



The KIST DAIL

# T H E K I S T

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

President: Miss Campbell of Kilberry, FSA, FSAScot.  
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# STUDIES in THE HISTORICAL ECOLOGY of N. KNAPDALE

Leslie Rymer

## I. INTRODUCTION

Landscapes are dynamic entities resulting from the interactions between geology, soil, climate and living organisms. Although they may be described in terms of the spatial distribution of these separate components, any description applies only to one moment in time. Landscapes, like man, have a history. Time passes and things change. On a short time scale there are the changes wrought by the passing of the seasons, or by the life and death of an individual tree. Over a longer period there are cataclysmic upheavals brought about by various geological processes, and the more gradual effects of drifting continents and organic evolution. Intermediate in time and scale are other effects resulting from geological processes such as the slow infilling of lake basins, and effects resulting from chronic climatic change, such as resulted from the Pleistocene ice ages.

The present landscape is a result of past history and both past and present are determinants of the future. When Mae West went to the fortune teller she said: "Tell me about my future. You see, I know all about my past." We are also interested in the future but, often, we do not know about the past, only the present. In order fully to appreciate and understand the present landscape, and if we are to assess its future development, we must needs investigate the history of the environment.

For those able to appreciate it, the present landscape is an admixture of times past, times present and times to come, and, because of this, it provides a great hunting ground for environmental detectives. Like Sherlock Holmes, we must search for clues and use them to deduce the nature, sequence and cause of past events and then consider the implications and consequences of these events for the future. Clues are everywhere, if only we can learn to interpret them.

In many cases all that is needed is thoughtful observation. Look, and consider what you see. An interesting example, which I will return to in a later note, is that in many areas of North Knapdale bracken grows over old cultivation ridges. Obviously it must have invaded these ridges after their cultivation had been abandoned. This, in turn, presents all sorts of other questions. Why was cultivation abandoned? When? Why did bracken invade these areas? Was bracken growing in the parish before it invaded these areas? If not, where did it come from? What happened to the people who cultivated these ridges? And so on. The questions are endless, and each answer generates even more questions.

Other clues may require specialised knowledge for their interpretation (but not for their discovery). As an example one can cite the dating of archaeological remains, or the presence of various plant and animal species. Other clues can be discovered and interpreted only by means of special instrumentation and equipment. An example of this would be the identification of fossil pollen grains trapped in lake sediments.

Still another sort of clue is found not in the field but in books. These, perhaps, are the most accessible clues of all. As anyone who reads a newspaper will know, the greatest agent of change on our planet is man. Happily, man often keeps records of what he is doing, and these records, whether they be in the form of estate papers, journals, official statistics, or general accounts of holiday excursions, are often very valuable sources of information for the historical ecologist.

By the careful and critical analysis of all these clues it is possible to study past environments, past organisms, and the relationships between them. This study is graced by the name of Palaeoecology. It is, perhaps, rather more difficult than I have so far suggested, particularly with regard to the field evidence, because, as indicated by Francis Bacon several hundred years ago: "Antiquities are history defaced, or some

remnants of history which have casually escaped the shipwreck of time." The clues may themselves have been altered, lost, or transported into another context. But so long as this is realised it is possible to keep an eye out for it, and even to make use of it.

Over a period of three years I had the privilege of being able to study the palaeoecology of the Parish of North Knapdale. Regrettably only a small part of this period was actually spent in the field. Being a botanist I naturally concentrated on botanical techniques, although I have used other sources of information to the limits of my competence. Fortunately the study of vegetational history by means of pollen analysis is one of the most powerful palaeoecological methods, and I hope that this will in some way compensate for my lack of ability in other areas.

It is my intention, if the Editor will allow me, to discuss aspects of the historical ecology of North Knapdale in a number of short occasional papers. It is my hope that this will stimulate further work of a similar kind in other parts of Mid-Argyll, and that others will be able to build on, revise, correct and criticise my work on North Knapdale.

But before beginning this somewhat lengthy project, I would like to take this opportunity of thanking all those people, members and non-members of the Society, who gave so freely of their time, help and hospitality during my all-too-brief visits to the parish.

## II. THE PRESENT DAY LANDSCAPE

Most readers of this journal will already be familiar with the area under consideration. Nevertheless it seems essential to begin with a description of the present situation. This will serve to refresh the memories of members already familiar with the area, and may even encourage those who have never seen the parish to visit it.

Before 1734 the whole district of Knapdale formed a single parish Cill Mhic o Charnaig. This covered a huge area, being bounded by the isthmus

and lochs of East and West Tarbert on the south, the Sound of Jura on the west, Moine Mhor to the north and Loch Fyne to the east. In 1734 this area was split into two more manageable parishes of North and South Knapdale (SRO TE/I9/48). Despite this, North Knapdale still covers an area of 41.1 sq. miles (107 sq.km) inclusive of inland water, tidal water and foreshore. It has a length from north to south of about 12½ miles (20 km.) and a width from east to west varying from 2½ to 7 miles (4-11 km). The new boundary between North and South Knapdale followed the watershed dividing the westward drainage into Loch Sween from the eastward drainage into Loch Caolisport. In a sentence, North Knapdale consists of the lands draining into Loch Sween.

Although only 50 miles (80 km) due west of Glasgow, North Knapdale is a Highland parish according to all the definitions - whether cultural, economic or geological - that have been used to define the Highlands. This being so, it suffers from the usual "Highland problems" of geographical remoteness, bad communications (the first being a result of the second) and a convoluted terrain. These three factors are obviously interrelated and may not have had such significance before good communications had developed elsewhere in Britain, and before the great mechanisation of agriculture.

Topographically the parish consists of many elongated, steep-sided ridges which are intersected by narrow valleys, most of which follow the pronounced NNE/SSW strike. Just south of the northern boundary to the parish these ridges culminate as a steep scarp that drops down to the Crinan Canal and the flat moss of Moine Mhor. This highly dissected scenery is a result of the geological character and structure of the rocks, which belong to the Dalradian metamorphic assemblage and are of late Precambrian to late Lower Cambrian in age (Johnstone, 1966). In very general terms, Dalradian quartzites are broken by long bands of hornblends and epidiorite schists which strike across the region in a NNE/SSW direction.

# NORTH KNAPDALE

SOLID GEOLOGY  
simplified

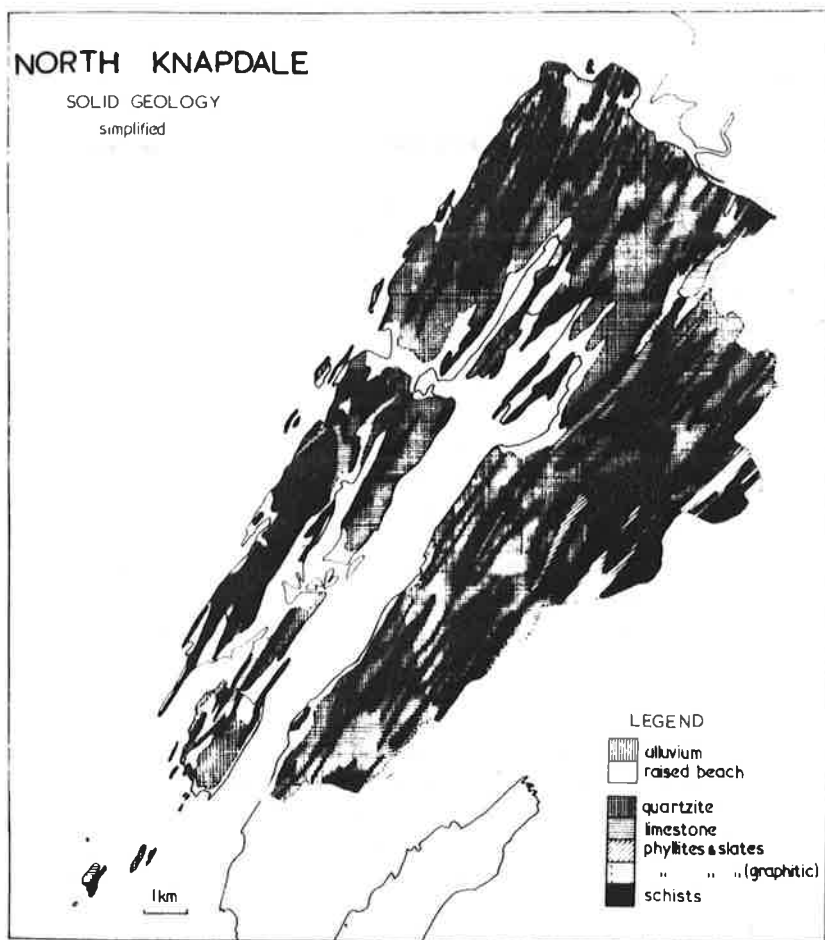


Fig.I

/The Editor is indebted to Mrs Campbell of Glenfeochan for kindly allowing him to use a reproduction of an old map of North Knapdale on the cover of this issue./

Because the schists contain a large amount of mica they are very fissile, and weather more quickly than the quartzite. The whole area is characterised by a low degree of metamorphism. Bands of limestone outcrop along the eastern boundary of the parish, on Danna and along the Tayvallich peninsula as far north as Drimnagall. Basic intrusive sills occur within the quartzites, and volcanic basic lavas are found with the slates and limestones. These help to explain the greater natural fertility of the Tayvallich peninsula as compared with the area to the east of Loch Sween.

The height of the parish varies from sea-level to a maximum of 1530 ft (467 m) at Cruach Lusach, which dominates the south-eastern region. However, most of the ridges are below 100 ft (305 m), those in the west being generally below 500 ft.

As shown in Fig.1, raised-beach deposits and wave-cut platforms are common features, particularly to the south-west of the Tayvallich peninsula where they form the largest area of flat land in the parish. Further north, the raised-beach deposits are quite extensive around Carsaig Bay, where they run right across the isthmus that gives Tayvallich its name (Tigh a'bhealaich - House of the Pass). Patches of raised-beach deposits extend in a narrow band along the east shore of Loch Sween, and are found on the Ob Mor and Ob Greim peninsulas. These deposits, together with the wave-cut platforms, indicate either that sea-level was once much higher than at present, or, conversely, that the land was once lower than it is today. As will be apparent when I discuss the condition of the parish toward the end of the last ice age, both explanations seem to be partially true.

North Knapdale has a long sea-coast relative to its land area, and no farm is very distant from the sea shore. This has had interesting consequences for the economic development of the parish, and it accounts in some measure for the former importance of the fishing industry and, perhaps more directly, for the development of the kelp industry during the eighteenth century. It also ensured ready supplies of sea-weed manure. These subjects will be returned to later. Along the west of the parish the coast-



line is rocky, at places rising precipitously for 300 ft (92 m), but the drowned valley of Loch Sween has a more varied and sheltered coast, with low rocky ledges, shingle and sandy beaches.

Meteorological records are now being collected at the Barnlusan Forestry Office (NR 789 913) which is situated almost in the centre of the parish at about 40 m a.s.l. Table I is prepared from the Meteorological Office Monthly Weather Reports, 1968-72, and gives an indication of the climate of the parish. Further information will be found in Green (1964) and the Climatological Atlas (1952).

The climate is moist and mild, with rainfall varying from 45 ins p.a. at the coast to 70 ins p.a. on the higher, eastern ridges. Although rain tends to be evenly distributed throughout the year, October-January are often months of maximum rain with March-June being the driest part of the year. December-March is the coldest period (January mean temp. 57°F (14°C)). As might be expected, the oceanic situation (enhanced by the effects of the North Atlantic Drift) results in mild winters. The average date of the first frost is November 1st, and snow lies on the ground on an average of 12.5 days p.a.

The prevailing wind is from the south-west and the area is subject to gales, experiencing them on about 20 days a year over the period 1926-40. Gales sometimes result in extensive damage to Forestry Commission and other plantations, as in 1968 when over 300,000 trees were snapped off or uprooted in Knapdale Forest. Other serious gales occurred in 1879, 1893 and 1911-12. In June 1912 some 538 wind-blown trees from Achnamara wood were sold for £25, and similarly 2571 trees from the same wood were sold in January 1913 for £135 (SRO GD 43/80/6).

Apart from a discussion of vegetation and land use, which require separate treatment, this ends a very brief account of the present-day physical geography of North Knapdale. The next paper in the series will deal with the parish between 10,000 and 13,000 years ago.

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- .....

## TABLE I

### Summary of Meterological Records, Barnlusgan 1968-72

<u>Temperature:</u>	Mean of daily maximum	11.84°C
	Mean of daily minimum	4.76°C
	Daily mean temperature	8.26°C
	Highest maximum over period	26.10°C
	Lowest minimum over period	-8.90°C
<u>Rainfall:</u>	Average annual rainfall	1420 mm
	Average no. of days with precipitation over 0.2 mm	231
	Average no. of days with precipitation over 1.0 mm	187
<u>Weather:</u>	Average number of days with	
	Snow or sleet	16
	Snow lying at 9.00 am	6
	Hail	7
	Ice-pellets	1
	Thunder	6
	Fog at 9.00 am	2
	Air frost	63
	Grass minimum below 0°C	122.5
	Gales (i.e. Force 8 (34 knots) or more)	8.25

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NOTE INSERTED INTO KILBERRY RENT ROLL (1749 accounts)

II<sup>th</sup> Decbr 1750

Lady Kilberry Dr -

To three Stone Butter 6/8 - £ 12-0-0

To five Stone Cheese 3/4 10-0-0

£ 22.0.0

Ardmenish 12<sup>th</sup> Decbr 1750

Madam -

please pay or allow to Donald MacLelan in  
Kilberry. twenty one pund Scots Money. which shall  
be Accept of in full pay<sup>tt</sup> of the above. Acco<sup>tt</sup>. By. Dr

Madam

To Lady Kilberry Your huble Serv<sup>tt</sup>  
Dun: Campbell

-----  
There is No bottles in Ardpatrick to Spare.  
My friend has two Do<sup>zn</sup>. to y<sup>e</sup> fore of 6 do<sup>zn</sup>  
Ye may send for them, They're run out of Bottles  
at Dunmore -----

\*\*\*\*\*  
(Wine, smuggled in casks, was decanted aboard  
ship into customers' own bottles to decrease  
the risk of discovery.

Duncan Campbell was "merchant" at Ardmenish (sea  
ward part of Carse) and formerly (1732-46) Merch-  
ant and Tacksman of Lergnahension with its Mill.

Donald McLelan (McInlelan, McLellan) was tenant  
of a ½ merkland in Kilberry from 1733 to 1761.)

...oOo...

ENTOMOLOGICAL NOTE

Mr Jex-Long, who reported in Kist 4 his discovery of  
an Elephant Hawk Moth larva (*Choerocampa elpenor*) at  
Minard, wrote on 20th August 1975 to announce another  
specimen, this time a pupa, in the same area. He  
says "Two may be only a coincidence but it raises the  
possibility of a resident population. Would this be  
an addition to the Mid-Argyll indigenous lepidoptera?"

## WHEN THE YEARS WERE YOUNG

Mary Sandeman

### CARTING

Willy was an Islayman, Willy was a ploughman, Willy taught me to ride a cart when I was six or seven and was as proud of the achievement as I was. Now if you think 'riding a cart' means just sitting on the foreboard behind the horse where have you been, not with Willy that's for sure. No carter worth his salt ever sits in or on a cart and never never even standing on a loaded cart, and "you'll never make a carter 'till you've couped a cart", Willy says. Fortunately Willy was a carter already and I never thought I could be. To ride a cart you must stand up, feet well apart, and ride the bumps and turns - remember the roads were untarred at best and often just ruts cut by use over the rough ground with many a rock outcrop - with never a touch of hand on wood or even Willy's jacket.

The carts were strong wooden ones with wooden wheels and iron tyres. They were painted in at least two colours - the spokes of the wheels might be dark green with a thin line of red; they had lovely big black axle hubs with a big split-pin covered in black grease; and always of course the fore-board was decorated with the spectacle mark - how else could the cart see where it was going! Each farm had its own template for these and they tended to stick to their own colours too.

Willy and I - in my own estimation - built a road and it is there yet. It took us most of a winter and spring off and on when we weren't at other things. The big stones for the edges were heavy and "no carter worth his salt will overload a cart" Willy says, so I had the chance to ride the empty cart five or six times a day. Once the big stones are in place you fill in with smaller ones and top it all with cinders and gravel, and you have a road that will last for fifty years or more if you do it Willy's way.

Then there was the muck carting, taking the pungent manure out of the midden and out to the

fields; just as well that you can ride a cart for its not exactly clean work. Small wonder that white socks were only for Sundays. At the end of the day the cart was driven into the sea to clean the wheels, and at the end of the mucking or if it was going to be needed for other work it was taken in deep enough to bring the water right into it and then scrubbed with the stable brush. Even if the cart didn't need cleaning the horse was always ridden into the sea - the muck softens the feet and salt water is good for them, Willy says. The horses loved it and cantered up the shore with their great Clydesdale feet all white and streaming water.

Willy was fond of his horses and his horses were fond of him. Great powerful gentle wise old things. Willy was nearly killed when riding a young horse, bare-back of course, and it bolted and eventually threw him into a house. All Willy said was that it wasn't the horse's fault, and Willy always won in the end.

On Saturdays, as soon as the weather came mild, Willy rode the mare and led the horse or horses clip-clop up the road to the fank field where they rolled and cavorted like children come out of school before settling down nose to tail in drowsy contemplation of their day of rest. On Monday early they came clip-clopping down again for another week's work.

Willy was a hero although Willy said the only hero was the mare. The Highland bull from the next farm went 'nasty', not a thing that often happens, and broke into the horses' field one hot Sunday when Willy was giving them a look and chased poor Willy for his life. He called to the mare and she came at the gallop with her ever-faithful consort in close attendance, which gave even the bull pause for thought. Willy jumped on her back and with the horse in close order soon left the bull behind. Maybe you don't see how that made Willy a hero, but he was.

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KILBERRY PARISH CHURCH  
and  
EXTRACTS from the MINUTES

William Eadie

The previous building of Kilberry Parish Church was situated near the present Kilberry Castle. It may have been on the site of the original foundation, St. Barr's Cell. The saint was probably an independent missionary who landed here about the time of St. Columba (521-597 A.D.), or later, and settled to the task of converting the natives to Christianity.

From this simple beginning arose, in time, a mediaeval Parish Church, the patronage of which was given to the Bishop of Argyll by the Lord of the Isles in 1492. This building remained as the place of worship after the Reformation. In 1635, owing to the lack of Gaelic-speaking ministers, the minister of Kilcalmonell, in Kintyre, undertook the charge of Kilberry, crossing West Loch Tarbert by ferry from his Manse in Clachan to pursue his ministry.

In 1651 the Synod of Argyll resolved to break this informal union and to build a Manse at Kilberry. This was not done and the parishes remained unofficially united until Kilberry was officially linked with Tarbert in 1964.

By the 1730's the mediaeval church was in ruins and after much prevarication and disputation (very unseemly but typical of the times) from the year 1730 to 1820, the present building was begun and completed in 1821. It is situated at the head of Loch Stornoway, a broad inlet in Knapdale, almost at the mouth of West Loch Tarbert. It is not certain, in the interval when no church was available, whether services were held in houses, or in the open air, or perhaps in a tent, since a tent was in existence after 1821.

This very brief history has been abstracted from information very kindly prepared by Miss Campbell of Kilberry for the church's Festival of Flowers in 1975; she has also supplied the documents which follow.

These documents are valuable source material for local history and it is fortunate that they,

along with others, have been preserved, as they throw much light on the way of life at an interesting and formative period. In 1845, for example, an inspector of poor and a parochial board, were appointed in each parish, subject to a Central Board of Supervision, while 1872 saw the end of the Church's responsibility for education.

The documents, while revealing only what was happening locally, have a wider significance as this was typical of what was taking place all over Scotland, as is to be seen from the Extract Minute (see below) from Paisley Abbey.

At the time in question the Church was the sole source for the relief of poverty, general education and the dispensation of strictly local justice. It was the body concerned both nationally and locally with the moral, spiritual and practical welfare of the nation.

In the following documents we get a glimpse of the Church exercising its various functions locally and dealing with situations that must have tried the patience of the office-bearers and stretched their wisdom and their abilities to the full in seeking fair and just solutions.

#### EXTRACT MINUTES

The following Extract Minutes give us a glimpse of something of the variety of business dealt with at ordinary meetings of the Kirk Session:-

(I). This Minute indicates that someone obviously had objected to the money contributed for the relief of the poor being 'raided' to provide a perquisite for the Church Officer, and the Kirk Session clearly took the point!

/Extract Minute of Session/

at Kilberry the IIth July 1827

Which day the Kirk Session being met and constituted

Sederunt. Revd John Macarthur Modr /Moderator/  
Revd Thomas Davidson  
James Campbell Esquire of Dunmore  
Dond. Macquilkan Esq.

Hugh Stevenson  
 Alexr. Macquilkan  
 Lachlan Galbraith  
 Duncan MacPhail  
 Duncan MacPhail  
 Angus Maceachern  
 Charles MacLean  
 Dond. Macormick

Elders

The Session after distributing the poor's money, took into their consideration, the money that is expended, out of the said fund, for washing the cloth of the Communion Table for scouring the cups for conveying the elements from the ferry to the Church of Kilberry are of opinion that the beadle who uplifts the dues belonging to the same should in all time to come take this trouble without any charge upon the Session for the Same, and resolve accordingly. -- Archibald Walker Session Clerk of Kilberry complaining that John McKillop beadle has been in the practice of receiving the one half of the dues upon baptism lines from the Session Clerk of Kilberry. -- The Session considering the complaint think it reasonable and ordering the Session Clerk during their pleasure to retain the whole dues arising from this source. -- The Session considering that the sum of thirty shillings per annum is a fair allowance to a precentor for the Church of Kilberry resolve to award the same to Donald McCormick one of the elders whom they hereby appoint to the office of precentor. -- The Session resuming the consideration of the case of Niel Buchannan designed in Minutes 30th April last appoint their beadle to summon him to attend a meeting of Session to be held here on the first Sabbath of August next. -- And in reference to the case of Dugald McMurchy and Niel Brodie's wife designed in minutes of 30th April last, and the evidence taken in connection with which was left in an unfinished state, the Session



after some conversation relative to the same, agreed to dispense with the compearance of Niel Stevenson who failed to appear at the meeting of the 30th of April last which resolution goes to close the evidence for the prosecution, and they appoint their beadle to summon the parties accused to attend the meeting of Session already appointed to hold on the first Sabbath of August next, to hear from them what defence, if any, they mean to bring forward in the matter.

Closed with prayer

John Macarthur Modr.

(2). This Minute clearly reveals the seriousness with which fornication, and it may be added adultery, was treated. It is interesting to note the fairness and the correctness of the procedure adopted in furnishing the guilty party with a copy of the Extract Minute informing her of their action in transferring the matter to the parish to which, clearly, she was herself moving.

Paisley Abbey Session House. 25th Jany. 1835

At a meeting of Session, present, the Rev. Rob. Macnair, Modr., Messrs John McNabb, John Reid, & John Findlay, Elders, & Andw. Blaikie Sess. Clerk.

(Inter alia) Compeared Christina Walker, formerly of this Parish who confessed guilty of Fornication with the now deceased Francis McQueen. From evidence brought forward of their former intimacy the Session were satisfied of the truth of her confession; She was taken on discipline, rebuked for the first time, & she being about to leave this place they remit the case to the Session of Kilcolmonel for further procedure, & instruct their Clerk to furnish her with an Extract of this Minute.

Extracted from the Minutes of Session by  
Andw. Blaikie Session Clerk.

(3). This Minute reveals a situation demanding the wit of Solomon to deal with it!

/Extract Minute of Session/

Kilberry parish 2 Jan'y 1837

The which day the Kirk Session being met and constituted -

Sederunt. Revd. J. Macarthur Modr., Donald Macquilkan Esq. & Messrs MacLean & MacPhail Elders.

Compeared Mrs Duncan Crawford at Kilnaish. - Who complained that some six or seven weeks ago, Duncan Campbell's Wife, residing in the same Farm, had been accusing the Complainer of having stolen some Towels from her Duncan Campbell's wife.

Compeared Sarah Maccoist, unmarried, residing in Kilnaish.

Who being interrogated declares as follows; that she heard Duncan Campbell's wife say to the Complainer, that she had her towels long enough now, & therefore, that she had better send them home. Cross-examined, declares that she went in to Defender's house, & told her that if she wanted her Towel, She had better go for it or send for it as she saw a Towel, about a Pan, belonging to Crawford's Wife; - upon which the Defender brought a Towel in the house, and asked the declarant, if the one she saw about the Pan, resembled the Towel she saw in complainer's possession - Declarant could not say - but declares that the Two Towels had a Blue Stripe near the edge, a part of the hem was lost or Missing one being open or the Sewing given way - declares she cannot write.

adjourned the farther consideration of the subject -

Closed with prayer.

John Macarthur Modr.

Dun. McPhail Sess. Clk.

#### PETITIONS

The following Petitions continue the range and variety of the matters dealt with at Kirk Session level:-

(1). This Petition is interesting as it is not submitted to the Kirk Session but to the Minister alone. Its tenor seems to indicate a request that the matter be dealt with on a personal basis. It would be interesting to know if this was a common or an uncommon way of dealing with a situation like this, which is a combination of unprofessional conduct and neighbourly squabble.

UNTO the Rev<sup>d</sup> John M<sup>c</sup>Arthur

The

Petition of Dugald Connell at Ardpatrik  
Humbly Sheweth

That the Petitioner are under the Necessity of applying to your Rev<sup>d</sup> for immediate relief from the maltreatment inflicted upon your Petitioner by John Johnston School Master in presence of witness and in few Days after came to the Petitioners<sup>gs</sup> House and attack him with the most scurrelous language imaginable and that without the least Provocation whatever and of course the Petitioner have every reason to belive that his childring may suffer Injury from him being a man capable of such abomenable conduct if the Petitioner send them back to school since he turn<sup>d</sup> them off,,it is the plain matter of fact that the Petitioner was at great Dale of trubl at Building the Schoolhouse and to lost the benefite,,

May it therefore pleas your Rev<sup>d</sup> to take the above petition unto your Serious consideration with the facts Stated therin and to cause sume means to bridle John Johnston Schoolmaster when your petitioner have so much reason to complain of as intolerable Nighbour so as peace and tranquillity may be restored to him and the Petitioner as in Duty bound shall for ever pray &c

March 19<sup>th</sup>  
1831

Dugald Connell

(2) This Petition is submitted to the Heritors, not the Kirk Session or the Minister. The reason may well be the knowledge that the Heritors being men of

standing in the community they were likely to be able to influence the authorities responsible for the Asylum.

This is a pathetic document, the phrase "the object in question" being one that raises many questions, particularly as to who wrote the Petition.

/endorsed/

Petitn

Neil Smith

To

The Hon. Heritors of  
the Parish of Kilberry

1837.

---

Unto the Honourable Heritors of the Parish of Kilberry The Petition of Neil Smith residing at Auchnahaird in said Parish,  
Humbly Sheweth

That your Petitioner's family consists of three female children, the Youngest of whom remain a Lunatick apparently from her birth; she is now about four years of age her infirmities increasing with her days so much so that since her mother's death which happened three months ago Your Petitioner is obliged personally to watch over her because it would be dangerous to leave one of such a description under the charge of the other two girls the oldest being only in her eighth year. Your Petitioner being thus prevented to prosecute his wonted work as one of the labourers on the Roads in this Parish he is thereby reduced to a state of extreme poverty -

May it therefore please Your Honours to take your Petitioner's distressed case into your serious consideration and exert your united influences in order to relieve him by getting the object in question admitted into an Asylum or to adopt such other mode as may enable your Petitioner to resume his employment so as to provide the necessaries of life for himself and his destitute orphans. And your Petitioner as

in duty bound shall ever pray

his  
Neil X Smith  
mark

(3). Here the Kirk Session is being called upon to deal with an Action for Defamation of Character.

Unto The Moderator and Elders of the Kirk Session of Kilberry the Petition of Malcom Connel at Dunmore

Most Humbly Sheweth

That Cathrine McQuilkan or McMurchy Spouse to Angus McMurchy in Auchanancarnan was Casting up to your Petitioner at Tarbert fair last that She might put him in Jail when your Petitioner asked her for what Cause when she answered him that he Stole her Sons watch from under his head through the night time and that they pursued him and that they found the said watch with your Petitioner in Mrs Campbells house but your Petitioner does not Know what Mrs Campbell she meant

May it please the Moderator and Elders of the Kirk Session of Kilberry to order their Beadle to Summon the Said Cathrine McQuilkan or McMurchy before the Session in order to ascertain what proof She Can Lead for the Said Statement as it Injures your Petitioners Character very much as She said it openly in the face of the Market and in the hearing of all near her at the time and your Petitioner as in duty bound Shall ever Pray

Dunmore 20th Aug. 1841

MALCOLM CONNELL

/endorsement by Session Clerk/

A List of Witnesses to be taken in Malcom Connells Case against Mrs Angus McMurchy

Alexr McMurchy

Alexr McMurchy's Mother reported that they have written him asking him to write them all he Knows about the dispute between his people and Malcom Connell.

(4). This Petition is not "in due form" but I am sure it would not be dismissed on these grounds. It is clearly a cry from the heart that reveals the plight of age and infirmity in hard times.

That the Bearer Widow McMillan begs leave to intimate that She is a native of the Parish of Kilberry, and that in consequence of old age and miserable worldly circumstances She is compelled on the present Occasion to Call the attention of the Minister and Elders of said Parish to take her hapless Condition into their Consideration and most favourable point of view and grant that She may now be admitted to enter on their Poor's Role for her support in decline of Life. for which She promises to pray --

Breckvar - June  
1842

Widow McMillan

#### ACCOUNTS

The receipted Accounts are interesting and the charges are revealing!

The contractor cannot write his name but the tradesmen's Accounts show business-like qualities.

Donald McQuilkan of Cuildrynach was an Elder of the Church and the shoes were probably paid from the Poor's Fund.

A Catechist was a man employed, often by the Church though sometimes by other bodies, to visit the homes of the people in order to teach the Ten Commandments and the Catechism (hence the name), particularly to the children, and to prepare parents for the baptism of their children.

(I) Corran 26<sup>th</sup> Dec<sup>r</sup> 1821

Received from Archibald Walker Catechist parish of Kilberry in behalf of the Heritors of said Parish, the Sum of one pound eighteen shillings Sterling being the amount of cash paid for a large Bible and an English and Gaelic Psalm Book for the Church of Kilberry.

/signed/ John Macarthur

/Minister of Kilcalmonell and Kilberry/

- (2) Kilberry II.<sup>th</sup> Feb 1823  
 I acknowledge to have received from Mr Donald McQuilkan of Guildrynoch in behoof of Joann Calender the Sum of six Shillings Sterlig being the price of a pair of Shoes which I furnished her

Donald McCormick

- (3) Session of Kilberry Dr  
 To John Leitch Ferryman  
 1823 ( To 2 Gills Liquor in time of £ Sh d  
 Augt ( ferrying the Tent by Dun.  
 McPhail John McKillop &c .. .. 10  
 1825 ( To Ferrying the Tent .. .1 ..  
 June ( To 2 Gills Liquor by A.  
 Galbreath Dun. McPhail &c .. .. 10  
 £ 0 2 8  
 Oc.<sup>t</sup> 3 By Cash in full 0 2 8  
 John Leitch

- (4) Dond. McQuilkan of Guildrynoch  
 To Dond. McTaggart

10.<sup>th</sup> Novr  
 1826 To Quarrying & Leading flags  
 & a drean & Leading Gravell  
 for Repearing and Carying  
 water from the Church & sh  
 Session hous £.. .8 ..

Recd payment in full  
 Don.<sup>d</sup> X Mctagert  
 mark

Hugh Stevenson witts /witness/

- (5) Ardpatrik II.<sup>th</sup> July 1827  
 I acknowledge to have received from the Kirk Session of Kilberry the Sum of five pounds sterling, being in full, the payment of my account against them for Making a new Tent.

Received the above  
 Archd. Leitch

(6)	1853	The Kirk Session of Kilberry
		To William Stuart
	Jan 28 <sup>th</sup> ..	To repairing the Church doors
		and windows of Kilberry partly
		with my own material. <u>£.. 8s. ...d</u>
	Nov 15 <sup>th</sup> ..	received payment of the
		above from Charles McLean
		William Steuart

...oOo...

### DEATH OF A SQUIRREL

Alexander Fraser

A squirrel was killed on the road near Tayinloan, Kintyre. A small car, travelling very fast, struck the little creature as it crossed the road. It made one or two convulsive efforts to rise, beating its bushy tail on the road, and fell back dead.

It was a Red Squirrel, a species by no means common in Argyll, and was jumping towards a small conifer wood where its drey was built. Being May it was the busiest season in its year. After its long period of sleep in the winter it had vanquished its rival in the early spring, mated, and with its mate constructed a new nest of sticks, barks and moss in a tree. Within the drey were three young squirrels, already equipped with short-haired red tails and ear tufts.

The little creature was scarcely marked by the car. Its body was eight and a half inches long, and its bushy tail as long again. It weighed about twelve ounces. Its coat was red, its chest white; above its exquisitely formed ears were ear tufts; the soles of its feet were naked and hand-like, having four long flexible sharp-clawed fingers and a rudimentary thumb. How often had it held food in these hands, or run down tree trunks head first; leapt from branch to branch, or sat up, shaded by its tail, flippant, pert and full of play! Now its play was ended: it was beautiful in death.

At vobis male sit, mali viatores celerrimi,  
O factum male! io miselle sciure!

...oOo...



BIRD NOTES  
Gordon Young

The excellent summer of 1975 produced an interesting crop of reports from members. Early in the season a pair of Turtle Doves were seen at Kilberry and another possible pair flew over Inverneill. In Scotland these beautiful birds are known to breed only in the south-east corner although they are seen regularly elsewhere in small numbers; but there do not seem to have been other recent sightings in our area.

A member sailing on Loch Fyne in June between Tarbert and the Cowal coast found himself accompanied by a group of three immature geese, and on another occasion by a Puffin. Wild Greylag Geese breed only in the extreme north of Scotland and on the Hebrides, but there is a growing feral stock in southwest Scotland and it seems likely these birds came from this source. Puffins have been in decline during recent years and this regrettably rare but welcome visitor was some way from the nearest known breeding grounds, on Ailsa Craig and on Sheep Island and Glunimore Island off Southend.

In most years there are reports of single White Storks in Scotland but we can find no record of recent ones in Argyll. However, during June several sightings of what was almost certainly a White Stork on the Crarae River culminated in a remarkable early morning sighting by a member of a pair of most probably the same species from a window in Minard.

An even more notable sighting for Argyll was of a single Spoonbill in October, near Tayvallich. One or two are seen in Scotland annually, usually on the eastern side, but extremely rarely on the West Coast.

An October sighting by two experienced watchers of an Osprey fishing in West Loch Tarbert came at the end of a summer during which Ospreys were reported on several occasions in the same area.

But the Nuthatch has proved much more elusive. Over the years there have been isolated reports of this species from various parts of Mid-Argyll, but members who spent some time following up a particularly convincing June report from an ideal Nuthatch habitat near Lochgilphead were unsuccessful.

## EXTRACTS FROM 'OLD KILBERRY'S' DIARIES

### V. Domestic and Estate (contd.)

1902. 29th Jan.

Sent for Duncan Campbell the postman & pitched into him about various matters which came to a climax yesterday morning when his daughter who came down in the morning for letter bag etc. refused to take up two small parcels, 1lb 10z & 2lbs 4ozs saying that she came for the bag & not for parcels. Duncan, poor devil, expressed much contrition but he is sadly under the thumb of his wife who has the devil's own temper.

1902. 24th Decr.

A furniture dealer Silvawhite or some such name came to see the Raeburn portraits of my Grandfather and Grandmother & was much taken with them. He tried to persuade me to sell them but I refused to have anything to do with such a proposal. The day may come when I shall have to do this but it is not yet.

1904. 28th Novr.

I dismissed Charles Campbell /coachman/. A decent lad but too flash & flighty for me & too fond of curling his hair instead of attending to his work.

1904. 25th Decr.

Angus gave me an Electric hand lamp which is very useful to me as I have to make a flare so often at night to look for cough mixture etc.

1906. 2nd Jan.

Mr Sedgwick came about 2.30 to try to buy the Raeburn portraits....and this time he brought a lean, long-haired, untidy looking ruffian called Roger Fry. He is said to be a great art critic and I daresay that he is & I think that he might be a good sort of a chap if he did not ape the get up & manners of a half-pay organ grinder. They returned to Tarbert after offering me 7,000 guineas for the 2 portraits, which I refused.

1907. 11th Oct.

Archie Campbell's dog escaped from his lodgings in Oban 4 days ago & it was thought that he had been stolen but he turned up at Kilberry two days later. Not bad travelling for an old dog.

## VI. County Matters

1876. 23rd Feb.

Went to Tarbert.....after the meeting went with Stonefield to see the making of the road leading to the new pier.

1876. 16th Sept.

Returned home by Tarbert /from Greenock/. The Iona will not call at the pier there now as it is unsafe, so we had to land in boats.

1883. 30th Jan.

Stonefield called for me about 10.15 and drove me to Clunaig to inspect the new road from there to Skipness along the shore. We picked up McLean at the Rhu as we passed. We three are the Committee appointed to inspect this new road which Graham has made & which he wants us to take off his hands & maintain as a public road. The first half from Clunaig is in a disgraceful state and not fit to be called a road. The half near Skipness is not so bad but not fit for taking over. We lunched at Skipness & then drove back to Glenakil taking the old road for preference this time.

1885. 30th May.

Went to Tarbert to attend a special meeting of Road Trustees at which we authorised Mr Graham (Skipness) to close the old road from Clunaig to Skipness & to make over to us the new road which he has made along the shore.

1887. 12th March.

Attended a special meeting of District Committee called for the purpose of petitioning Parliament in favour of the proposed Railway from Dalmally to Inveraray. It will do part of the Mid Argyll district some good and if it is extended as it may be eventually to Ardrishaig & Tarbert it may do a lot of good but it seems to me that it is a pity to have to go round by Dalmally instead of taking the line from Arrochar which would make the journey to Glasgow much shorter. I have been pressed to go to London to give evidence in favour of this railway but have declined to do so for several reasons

....I am so far from the presently proposed terminus (Inveraray) that I do not consider that my evidence would be of much weight. I hear now that the Duke & Lord Lorne are going to oppose the bill as they dont want a railway at Inveraray. They are quite right in one way as it would spoil a splendid place but it is doubtful whether it is right to oppose a scheme which would be of so much benefit to the county. If the Duke did not object I fancy that a railway would have been prospected before now to Arrochar. Considering the very Radical views held by the Duke for so many years many people have been surprised at his action in having prevented any improvement to Inveraray but I always maintained from the time when I first knew anything about politics that as soon as the Duke's own interests (that is to say the land question) came to be touched, he would be as Conservative as anyone else and my ideas were confirmed long ago. He did not mind dealing with other interests from a Radical point of view but when it came home he jibbed.

1890. 16th Feb.

....Willie Martin (Poltalloch's Factor)....was at Inveraray on Thursday & Friday last attending the first meeting of the first "County Council" a new form of local Government which has just been started.

1891. 15th Jan.

Had on view /at Kintyre District Committee/ a specimen of an iron milestone which we adopted for putting up on the roads towards Tarbert.

1891. 16th April.

Donald Gillies the road surveyor of North & South Argyll District measured the road north of Kilberry. His son Neill was with him. Mollison the Road Surveyor of Kintyre District measured the road from Tarbert to Kilberry. When he & Gillies compared notes they found that the total distance from Tarbert to L.G.Hd. via Kilberry was 34 miles and some yards. They agreed to divide the road at a point three or four yards north of where the Kilberry burn crosses the road making that point  $19\frac{1}{2}$  miles

from Lochgilphead and 14½ miles from Tarbert. Each distance is about thirty yards more than above. Mile stones are to be put up or rather iron mile posts.

1891. 10th April.

Left home at 7.5 a.m., drove to Ardpatrik, crossed the ferry, walked to Clachan where I joined McLean & McLarty who had come from Tarbert in a carriage and went with them to Tayinloan where we breakfasted, changed horses & went on to Campbeltown where we arrived at 1 p.m. Meeting of District Committee at 2.0 o'clock. Ugadale, McLeod of Saddell, McGibbon & several others present. Had a dreary meeting and plenty of hawering. Lasted till after 5 o'clock. Got the Committee to order iron mile stones for Kilberry Road. They have put them up on the Kilcalmonell side but as Kilberry is to be joined to S. Knapdale at Whitsunday they wanted to let the Kilberry roads alone. However as we have been assessed for the price of the Kintyre ones I insisted on having either the money or the milestones & got the latter. Left Campbeltown at 6 p.m. and took Greenbank with us as far as Tayinloan. I got out at the top of Clachan hill and walked to the ferry where I was delayed by the very low tide having left the boat. Got across to Ardpatrik about 11 o'clock & went to the house for a few minutes while my carriage was getting ready - only Ardpatrik at home. Got to Kilberry about a quarter to one on the morning of the 11th.

/And spent that day sowing oats and burning heather! Ed./

1897. 10th Oct.

This is the day of the opening of the new telegraph office at Achahoish.

1897. 27th Oct.

/at Inveraray/ In the afternoon we had a meeting to consider the question of employing Nurses throughout the county. The Duchess takes a great interest in this....we agreed to begin at once with two nurses, one at Tarbert and one at Easdale, and to follow up as soon as possible with others at Ardcrish-aig or Lochgilphead & at Strachur...on Lochfyneside

the people are well off as the Duchess employs a nurse at Inveraray, Lady Campbell has one at Cum-lodden & the Lloyds have one at Minard.

1897. 29th. Oct.

The telegraph poles for Kilberry extension are now erected as far as Drimdrishaig road end.

1897. 22nd. Nov.

About 11 a.m. went to P.O. & saw the last bit of telegraph wire stretched and communication established by telephone with Ardrishaig, Achahoish & Ormsary. This is a great step towards civilisation and we can feel that Kilberry is at last in communication with the world. The office will not be open for some days but the line is working or rather fit for working now.

1897. 8th. Dec.

The Kilberry telegraph office was opened today and we are now connected by wire with the civilised world.

1904. 16th. June.

Saw Geordie Stonefield at Tarbert & had a talk with him about a Cairn wh. is to be put up in Memory of Angus Campbell late Captain of McBrayne's steamers Iona and Columba. A fund has been raised for the benefit of his wife & family and I was one of the Committee, the Ld. Provost of Glasgow being chairman. About £700 /was raised/, then the Committee agreed to give £20 for a cairn. The erection to be left to Geordie & myself.

1904. 24th. Sept.

To Tarbert to the ceremony of unveiling a Cairn which has been built in memory of the late Angus Campbell.

1905. 19th. July.

Very fine day. The Games of the Mid Argyll Gathering took place at Lochgilphead and went off very well. I was judge of dancing and took Charlie Maclean with me. There was some good dancing but two of the competitors were women from Glasgow dressed in the kilt and somewhat indecent. They danced badly and ungracefully & got no prizes.

They were angry & followed me, with some women who were with them, into the enclosure among the ladies & one of them got hold of my jacket & the chorus abused me in no very polite language. I did not answer them but had them removed by the Police. They then attacked Charlie who was judging the Tug of War & got hold of him but they were then moved out of the ring. They were an ugly, ungraceful and rather indecently dressed pair and I fancy about 35 years old. Mr & Mrs Wigan who have taken Kilmory on lease gave a dance there this evening. All the Inverneill party went except Mrs Campbell, Molly and I. On their way they met the two dancing women in Ardrishaig and they shook their fists and howled at Charlie Maclean. There will be no more female dancers at this Gathering.

1906. 19th. Oct.

....Pretty full meeting of District Committee. Mr Neill brought up a proposal that we should get a Road Roller for Mid Argyll District and this brought a few members who would probably not have come otherwise. He was supported by Col. Edward Malcolm, Lunga, Arthur Campbell (Arduaine), Dr Crowe (Ardg.), Mr Crawford (Kilmartin), the Inveraray Provost. I moved the previous question but failed as I was supported only by Shirvan, Auchindarroch and Col. McIver Campbell, Lochgair. This is I think a great piece of folly.

1906. 14th. Nov.

/at Minard/ Owen Lloyd sent me in his motor car to Lochgilphead where I attended a special meeting of District Committee at which it was decided, much against my will, to buy a Steam Road Roller for the District with Scarifier, Water Cart, Moveable shed for workmen at a very large expense. No one would back me up in opposing this proposal without further information....so I had to take a back seat.

(TO BE RESUMED)