sometimes slightly undercut at the base. The disc was then worked free from the bed-rock with the wedges, and if all went well it broke out cleanly along the natural plane of the rock. (It appears that there were failures at this stage, from the numerous broken stones found below the workings).

So far the only other artefacts found have been some hand-sized lumps of hard crystalline limestone, with one or more surfaces heavily worn down by rubbing; these were probably used in finishing the stones after extraction.

The workings cannot be dated closely as yet; they are not mentioned in any map or survey of modern times. There are signs that the site may be ancient.

In the first place, the inner ends of the outcrops are covered by about two feet of soil and boulders; yet working began at the outer edge of outcrops, so the inner ends were worked last.

Secondly, at several points full sized stones have been cut from the edge of the outcrop, but only half their bed remains - that is, some 9" of hard rock has weathered away. Perhaps only an accurate study of the rates of soil accretion and

atmospheric weathering on the site could provide an answer.

The site is reached from Minard village by walking south along the shore for half a mile to a point just beyond the tip of a disused modern quarry. The outcrops are under a group of oaks thirty yards uphill from the shore, in Forestry Commission ground.



BIRD NOTES

Mrs I Rainier

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Mid Argyll, with its varied scenery, lacking only cliffs and high mountains, has many bird species, some, like the Divers and Hen Harriers, seldom seen in Britain outside the West Highlands and Islands.

Of our three Divers, the Great Northern is a winter migrant, (though it bred in Ross-shire last year), but the Red and Black-throats are year round residents. Shy and rare, sometimes in the sea, more usually on the wilder hill lochs, anyone lucky enough to hear their unearthly wailing, and see their beautiful colouring will never forget them.

Like the Hen Harrier, a large, long-winged, long-tailed hawk, which hunts flying low over open land, they are strictly protected. We should be proud of having them here.

The Red-breasted Merganser, a black, white and brown duck with thin, sawtoothed red beak and an untidy "hair-do", is common enough here on sea lochs, and occasionally fresh water, but of great interest to visitors from England. So are the Eiders, heavily built black and white, pale pink breasted drakes, whose soft cooings to their brown mates are heard on all our salt waters.

Of our other ducks, the Mallard, with the Eider, is the commonest all year round, though Wigeon are here in winter, on most of our sea lochs, sometimes in flocks of hundreds.

Goldeneye, black and white males, and brown and mottled grey females, slimmer than Eiders, and

identified by their odd, bulgy heads are also here in large numbers during winter, on fresh and salt water.

For Geese, all winter visitors, we have many Grey Lags, a few Whitefronts and Pinkfeet, and the Barnacle. Because Islay is the chief wintering place in Europe of the Barnacle, it is often not realised here that it is a rare bird elsewhere and becoming rarer. Like the other geese, it nests in the far north, near the Arctic Circle.

Mention should be made of the Whooper Swan, that romantic bird of Viking legend; the "silver swan, Who living had no note", said to sing only when dying.

A winter migrant, also from the north, it is distinguished from the black and orange billed Mute Swan by its straight neck and lemon yellow, goose-like beak, similar characteristics of the smaller, less often seen Bewick Swan.

The sight of Whoopers flying, outstretched necks, their whooping cries echoing over hills and lochs, is like that of the Divers, something to remember!

We have the little Black Guillemot, and further off-shore the Common Guillemot and the Razorbill, though unless strong measures are taken very soon to prevent the appalling slaughter by oil round every sea coast of hundreds of thousands of seabirds, there will be none left but Gulls, of which we have five common varieties, and three kinds of Tern.

The Forestry Commission forests hold several kinds of tit, the Greater Spotted Woodpecker, and the Goldcrest, the smallest British bird; three and a half inches long, whose nest is a tiny moss and gossamer hammock, slung usually under a conifer

branch, and the Siskin, with occasionally Crossbills.

The Mid Argyll Check List contains 279 species for us to see, hear and study! There is, however, space here to mention, with some exceptions, only species of special local interest.

Though a walk is more interesting if one can identify the birds seen, it is much more so if some studies are made.

For example:

Why has a certain heronry been suddenly deserted, though the trees containing the nests still stand, and human interference, as far as can be known, has not occurred?

Why does the population of certain species fluctuate? To take two cases; The Oystercatcher was once extremely numerous in Mid Argyll, then scarce, though not elsewhere; it has now built up its numbers again.

The Whooper has become scarcer, the Kestrel more common. Then the "invasions". A few Waxwings come every winter, but sometimes they come in hundreds all over the district.

Last winter, the forests were full of Crossbills, some nesting there; this winter, I, personally, have seen none.

There are always some Siskins, but again, last winter, flocks were seen in all the forests, and on the birches and alders by the roadsides.

The Check List has been compiled with great care over many years; the Society would welcome any notes for future editions.

TALES FROM AUCHINDRAIN I

THE STORY OF MCFARLAN'S LOCH

(Retold from the Justiciary Records of Argyll
I,ii,82-5, by the Revd Alexander Fraser BD)

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One of the stories told among those who sat round the glowing peat fires in Auchindrain, a story still handed down in oral tradition on Lochfyneside, explains why McFarlan's Loch is so called.

On the first day of October 1697, Thomas McFarlan, drover in Lennox, was travelling through the country on his business of droving. He came to the lands of Inverhea, Lochfyneside, and there met Neil MacTavish. MacTavish invited him to lodge with him and entertained him all that night in Inverhea with seeming friendship and kindness. Understanding by a girdle about the drover's middle, and by what he said, that the young man had a considerable sum of money on him to buy a drove of cows, MacTavish discoursed with him both before and after supper, telling him where he might buy good fat cows in Achagoyle.

The next morning they breakfasted together, and the host designing to take away the life of his guest and to plunder him of his money, carried along with him in his hand a gun, charged with small drops and other pieces of cut lead, as they went away in company together out of the house of Inverhea. MacTavish enticed and persuaded the credulous and innocent young man McFarlan to go with him to the Moor of Achagoyle to see the cows.

Accordingly both of them having gone on forward till they were near at a little fresh-water loch in

the top of the moor, being an obscure place remote from any high road or repair of people, MacTavish then shaking off and void of all fear of God, reverence or respect to His Majesty's laws, most barbarously and inhumanely did execute his wicked and execrable design of murder and robbery, by shooting Thomas McFarlan in his back about his middle, he being very near and going on before him.

MacTavish immediately took away all the money that was about McFarlan, being nine or ten pounds sterling or more consisting most of forty shilling pieces and then he hid the corpse in a bush of heather. He also carried away with him McFarlan's sword to the Moor of Inverhea where he hid the same in an obscure place at the side of a stone, the place being covered over with long heather.

But the sword being by Divine Providence found by the herds of Achagoyle and brought home, MacTavish was suspected of the murder and apprehended in May 1698.

In a Justice Court held within the Tolbooth of Inveraray, the eighth day of June, MacTavish openly and judicially confessed his crimes. There upon the Justice Depute by the mouth of Duncan McIlvory, dempster of Court, adjudged Neil MacTavish to be taken upon Saturday, the 18th of June betwixt two and three of the clock in the afternoon to the ordinary place of execution and then and there to be hanged on a gibbet till he died the death.

At this point, when no one in the households in Auchindrain was in any doubt as to why the loch was called McFarlan's Loch, and all that remained was an awful imagining about MacTavish, it was the custom with dry throats to sing the twenty-third Psalm.

SCHOOLS IN THE QUOAD SACRA PARISH OF LOCHGILPHEAD

The Revd John R Callen BD

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The forthcoming centenary of the Education (Scotland) Act of 1872 is an appropriate time to survey the local history of education.

Lochgilphead, a Governmental Parish from 1828, was erected a quoad sacra Parish in 1847, taking in territory from Glassary and South Knapdale Parishes. I deal here with schools in that territory.

In 1794 there had been in Glassary a parochial school, an itinerant catechist (paid by Royal bounty) "round the braes of Glassary", and in "the lower end" (Lochgilphead?) a sewing and knitting mistress paid by the Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge. In 1883 the Lochgilphead Kirk Session Minutebook names "Peter Cumming, teacher at Lochgilphead", and records General Assembly legislation to set up parish schools. The Church of Scotland was then urging both Government and Presbyteries to improve educational facilities - a field in which the General Assembly had taken the lead from its earliest days. By 1837 the Government had voted £4,000 to help private subscribers build schools and £6,000 towards the salaries of masters in forty Highland districts (including Lochgilphead). Land owners were to provide in free gift a school, house worth at least £10, garden and small croft. Teachers were to receive fees from those who could pay, but must give free tuition to the very poor. The heritors were responsible for upkeep of buildings; the house was to have at least two rooms besides a kitchen. In 1838 the Kirk Session of Lochgilphead began urging the local heritors to provide buildings and make the school the principal one in the

district, but in 1846 they had still not qualified for a Government grant for lack of permanent buildings. The master was then John McNaughton, whose school roll showed 88 weekday scholars, Gaelic 0, English 97, Writing 51, Arithmetic 43, Book-keeping 3, Geography 4, Mathematics 1, Latin 3, Sabbath Evening School 80, no library; half yearly fee £3.7.0d.

Meantime Alexander Campbell of Auchindarroch had offered an acre and £120 for building, provided the Government gave as much, and the temporary school was in danger because of rent arrears. With the Presbytery's help, things looked brighter in 1857 when "a new school-house and dwellings for a male and female teacher" were complete (the Manse Brae School, in use to 1926) and 104 pupils attended for examinations, "truly gratifying". Robert McGregor was schoolmaster, 1849-56, and in 1848 the fees, at £11.15.0d were the highest in Scotland for Assembly schools.

But this was not the only school; in 1845 the Lochgilphead Female School of Industry had an Assembly grant of £8 provided the Ladies' Association formed to maintain it raised £12. Its teacher in 1847 was Ellen Robertson, who taught "reading, writing, needlework and the like". A "Penny School" at Kilmory (Burnside Cottage marks the site) charged 1d fee to pupils; its successive teachers were Miss Carmichael (Mrs Mackay), Miss Bella Kerr and Miss Mary McMaster (Mrs MacAlpine). There were Episcopalian Schools at Ardrishaig (1847-86) probably at Kilduskland, and in Lochgilphead where Inveryne now stands, close to Christ Church, at whose consecration in 1851 seats were kept for pupils from both these schools.

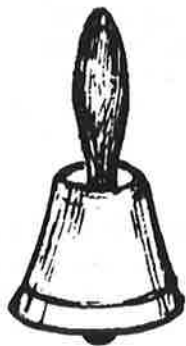
There was a Parochial School at Airds by 1848 when the master, Daniel Thomson, became Elder for that ~~sea~~ where a Gaelic-speaking Elder was needed. This school was above Lingerton; later Miss Campbell

of Shirvan ran a charity school in what is now the south end of Castleton Farm Cottages.

I have as yet no starting date for the Free Church School in the Mission Hall at the Union St Manse Brae corner, but in 1873 its master, Robert Stewart, became the first Headmaster of Lochgilphead Public School.

In 1858 Airds and Lochgilphead schools together mustered 239 pupils, with 70 in the Female Industrial School. In 1860 Lochgilphead had 150 pupils, but delays in appointing the new master, John Alexander, had caused many scholars to "find their way to another school in the village" which also had certificated teachers. In 1862 Mr Alexander had 76 pupils and two pupil teachers, while Miss Wilson of the other school had 70, and one pupil teacher, and was highly praised then and in 1867-9. In 1870 a Presbytery visitation reported that "the condition of the Parliamentary school has improved ... both in attendance and attainment" and "the Society (SPCK) female school, under Miss Tocher, made a most creditable appearance - more so, indeed, than this school, (which has for several years taken a high place) ever previously manifested".

This was a high-water-mark; but the passing of the 1872 Act was to change the whole pattern of education.



NOTES AND NEWS

Gordon Davis, Hon Secretary

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Your Society is flourishing.

At the 1970 Annual General Meeting Mr Bruce reported that there were 108 members - we are at the time of writing 124.

The Society deeply regret the death of Major Duncan Campbell of Glen Feochan, a loyal member of our committee from its early days, whose willing help and wise counsel will be greatly missed.

Due to the incompetence, or over-enthusiasm, of your secretary, the Winter Programme has over-run the Summer Programme by two months, but April and May are such wonderful months in Argyll that we must have outside meetings, yet how could we miss the chance of hearing such an eminent authority as Professor Corcoran on Chambered Tombs, or spare a single word of Professor Duncan's The Stone of Destiny and All That?

It is difficult to say which was our most successful winter meeting; as so often happens, those that sound the least interesting can turn out to be the best. At least in Mid Argyll the prophet is accepted in his own country.

Our Summer Programme should provide interest for all, and we hope some will be able to enjoy every meeting.

Our visit to Ardpatrik was most enjoyable, even if the size of the party was rather too large for serious birdwatching; but now we have discovered this delightful unspoilt area, members will no doubt revisit the new Nature Trail in small groups. We

are most grateful to Mrs Kenneil, not only for providing welcome refreshment but also for opening the Trail to the public.

The meeting at Inverlussa (7th July) should be of interest to both sections of the society. You must see the Clapper Bridge at Achnamara - and how many will attempt the hill crossing to Ardrishaig?

The Garvellachs! Some members have visited this romantic island group, but for most it will be a venture into the unknown. The antiquities are important - so are the flowers and seabirds; and there is Corryvreckan to be traversed. I shall be away 4th - 10th June, so please let me know if you hope to join the party by 1st JUNE and contact me on 11th or early 12th for final details. Even more than our other outings this trip is entirely dependant on the West Highland Elements.

Our excursion into Industrial Archaeology takes a new form, with Mr Aitken telling us about Iron Workings on Friday May 28th and leading a visit to a newly found site near Cairnbaan Camp on 29th.

This Magazine is our most important new venture; its success depends on YOU, the ordinary member of the society. You must write it and you must sell it. This first number is a "trial run", produced by a sub-committee as an experiment. The next number must be GOOD, good enough to warrant further publications (probably at half-yearly intervals). Do please consider what you could contribute; it need not be a learned treatise - though these will be welcome - light anecdotes of the past, or recent observations of interest to the Naturalist or Antiquarian, will be acceptable. So will pen and ink sketches. Articles to the Editor by mid-October please, but contact me or any Committee Member if you have an idea but don't know how to submit it.

Under the recent Town and Country Planning Act, your Society becomes an "Amenity Society" and will be advised of any plan to demolish or alter Listed Buildings - with the right to raise objections. In an area so rich in old and interesting structures, the first duty will be to ensure the correctness of the official List. This is a considerable task; any member with special knowledge or interest can give your Committee invaluable help.

As your Society grows in scope and importance, do you think we should change its name? "The Natural History, Antiquarian and Amenity Society of Mid Argyll" might cover the field of our responsibility!

Do you think we are important enough to become just "The Mid Argyll Society"?

Resolutions for the Annual General Meeting (October 26) to me, please.

By the way, after the AGM we are having a "Bring and Tell". Members are asked to bring something of interest and tell what they know of it, or ask other members about it.

Shall I see YOU in print in November?



OVERSEAS QUERIES

Marion Campbell

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No doubt other members of our Society often receive enquiries, as I do, from the descendants of emigrants who are anxious to trace their ancestors' homes; often the clues are scanty, but we hope that by publishing these enquiries in this magazine we may be able to solve some of the problems.

Here are two enquiries to start you off; we will pass on any information you can offer, and will gladly publish other requests for help in later numbers of the magazine.

1. Professor Charles C Carmichael of Toronto University wants to find a place in Argyll called Craig Feitach, from which his forbears sailed to Canada in 1820 (ship Gestian from Oban). His great-grandfather Charles Carmichael, born 1790, and great-grand-uncle Hugh Carmichael, born Feb 20 1796, went out. (Mrs Carmichael, Ardrishaig, who sent me the query, wondered if the place might be in Tiree. I wonder if the placename should be Creag Fitheach, Raven's Crag?).

2. Miss Eleanor Campbell, Toronto, wants to locate the birthplace of her great-great-grandfather Dugald Campbell; it was called Duipin, and he was born on June 4th 1801, to Duncan Campbell of Knapdale Parish and Catherine Campbell of Kilcalmonell Parish, who had been married on May 16th 1789. Places where the couple lived between 1789 and 1801 are given as Achnagarhnen, Conanby, Barhnavuila and Auchadlian. In 1824 Dugald married Katherine McWilliam at Drum (Drum) Farm, Kilchenzie where their son Archibald was born and whence they emigrated to Canada West in 1832, possibly because

Katherine's father's 19-year lease of Druim expired that year. Their later history in Vaughan Township, Toronto, is well-documented; Dugald was imprisoned for his part in the Liberal Rebellion of 1837. (I suspect that all the places mentioned in North Kintyre; Duipin = Dippen, Achnagarhnen = ? Achnacarranan; I cannot readily trace the others. Can any reader advise Miss Campbell, who is visiting Argyll this summer, where family graves or house-sites can be sought?).

BOOK REVIEW :- TOCHER

Mrs M Stewart Hon Librarian

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This is a new publication by the School of Scottish Studies. It covers a wide field from Berwickshire to the Shetlands. Students should find in it much useful material in a compact form. General readers with an interest in Scottish folklore will derive information and enjoyment from the contents which range (in Gaelic and English) from stories to music and songs.

Many items will recall memories of the past. Half a century ago I recollect a young lady fresh from college in Aberdeen and spending an evening round the peat fire with a Shetland family, being quite nonplussed by the question, 'Can 'ee lay up a guddik?' I renew my old acquaintance on p.29 with pleasure.

Probably the stories will be most enjoyed, with their mixture of humour, folk memories, odd beliefs and native wit. I particularly liked the story of 'The one-eyed Miller and the dumb Englishman'. Having heard it re-told by the late Calum MacLean, I realise how much greater an impact it would have had on its original audiences, but, faute de mieux, we have the printed page.

I recommend this publication to all our readers. It is truly a 'Dowry' of rich Scottish gems.

Congratulations to our Member and Subscriber Rev Alexander Fraser on his latest book "Lochfyneside" a history of the District in recent times, available from The St Andrew Press, 121 George Street, Edinburgh 2, £1.25 which we hope to review in our next.