dùn mhuirich

The KIST 13

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.

.....

NUMBER THIRTEEN: Spring 1977
Editor: F.S.Mackenna, MA, FSA, FSAScot.

CONTENTS

oooOooo

.....

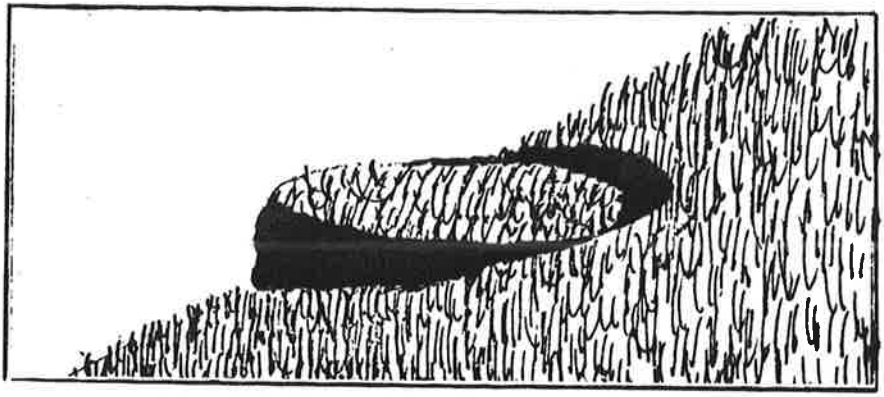
Hon. Secretary

Air Vice-Marshal Gordon Young, CBE
Middle Hill, Ardrishaig

Assistant Hon. Sec. (Membership and Kist)

Mrs A.M.Kahane, MA, FSAScot.
Kilchoan Lodge, Poltalloch, by Lochgilphead

Gow



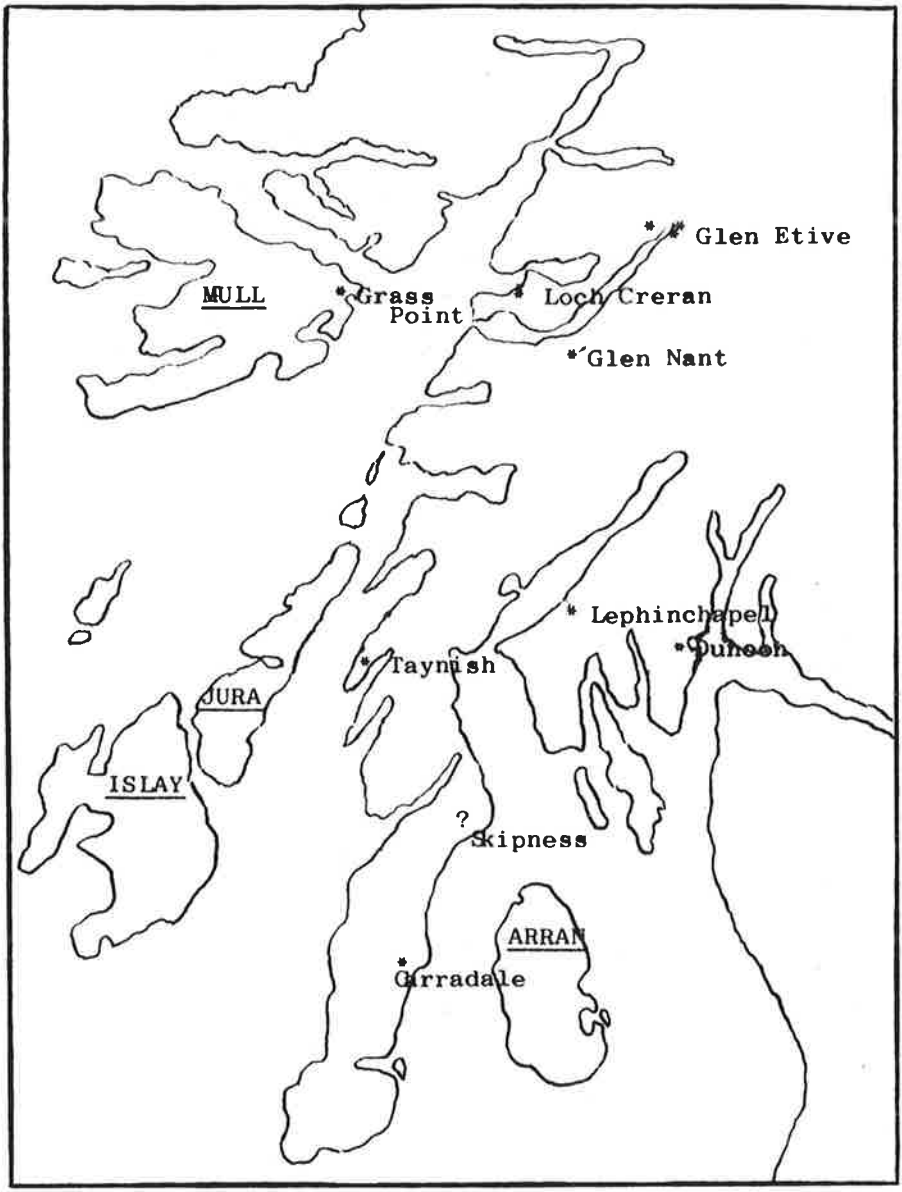
CHARCOAL HEARTHS v. HUT FOUNDATIONS

E.M.Rennie

In Glen Nant (NMO 14285), which is between Taynuilt and Loch Awe, there are a great number of near-circular 'platforms' built into steeply-sloping hillsides. These platforms consist of flat areas varying from about 20-30ft in diameter, with the rear cut down and the front built up, giving a near-vertical back and front. The depth of the front and back depends on the gradient of the hill into which they are cut.

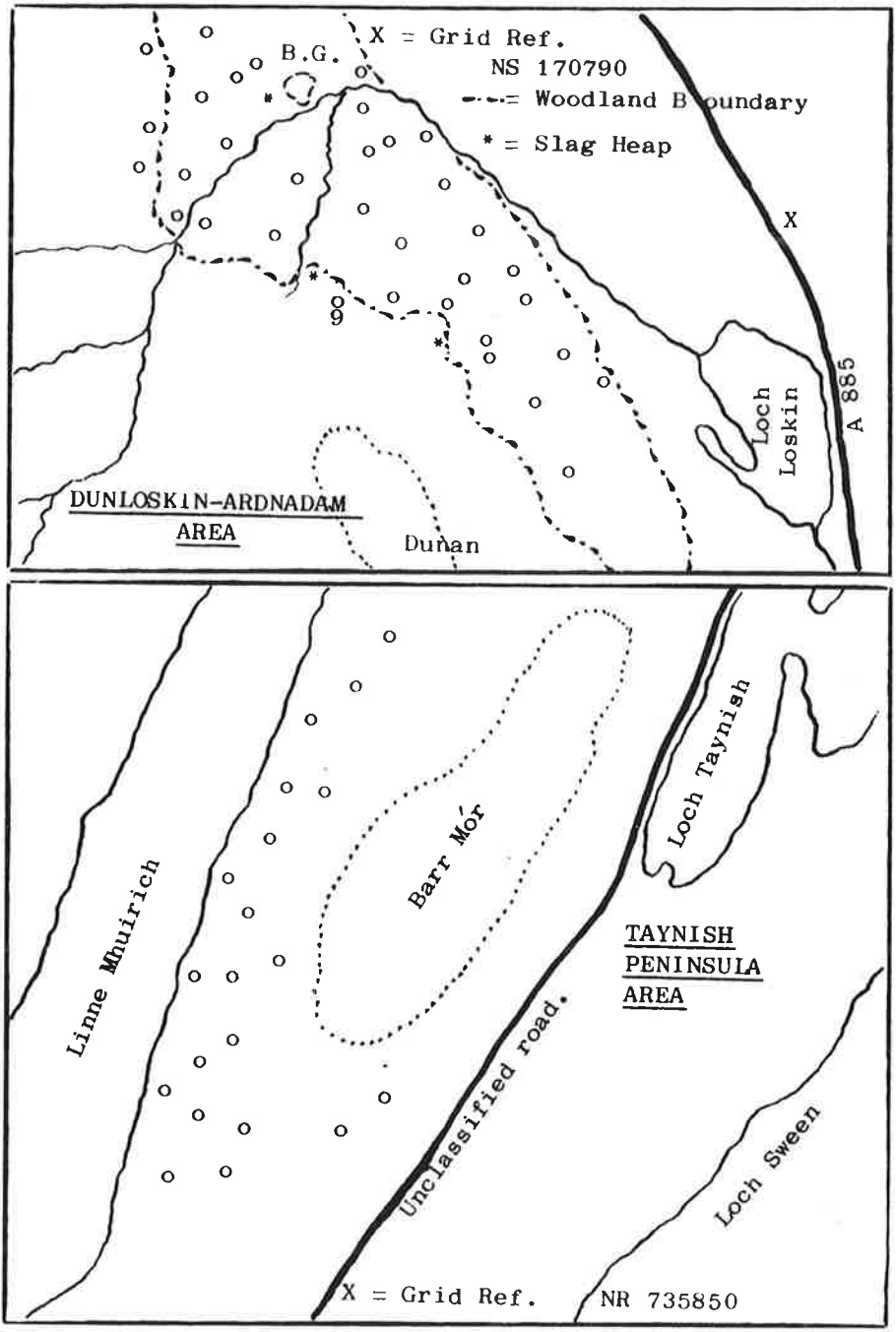
The platforms are found over a wide area - probably about half a mile along the bank of the River Nant and up the hillside above for about 200 feet. The number in this area is unknown but estimates from various reports suggest around 50. Local people state quite dogmatically that they are charcoal hearths built to render wood into charcoal, made and used at the time when the Bonawe Iron Works were flourishing from 1753 to 1874.

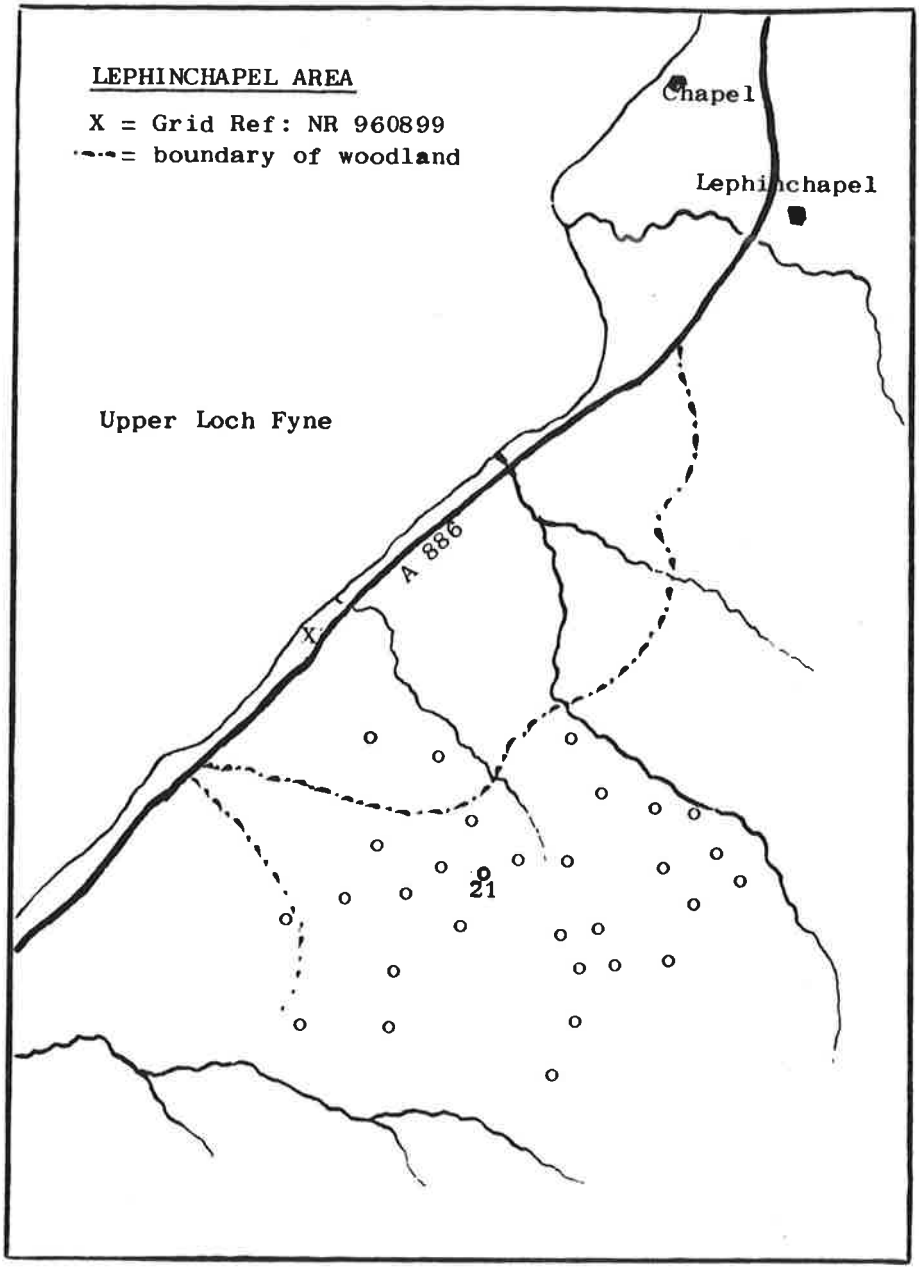
This theory is accepted by the Ancient Monuments Commission. In the recently published Inventory of Lorne (Argyll Vol.2) similar platforms at the head of Loch Etive (NM 108450) and at Loch Creran (NM 989435) (see items 360 and 361 of the Inventory) are described as 'charcoal burning stances'. The Loch Etive platforms are said to be very impressive, for they are built on a steeply-sloping hillside and thus the front lips are nearly 5 feet high and built of massive stones. As documentary evidence exists for timber rights and the making of charcoal in this area, the inference that they are charcoal stances

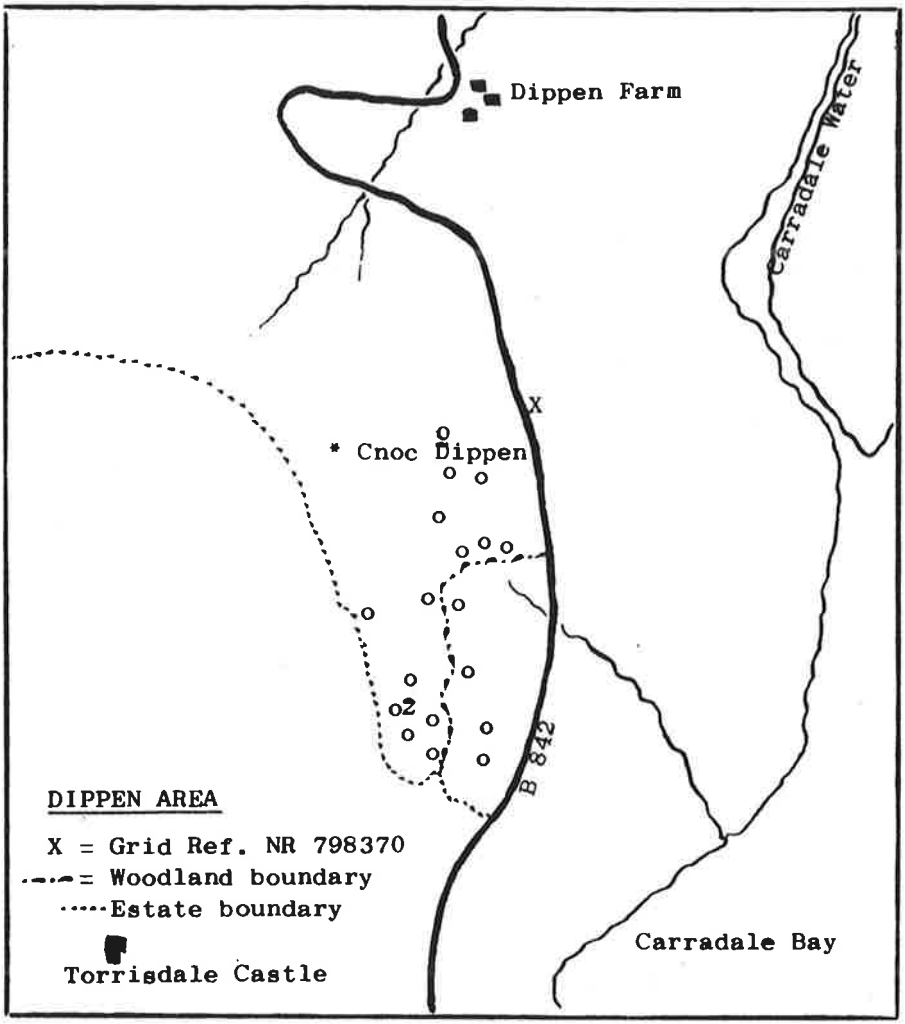


SKETCH MAP OF ARGYLL
Platform Sites

Known = * Probable = ?


X = Grid Ref.
NS 170790
= Woodland Boundary
* = Slag Heap
B.G.
X
9
Loch Loskin
A 885
DUNLOSKIN-ARDNADAM AREA
Dunan
Barr Mór
Linne Mhuirich
Loch Taynish
TAYNISH PENINSULA AREA
Unclassified road.
Loch Sween
X = Grid Ref.
NR 735850


LEPHINCHAPEL AREA
X = Grid Ref: NR 960899
= boundary of woodland
Chapel
Lephinchapel
Upper Loch Fyne
A 886
21


Dippen Farm
Carradale Water
X
* Cnoc Dippen
2
B 842
DIPPEN AREA
X = Grid Ref. NR 798370
= Woodland boundary
Estate boundary
Torrisdale Castle
Carradale Bay

seems reasonable.

In the Cowal area, 1 mile north of Dunoon at Dunloskin and Ardnadam (NS 162791) a similar group of platforms has been found. Here there are 36 platforms, 23 being of larger size (28-30 feet) on one hillside, and 13 smaller (18-20 feet) on an adjoining hill. They are all within a radius of ¾ mile and none lies higher than 300 feet. There is no tradition of charcoal burning in the vicinity and the platforms were unknown until about 1970.

Two more platforms have recently been found 2 miles south of Dunoon. The lip of one of these has no turf covering and is seen to consist of massive boulders 3½ft by 1ft by an unknown depth, forming a curved revetment 4½ft high and 30ft round the curve. This structure is only about 100ft above and away from the old raised beach of the post-glacial shoreline.

On the east side of Loch Fyne at Lephinchapel, 8 miles south of Strachur (NR 966899), there is another group of over 30 platforms which were claimed by the farmer-owner to be "places where charcoal was made".

In Knapdale, at Taynish, near Tayvallich (NR 731850), a group of 20 was visited. They are on a sloping hillside within an area of ancient oak woodland which had never been coppiced and according to Estate records going back for 200 years , had never been used for making charcoal. A tradition of charcoal making on these platforms was traced to the late owner, who himself had suggested this explanation to account for the presence of the structures.

In Kintyre, at Dippen, near Carradale (NR 797365), another group of 20 was found. They were completely unknown, even to the owner of the ground, and thus there is no tradition attached to them at all. Immediately above the shore to the north of Carradale (NR 811400), a single curved drystone wall was found by a local inhabitant. It closely resembles in dimensions and building technique the stone front of the platform lately found south of Dunoon. This curved wall is in Forestry Commission ground, and as the flat area behind the wall has been dug out, the wall is probably all that remains of another platform.

According to a report in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland for 1919, Angus Graham

described further similar small structures at Skipness, Kintyre (NR 896576). These he called 'charcoal hearths', but, although they have not been examined, the description suggests another group or groups of platforms in this area.

In Mull, 1 mile west of Grass Point, there are several platforms above the road (NS 731316).

Different explanations have been given for the group of platforms north of Dunoon. Experts originally thought them to be charcoal hearths by analogy with the sites in Glen Etive and Glen Nant, and similar sites in the Lake District, which had already been accepted as 'charcoal burning stances'. On the other hand, authorities who were conversant with hut circles and other domestic sites in different areas regarded them as probable foundation platforms for round huts.

Thus investigation by 'digging' and by recording features associated with each group has been begun. Much more thorough excavation and more field work is planned for the future.

One platform in each of the groups has been partially excavated. On Platform 9 at Dunloskin, Dunoon, there was firstly a mediaeval floor used by iron workers. Charcoal may have been made on this floor for there were two heaps of charcoal and evidence of fierce heat. Adjacent to the platform is a bloomery, where bog iron was processed as a cottage industry. Tramped into this mediaeval floor were many pieces of iron slag and sherds of 13th and 14th century pottery. A trench 3ft wide was cut through this floor, and 4 inches below it was found another floor. It contained 3 postholes within this small cut. One was large and deep and in the centre; the two others were slighter, each 6ft away from the centre and about halfway towards the perimeter of the platform. This gave proof of a roofed structure related to the second floor, beneath the upper, mediaeval one.

At Lephinchapel, Lochfyneside, one quadrant of the platform was opened. Three floors were found, and in the two lower 24 postholes were uncovered. Some were arranged radially, apparently to support a circular roof. Others were slighter sockets and were in a position to support a perimeter wall around the floor. Again there was proof of a roofed structure.

In a narrow trench cut in one of the platforms at

Dippen, Carradale, sockets were again found. The pattern of these was similar to that at Lephinchapel.

No appreciable charcoal, apart from domestic flaking, was found on the lower floor at Dunloskin or on any of the floors of the other two platforms opened. Nearly every platform in most of the groups was either cored with a cork-screw auger or tested by lifting spadefuls of earth. This was done to look for charcoal. Only in Glen Nant was real evidence found of a layer of charcoal. The Glen Etive platforms have not been properly inspected. In Glen Nant one platform produced charcoal about 8ins deep which apparently spread over the entire surface. On two others in this area deep charcoal was found, but only towards the front edge.

At Dunloskin and at Lephinchapel the platforms seem to be associated with terracing on the hillside, and with enclosures formed by these terraces and earth dykes. Frequently the dykes are ditched on the outside. There are also round and oval heaps of stone which could be field clearance, cairns and/or tumbled remains of round and oval stone huts. Three miles east of Lephinchapel, over the hill in Glendaruel,there is a similar group of terraces. Only one platform, some distance from the terracing, has been found there. However on top of one massive terrace is an Early Christian Chapel site. This implies that these terraces must pre-date the 7th-8th century. The group of terraces has been scheduled as 'prehistoric fields'. The actual term 'Celtic fields' has not been used as so little is known of dating in this area.

The group of platforms at Taynish is actually on the slope of an Iron Age fort - Barr Mór. At Dunloskin there seems to be strong evidence, but as yet no proof, for Iron Age fortification. There is stronger evidence of an Iron Age domestic occupation underlying an Early Christian settlement. On the hill above the two 'new' platforms south of Dunoon, called Craig nan Cat, there is walling which suggest fortification. At Lephinchapel the dyke at the highest point is so massive that it could be described as a rampart, particularly so as it seems to be ditched on the outside.

Thus, evidence for these platforms being foundations of huts and belonging to the Iron or early Dark Age is

very strong. If this is so, the groups of platforms at Glen Etive and at Glen Nant must surely also fall into the same category, for the structures themselves are the same. The opposing suggestion, that the Charcoal Burners themselves built 30 or 40 of these sometimes massive structures within a comparatively small area, on steeply sloping hillsides, leaving long stretches of woodland without charcoal stances, is much less convincing.

However, as the tradition is so strong and documentary evidence exists for the making of charcoal around the iron furnaces at Bonawe and Inverleckan (now Furnace), there must be an explanation. I suggest that the platforms must originally have been constructed as hut foundations, in groups, probably on flat ground as well as on sloping. In the 18th and 19th centuries the charcoal burners, felling all the available timber around the furnaces, would site their hearths near to the particular areas which were wooded at the time. However, when their cutting area coincided with a group of platforms the workers would use these available flat spaces. This seems to be precisely what happened at Platform 9 at Dunloskin in mediaeval times.

Thus, in the district around Taynuilt, where tradition states that 'the platforms were made by the charcoal burners' the theory would be more acceptable if it were changed to 'the platforms were USED by the charcoal burners'. It may be that it is this wrong tradition spreading from the Taynuilt area which has caused the failure to recognise all these groups of platforms as groups of hut foundations. Recognition as hut sites gives a tremendous wealth for future excavations which should add considerably to the knowledge of pre-historic Scotland. In the West, Iron Age forts of several different types, burial cairns of various periods, and Early Christian sites have been and are being found in abundance. Domestic sites are rare - only crannogs being recognised as a type of house. Yet the people must have lived somewhere. The so-called charcoal burners' platforms may be the answer.

.....

CHOEROCAMPA ELPENOR: An Elephant Hawk Moth was seen by Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Miss Sandeman in July 1976 outside a window at Kilberry Castle.

SCOTTISH HERALDIC BOOKPLATES

Sir Ilay Campbell, Bart.

Eighty years ago bookplate collecting was at the height of its vogue; there were bookplate societies, clubs for exchanging duplicates, and vast collections, like that of Sir Augustus Franks, now in the British Museum, were built up; there was, for a while, even a journal. The fashion waned however, other 'crazes' taking its place and others again taking theirs, until now, at least in this country, many people don't even know what a bookplate is. It is only occasionally I meet a 'fellow' collector. Now, therefore, I must start by attempting to answer the question:-

What is a bookplate?

Egerton Castle in his authoritative work English Bookplates, published in 1892, traces the first mention of the bookplate in an English dictionary to Cassell's Encyclopedia Dictionary of 1888. He quotes - "Bookplate, a piece of paper stamped or engraved with a name or device and pasted in a book to show ownership." Cassell's New English Dictionary of 1960 uses almost the same words - "A label with name or device pasted in a book to show ownership.", and it would be difficult to find a more succint description, but it is strange that the word should have failed to attract the attention of lexicographers before the very end of the nineteenth century; for bookplates have been in use for some 500 years, from a date, in fact, very soon after Johann Faust invented the printing press, thus bringing books out of the monasteries into the lives of the educated lay population of Europe.

When the name 'bookplate' was actually coined is difficult to ascertain. On the Continent it is known as an 'Ex-libris' from the habit, more Continental than British, of prefacing the name of the owner of the plate with these words, indicating that the volume is 'from among the books of...'. A bookplate collector is known as an Ex-librist - a more dreadful bit of degraded Latin would be difficult to imagine! Other English words for it include 'label' and 'ticket', but 'plate' was in use by the mid-seventeenth century, as Samuel Pepys in his diary for the 21st July 1668 says: "Went to my plate-maker's, and there spent an hour about contriving my little plates, for my books of the King's four Yards." The plate to which he refers is an appropriate

design of entwined anchors. He also had an armorial plate dating from about 1680.

Perhaps, not surprisingly, the first known bookplate is a German one, made for Hildebrand Branderburg, a Carthusian monk, about 1480, for use in books presented by him to his monastery at Buxheim. It is a very simply designed woodcut, being a shield of his arms (Azure a bull passant argent) supported by an angel. All the extant copies of this plate have been hand-coloured, the angel having a purple robe, green and scarlet wings and fair hair. In the same Monastery are books bearing an almost contemporary plate, showing the impaled arms of Domicillus Von Zell and his wife.

During the sixteenth century bookplates became very popular in Germany and many artists of the period designed them for clients; among the very finest are those of Albrecht Dürer in the 1520s, both pictorial and armorial, and often a combination of the two. The German engravings and woodcuts of this period have never been surpassed, one of the most magnificent being that devised by Virgil Solis in 1559 for Wolfgang, Duke of Bavaria.

Towards the middle of the sixteenth century the trend spread to France, and thence to England, but although a few plates of the English sixteenth century are known, it took a long time for the fashion to catch on on this side of the Channel. It did not become usual for English bibliophiles to make habitual use of bookplates until the second half of the seventeenth century.

The first recorded English plate is that of Sir Nicholas Bacon, father of Francis Bacon; this plate is first known with a presentation inscription in books presented by Sir Nicholas to the University of Cambridge in 1574, but examples have since come to light without the inscription, and these presumably were used for his personal volumes. Another more elaborate plate is that of Sir Thomas Tresham, dated 1585. One of Sir Thomas's sons was Sir Francis, who was implicated in the Gunpowder Plot.

Most early English bookplates were armorial in design, although plain printed labels, where the name of the owner is surrounded by a stylized border, were also quite common.

In these days of 'Women's Lib' I'd like to stress that ladies were early among bookplate owners, the first recorded being that of Elizabeth Pindar in 1608, a printed label

with motto, and the first dated armorial plate being of the Dowager Countess of Bath in 1671. This was a presentation plate, but a personal heraldic plate exists for Alice Brownlow, widow of Sir John Brownlow of Belton, in Lincolnshire, dated 1698.

In Lorna Labouchere's book Ladies Bookplates, published in 1895, ten ladies' dated plates are listed in the 17th century and no less than thirty-five belong to the first fifty years of the 18th century. Obviously there are many more which do not bear dates.

My title is 'Scottish Heraldic Bookplates' and perhaps you are beginning to wonder when I am going to move north of the Border. The reason I have'nt done so before is that Scotland seems to have lagged behind England in adopting these marks of ownership.

Walter Hamilton, in his Dated Bookplates of 1895, illustrates a plate of 1639 for James Riddell of Kinglas, but I doubt whether this date, which appears after the owner's name, is really that of the plate. The arms are as Riddell of that Ilk with the addition of the mark of cadency, impaled with those of Foulis. I have not been able to trace James Riddell to establish whether he and his wife flourished in the first part of the 17th century, but it is not unusual to find misleading dates on bookplates. Sometimes they refer to the acquisition of particular property or the creation of a title. On stylistic grounds I would place the Riddell plate early in the 18th century, especially as the shield is 'hatched' with conventional lines to indicate the tinctures of the charges of the arms, and this system did not come into general use until the 1640s. It is supposed to have been invented by a Roman priest, Father Sylvester Petra Santa in 1638, and first used in a British bookplate in 1641 by Edward Lyttelton, who became Lord Keeper in that year. It seems doubtful whether an obscure Scottish laird could have beaten the nobility of all England and Scotland to the draw in adopting this new usage - but one never knows!

The first dated plate of a Scotsman that is not open to doubt is that of Richard, Lord Maitland, Lord Justice General for Scotland, 1681-1684, eldest son of Charles, third Earl of Lauderdale. This is dated 1682.

From 1700 onwards the bookplate bug seems to have hit Scotland with a vengeance, examples being found of those

of many of the principal Scottish families, and some not so well known. Although it is probable that most of the earlier examples were actually commissioned from London engravers, it is evident that before long it was not necessary to go south of the Border to keep in with the prevailing vogue.

So far I have written mainly about bookplates bearing definite dates, but of course many, indeed the vast bulk of them, do not do so. How, therefore, is it possible to determine to what era they belong? Often of course the name of the owner is enough to place the plate exactly, especially where the owner describes his name, title and offices in full. A plate engraved in Brussels in 1723 is an extreme example. Below the armorial bearing is an inscription which reads as follows in translation:-

> M. Charles Bonaventure, Comte Vander Noot Baron of Schoolhoven and of Mares etc, Councellor of His Imperial and Catholic Majesty to the Borough of Brabant, son of M. Rogier Wauthier, in his lifetime Baron de Carloo etc, and ordinary Deputy of the said body of the Nobility of Brabant, and the Lady Anne Louise Van der Gracht, née Baroness de Urempde and d'Olmen etc.'

Not all are so specific.

Luckily bookplate design follows, as might be expected, the artistic style of the day, and can be related to the architectural and decorative fashions of the same period. Writers on bookplates have attempted to classify the main periods, the first to do so being Sir John Byrne Leicester Warren, 3rd Lord de Tabley.

This remarkable scholar was born in 1835; a poet, writer, historian, numismatist and botanist, he was also an ardent bookplate collector. Unfortunately in classifying heraldic styles he used some misleading terms which later writers have followed. In particular he used the word 'Jacobean' to describe heraldic design usually found in bookplates between 1685 and 1725, presumably because the style emerged as distinctive in the reign of James 11, though it continued with little obvious variation throughout the reigns of William and Mary, Anne and George 1, and is closely equivalent to what in architecture, furniture and silver would be loosely called 'Queen Anne'. I prefer to call it 'early

eighteenth century'.

In this style the shield is usually nearly rectangular with a point at the base, the mantling stiff and formalised, thickly enfolding the shield, except where there are supporters, in which case these, equally stiff and formal, take the place of the lower swathes. The name and designations of the owner, and sometimes the date, almost invariably appear in a wide scrolled label below the achievement. The few known plates dating from Tudor and Stewart days are much more freely drawn and exuberant, using various shield shapes and generally conforming to no particular stylistic pattern. It appears that before the closing years of the 17th century heraldic design was not nearly so subject to convention as it later became. Perhaps there is something here for the social historian.

From the 1720s onwards heraldic bookplates gradually change to reflect the artistic taste of the day; mantling becomes less stuffy and motifs such as shells, floral garlands and cherubs begin to make an appearance. Often the helmet disappears and the crest rests directly on the shield. Almost invariably at this time the shields are set against a sort of scrolled cartouche. Egerton Castle calls this the 'lining'; more often than not it has a fish scale pattern. In fact the style is very similar to that familiar from early Georgian picture frames and mirrors.

There is no difference at this stage between the plates of Scottish and English families; it is only towards the mid-18th century that a distinctive Scottish style emerges.

From the late 1740s onwards the rococco style influenced bookplate design; Lord de Tabley called this 'Chippendale', which is as misleading as it is unfair to Thomas Chippendale. True, he certainly worked in the rococco manner and is perhaps particularly remembered for his exuberant chinoiserie mirror frames, but he was also master of many other styles, some of them starkly plain and the antithesis of the flamboyant rococco.

Though rococco had its origins in France and derives from 'rocaille' or 'rustic' stonework used in garden architecture, particularly for grottos, in the reign of Louis X1V, it evolved over here into a particularly national art form. Certainly it changed heraldic design out of all recognition. Shields got squashed into every manner of unlikely asymmetrical shape; from their borders, encrusted with rockwork

and shells, sprouted rushes and flower sprays, while among them perched dragons, exotic birds, Chinamen with parasols and other impedimenta.

This style, when used with taste and a sense of proportion, has inspired remarkably elegant bookplates, but many designers seemingly went 'haywire', delivering themselves of so many tortuous convolutions that helmets, crests and even the charges of the shield itself are hard to pick out in the crazy maelstrom of unrelated objects.

In Scotland there developed a 'weeping rock' effect, as Egerton Castle calls it, used in the surrounds of the shield, and as mantling, which, often springing laterally from behind the helmet, droops downwards like those wilting moustaches which seem so popular in some quarters these days. A jaunty originality and light-hearted exuberance distinguish these Scottish plates.

The 1770s and 1780s brought two developments to bookplate design. The romantic revival produced a spate of 'gothick ruins', weeping willows and sepulchres. Shields hang from trees or nestle among bocage, while helmets (sometimes with the crest precariously attached), spears, swords and banners litter the landscape round about. Sometimes the shield leans against a column, sometimes it is supported by allegorical figures and, for the first time, objects are introduced to show the interests of the owner, such as books, terrestrial globes, and even pet dogs.

Contemporary with this style are the much plainer 'festoon' designs, sometimes known as 'wreath and ribbon'. These are simple; a spade-shaped shield is surrounded by a laurel or floral wreath, or has sprays crossed below the shield. Often the shield itself is suspended from a wreath, ribbon or swag, helmets almost completely disappear, and the crest is placed 'in the air' above the shield, regardless of the laws of gravity. Sometimes military trophies support the shield or 'sprout'from behind it, and supporters, when they are shown, balance precariously on slender ribbons bearing the motto. None the less many of these plates are aesthetically extremely satisfying. Kirkwood, the Edinburgh printer, was an excellent exponent of this genre.

Throughout the 18th century crests alone instead of the full armorial achievement, have been used on bookplates becoming more frequent as the century drew to a close. Some of these are most attractive when elegantly displayed

with cartouches of floral swags, but alone or with a motto on a stereotyped scroll they are very dull indeed, and usually only interesting to the collector for their associations. Nineteenth century examples are even worse, as so often the wreath or torse, by which the crest is fastened to the helmet, survives flattened into the likeness of a string of sausages.

The decline of the 'Festoon' style in the early 1820s ushered in the most uninteresting period in bookplate history. There are of course exceptions, but the typical heraldic bookplate of the 30s, 40s, 50s and 60s of the nineteenth century tended to be a small engraved or printed label showing the arms of the owner, technically correct no doubt, but lacking in real heraldic feeling or artistic merit. It seems strange that the very families who, inspired by Sir Walter Scott and Queen Victoria, were building 'baronial castles' all over Scotland, should have marked their literary ownership in such an unenterprising manner. Egerton Castle calls this the 'die-sinker' style, castigating it as 'graceless'. He is also far from complimentary about the Heraldic Stationers who catered for it.

However, the 'die-sinker' era was but the darkest hour before the dawn, for in the 1870s and 1880s there suddenly blossomed an heraldic renaissance which, encouraged by a handful of talented artists and engravers, completely revolutionised bookplate design. Part of the reason may have been that bookplate collecting came into fashion about this time, collectors vying with each other in commissioning artists to design plates for them.. J. Paul Rylands, FSA (1846-1923), an ardent collector of the period, had at least twenty different bookplates of his own.

Again I must admit that the first of these artists were Englishmen, but they had plenty of Scottish clients. Masters of the science of heraldry as well as its artistic adaptation, they have produced some of the best examples of heraldic design ever.

Mention must be made specifically of C.W.Sherborn, J.Forbes Nixon (who must at least have had Scottish connections!), J.Vinycomb, Harry Soane, Thomas Moring, G.W.Eve (author of Decorative Heraldry), C.Helard and T.Phillips Barratt (who for many years worked for Messrs Bumpus). Many artists, famous in other fields, did not disdain bookplate design, including Sir J.E.Millais, Randolph Caldecott,

Kate Greenaway, H.Stacy Marks, Sir John Leighton Bt., Sir Frank Brangwyn and yes - at last a Scot - D.Y.Cameron.

Of course not all bookplates were, or are, armorial; many are pictorial, and it is in this sphere that one Scottish artist excelled. This was C.R.Halkett of Edinburgh, who specialised in allegorical plates. But perhaps the most prolific and successful of Scottish designers was Archibald Leslie, during the first years of the present century. He designed and engraved a series of highly original and lively armorial plates for Scottish families. No two are alike, though it is easy to recognise his very personal manner.

Some of the most effective bookplates ever made were by two successive Herald Painters in Lyon Office. Graham Johnston, who also illustrated Sir James Balfour Paul's Scottish Peerage of 1904, and who often worked in what is known as the 'pounced' style derived from early printers' marks; and A.G.Law Samson who continued working into the 1940s. A contemporary designer in much the same tradition as Graham Johnston is Gordon Macpherson, of Scottish descent though in fact a Canadian citizen and resident. France has a fine heraldic artist in Robert Louis; Herbert Wauthier is popular in England; while Scotland has Don Pottinger, also a former Heraldic Painter.

.....oOo.....

(Editorial Note:-

The following definitions may be of help to readers who may not be familiar with heraldic terms.

Achievement: the full coat of arms.
Argent: silver.
Azure: blue.
Cadency: armorial distinction between members of a family.
Charge: armorial bearings on a shield.
Impale: two charges on one shield (e.g.husband and wife).
Mantling: scroll work flowing from the helmet.
Motto: word or words on a scroll.
Passant: walking.
Supporters: figures that appear to support the arms.
Tincture: colour.
Torse or Wreath: placed between crest and helmet, of two colours entwined.

WHEN THE YEARS WERE YOUNG

Mary Sandeman

HIGH AND FAR OFF

In January or February, when there were still patches of snow and miniature glaciers of frozen water on the hills, we would go off after the White Hares, which never seem to come below 500 feet. The dog and I both loved these days, although I am sure we were both more of a hindrance than a help. He had all the loose rugs in the house rucked up and deposited in strange places as he dashed from room to room trying to hurry father who was lacing up his boots and getting the gun.

We had transport for the first 150 feet up, after that it was shanks' pony, shod in my case with clogs. At first there was a path of sorts, just a space between two overgrown ditches, but a help. It could be cold, however much the sun shone, on the skirts of the high tops which were our hunting ground, and this was one of the few times except for church, when I ever wore gloves - knitted mitts strung on strings and passed down the sleeves of my coat so that they could be pulled off and not lost.

Soon we came to the first scree, which always seemed to hold a leveret, its blue-grey coat matching the stones. The dog was allowed to chase it to get the steam off. He would be back in no time, knowing that the real hunt had not begun. We would never take the leverets but were after the almost snow white adults, who in winter have only a small patch left at the nape of the neck of the blue summer coat. There was a burn to cross; some panic here for me as we had to jump from rock to rock above what seemed a very big waterfall, but of course there was a helping hand.

Now we were in real hare country and had to spot them as they sunned themselves by their holes in the screes. We would stalk many a patch of snow or frozen water during the day, and often it was only their eyes or shadows that gave them away.

The walking was rough in the long heather for short legs and there were frequent stops. Then I would look down, down to the great bay with its islands all seeming flat as on a map, and the little fields and tiny houses,

and clear and oddly poingant in the frosty air a cock's crow came up to us.

Sometimes I was put down in the heather while father carried out a long stalk. That was fine while I could see him but once out of sight I felt rather fearful; it was the fingering of the wind over the screes that sent cold shivers up my spine, it seemed to hold unnamed dreads of things unseen and powers beyond all knowing. On one occasion, to my great shame, my nerve gave and I rushed after father, stumbling in the heather obscured by tears. He was very right to scold, and I knew it; I was quite safe while I stayed where he'd put me. It would have served me right if I had got a pellet in the face moving about like that. I soon got used to it and felt quite safe and master of my surroundings. There was never any question of feeling lost, for after all I could see home down there, far far below, nor any sense of loneliness; there was so much to see up there among the high tops - grouse, snipe, curlews, pipits and wrens all going about their own lives. Lots of colour too - the racing cloud shadows, the lochs we would fish come summer so blue in their setting of peat and stone, the big black peat wallows churned up by the stags in last autumn's rut, and under ones feet bright red leaves of tormentil still showing among the stones, even the stag grass which looks so dull from a distance has many shades of yellow and red, seed heads of asphodel - apricot to buff - and brave little cobwebs so frail and yet so strong. Deer too if you could spot them, hinds on one hand and stags on the other, the 'path' seemed to divide the grounds.

It was up there that I was taught to memorise the ground under my feet, a sort of "Kim's Game". Just a game to keep the feet moving but it has got me out of a bit of bother, which of course I should'nt have got into, when the mist has come down and I went on "to get to the top" when I should have turned back. It certainly works over a short distance but I should'nt like to try it too far.

Once I was left on a bank of heather out of which a flat rock projected with a steep drop below. Dressed in heather mixture, coat, cap and leggings, I must have

been invisible as I lay back enjoying the sun and admiring our 'bag' of hares laid out on the rock. Suddenly there was a rushing mighty wind as a golden eagle swooped over the bank and stooped on my hares. In an instant I was on my feet stamping my iron-shod clogs and shaking my fists at the poor eagle, who got the shock of his life. Never would he have dreamed of interfering with a female, however young, in defence of her prey, he seemed to say as he went into a reverse climb with a very undignified flapping of wings. I have never been so close to an adult eagle since. Chiefly I remember the shiny greenish grey talons on yellowish legs and the flash of his eye as it turned from the hares to the fury behind him. As his talons were open and he was going so very fast I suppose he meant to snatch up a hare without landing and drop over the end of the rock before regaining height - he would see the man and dog quite close. I also remember being surprised at the spaces between the pinions, not a bit like the solid interlocking wings of birds I had handled, all game birds, and the odd damaged song bird and the hens, not to mention my brother's fantails who perched on my head and shoulders. Father and dog arrived very quickly; they may have seen the eagle stoop, but I was still stamping and shaking my fists. I was'nt a bit frightened, just very angry - my precious hares.

On another day we watched a peregrine and an eagle hunting together. Grouse tend to rise when an eagle comes over as eagles prefer to take on the ground while peregrines take on the wing. They stayed together for some time but although several grouse rose I dont remember that the peregrine had any luck - perhaps because the grouse kept low, skimming the heather - but she did try.

We were apt to get carried away by the fun of the hunt and take too many hares even knowing that mother would not be too pleased - two or three hares are very good eating but more rather overloaded the larder and we could'nt give them away for few people would eat them. Cloven hoof, and of course everyone knows that "SHE" can turn herself into a white hare and, well, one can't be too careful. Hares are heavy, up to 10lbs, and it was a long way home. Father had the game bag

full, the cartridge bag and the gun and a hare in the other hand; I had two hares linked by the hind legs and slung round my neck. They were too long to carry any other way and even then their heads were apt to trail on the ground - I was'nt very tall you see. The day was drawing to dusk by now and the wind had an edge to it, so I was glad of their warm fur. The cat ice was re-forming on the puddles where we had broken it and smoke rose invitingly from those so-small houses by the sea.

So we plodded home as man the hunter, his child and dog have done down the ages. The dog, who had nothing to carry, leading, followed by father and then me, singing, when I had breath, a wordless tuneless song of triumph and thanksgiving for a good day on the hill.

...oOo...

BIRD NOTE: A GANNET'S PECULIAR BEHAVIOUR

Air Vice-Marshal Gordon Young

For the bird watcher in Mid-Argyll one of the highlights of the year is the stirring sight of Gannets diving for fish as they range over Loch Fyne and along the western coast from their breeding ground on Ailsa Craig.

But in April 1976 an observant member of the Society had an unusual sighting of one of these magnificent birds which has created some interest in ornithological circles. By the road, about a mile north-west of Kilmichael Glassary he noticed a mature Gannet wheeling round and above a flock of gulls which were following a plough. It gave every indication of wanting to join the gulls feeding on the newly turned soil, but during the time he watched it did not do so.

It seems that there are no previous reports of aberrant behaviour of this kind, although it is known that on rare occasions Gannets fly overland on migration. Dr W.R.P. Bourne, Director of Research of the Seabird Group, and Dr J.B.Nelson of Aberdeen University who has made a special study of the species, consider the most likely explanation to be that the cloud of gulls triggered off the 'trawler scavenging' response of the Gannet; having fed with gulls behind trawlers on many occasions it was merely responding to a similar situation.

THE HISTORY OF MAN IN NORTH KNAPDALE (Part 1)

Leslie Rymer

MESOLITHIC.

The final melting of the ~~Devonian~~ Devensian ice opened up Scotland to human settlement. Climatic amelioration led to the spread of vegetation, and a varied fauna was provided with new feeding grounds in which man could hunt and settle. Despite the many obstacles to migration caused by rivers, swamps, and dense forest, a great movement of peoples took place.

The first people in Scotland were likely to settle around the coast and it is possible that any evidence of their presence has been destroyed by the post-glacial marine transgression that began about 7300 bp. What is believed to be some of the earliest evidence of man in Scotland comes from Campbeltown in Kintyre. It consists of simple and edge-worn flakes and blades struck from pebbles and cores. These belong to the Larnian culture which is thought to be late Mesolithic, originating in N. Ireland.

The Obanian culture, described from six caves in and near Oban, from Oronsay, Risga, and from a cave at Duntroon just north of the parish boundary, is now thought to be a local adaptation to its environment, having its origin somewhere further south in Britain. It does not seem to be related to the Larnian. It is adapted to a sea-shore life, all known sites being associated with caves just above the '25 foot' raised beach level. The tools are restricted in type and poor in quality; most characteristic being the 'limpet scoops', finger-like pebbles probably used in the harvesting of limpets. It is best known for its bone and antler harpoons with their two rows of clumsy barbs. These may have been attached to wooden hafts to form spears used for hunting. It is significant that the Obanian industries do not include tools suitable for coping with wood or timber of any size.

In 1954 Lacaille gave a table of all faunal remains then known from Obanian sites. It includes many molluscs (both land and marine), crustaceans, birds, mammals and fish. The following mammals occur at two or more sites:- badger, otter, weasel, grey seal, common seal, red and roe deer, ox, wild boar and rorqual. There are no available quantitative data but one can surmise that the economy was

that of specialised hunter-gather with some selective hunting and with seasonal collecting patterns. Man was just one predator, and may even have been complementary to and non-competitive with, other important predators in the community.

All the evidence (and lack of it) would suggest that the Mesolithic population of Scotland was "exceedingly sparse". In 1972 Butzer quotes population estimates of from one person to 10 sq.km to one person to 250 sq km for modern food gathering and hunting populations. The present area of Scotland is 29,796 sq.miles (77,191 sq.km). During the Mesolithic period it would be less, but taking the present area and Butzer's population-density figures, we can estimate that the population of Scotland could not then have been more than between 308 and 7719, the lower being the more probable figure, especially as inland areas do not seem to have been settled.

This population would have ranged widely in search of food and may have had only seasonal settlements. Most Mesolithic settlements in Scotland appear to be along coastal strips, river banks, or the margins of lakes, and if this is considered in relation to their limited technological development, one cannot avoid the conclusion that man was not the predominant ecological factor. He did not have the capacity to change the landscape as did other Mesolithic cultures in England, except perhaps accidentally by fire.

Few radiocarbon dates are relevant to these Mesolithic cultures but some have recently been obtained from material taken from the Oronsay shell midden excavation. The measurements were carried out on collagen from bone fragments and the carbonate of an oyster shell. The shell gave a date of 5015±210 years bp, and the bone gave what is thought by the dating laboratory to be a more reliable date of 5755±180 years bp. Mercer has published carbon dates relevant to the microlithic succession on Jura which he considers to be a facies of the Obanian culture. These include the oldest Scottish radiocarbon dates in an archaeological context. Blades and end scrapers were found at Lussa (Jura) with minute bone fragments, limpet shells, red ochre and burnt hazel-nut shell and wood. The latter gave a radiocarbon date of 8194±350 years bp. However Mercer has suggested, on the basis of a few proto-

trapeze tanged points, derived and rolled in marine gravel, that Eskimo-type hunters occupied the region from the beginning of the climatic amelioration.

NEOLITHIC.

The first Neolithic arrivals to the area, the builders of the Clyde-Solway tombs, must have entered a region supporting only the most meagre and scattered population.

Most of our knowledge of the Neolithic in Scotland comes from excavations of tombs. Settlement sites such as Skara Brae are rare and atypical. Deposits of animal bones have been discovered in chambers yielding exhumations. The Scottish evidence includes domesticated ox, pig, sheep or goat, and dog. This is an important indication that the tomb builders were agriculturalists.

These Neolithic settlers were introducing their domestic animals to the area for the first time and must have had a considerable effect on the ecology of the region. Colonisations, immigrations and invasions involving the transfer of livestock, posed formidable problems, especially in a largely forested environment. They appear so great that even an initial settlement must have involved large numbers of people.

Stockbreeding activities of Neolithic man in Scotland are well supported by the evidence. Proof of cereal cultivation, although widely assumed to be part of all Neolithic economics, is not so impressive for the Clyde-Solway cultural area. It appears to rest on grain impressions of small spelt (Triticum monococcum) and emmer (Triticum dicoccum) on pottery sherds from Dunloy, N.Ireland, an impression of naked barley on a sherd from Eday, and on a single identification of a wheat grain from Mull Hill on the Isle of Man. Cereal type pollen grains are recorded from Pollen Zone viib at only four sites in Scotland: one each in Dumfriesshire, Fife, Kintyre and Wester Ross. Of these, only the Kintyre record falls within the area of the Clyde-Solway culture, and that record is correlated with Bronze Age farming activities. It would seem that the Neolithic people in this area were predominantly stock breeders and that cereals formed only a minor part of their economy. The material evidence for the economy of the chambered tomb builders in Scotland has been analysed by Daniel, who concludes that they were mixed farmers who hunted and fished.

Some of the most fertile soils in Knapdale occur on the raised beach areas and on the alluvial flats. According to Scott such areas would not have been available to the first Neolithic colonists because the "25 foot" beach would have been still under the sea or else "so recently exposed as to be useless for agriculture". The earliest date for Neolithic settlers in the cultural area is3160±110 years BC (5110 years bp) for an early stage in the use of the Monamore chambered cairn on Arran. Although fluctuations in sea-level were more complex than once thought, dates from a number of areas suggest that vegetational development or human occupation of the raised beach areas had begun at 5450 years bp or soon after, and there seems to be no reason why these areas could not have been used by the Neolithic colonists.

Axe heads identified petrologically as coming from Graig Lwyd in Wales, Rathlin Island off Ulster, and Great langdale in Cumberland have been discovered in the Clyde-Solway cultural area, so that extensive trade with other parts of Britain seems possible, and there is no reason why this should not have included pottery and grain.

One of the largest areas of flat low-lying ground in Argyll occurs between Lochgilphead and Crinan, and the region would seem ideal for settlement. The number of cairns found within and to the north of the parish, especially around Kilmartin, would suggest a substantial population. Unfortunately unknown factors, such as the status of families entitled to tomb interment, make it impossible, in the absence of any settlements, to interpret the tombs in terms of local population size or density. But the technology available would certainly have enabled a reasonably sized population to have considerable effect upon the landscape.

BRONZE AGE.

The earliest metal users in the country, the makers of the short-necked beakers, appear to have arrived while the Clyde-Solway chambered cairns were in use. In several of the excavated tombs (e.g.Nether Largie South, Kilmartin) beaker burials are found above Neolithic burials.

By about 3500 years bp the Food-vessel culture replaced the Short-necked beaker culture. Pottery of this date shows close resemblances to pottery found in Ireland of

the same period, and it has been suggested that settlers from Ireland may have arrived to exploit the copper lodes around Crinan.

The presence of Bronze Age people in North Knapdale is well attested by the remains of several round cairns, and standing stones (some of which are cup-marked). Two standing stones occur on the skyline ridge overlooking Loch Sween and just west of Barnashalg. About 1866 there were said to be fifteen such stones between Fernoch and Barnashalg; several of them now serve as gateposts. These stones would have been along the route of an 18th century drove road, suggesting that the route may have been used continuously for a very long time. If these stones were intended to mark out a path it is necessary to conclude that the area was not forested when they were erected.

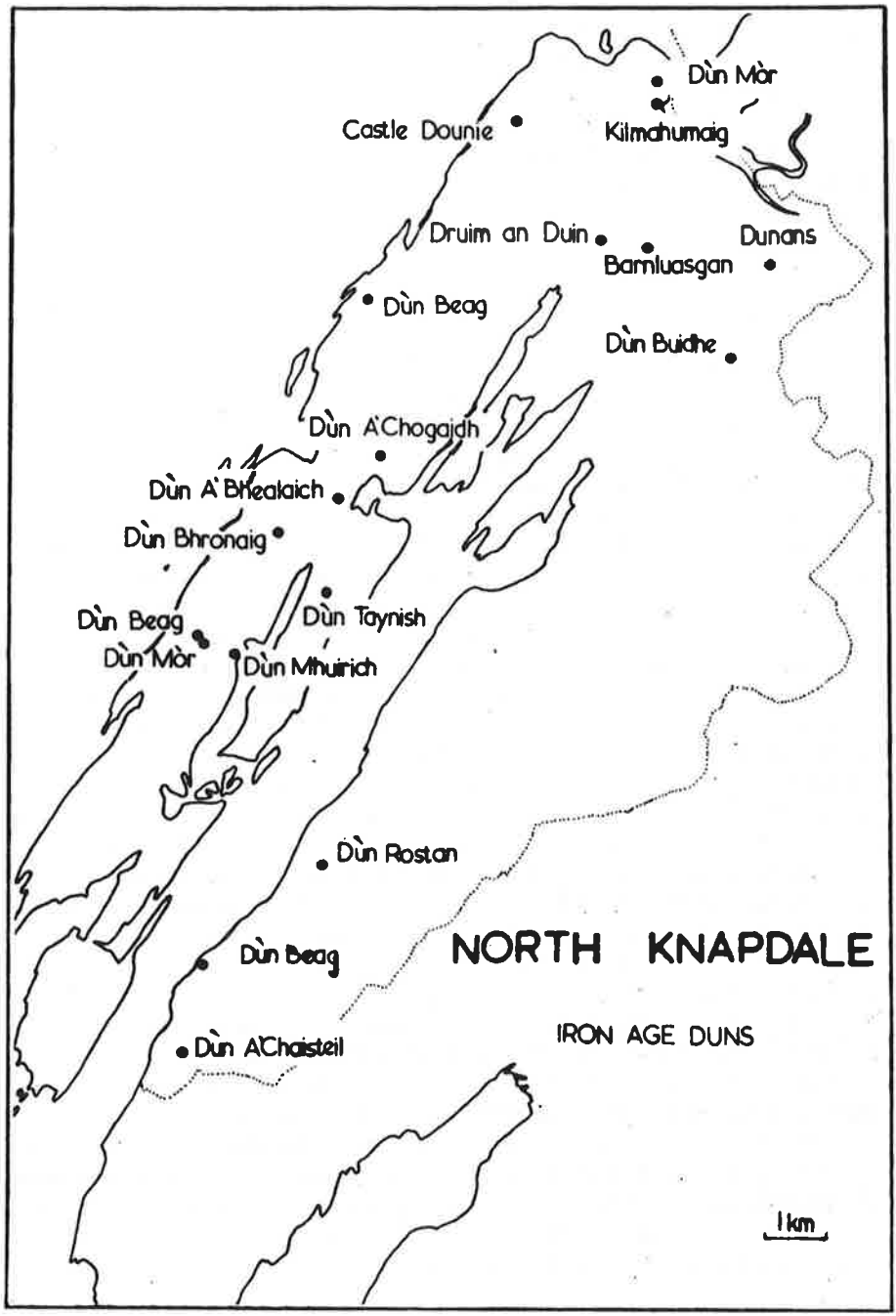
Little seems to be known about the economy of the Bronze Age peoples in Scotland; metal working might imply specialisation and the evolution of a class structure. Some groups of standing stones appear to have been solar or stellar observatories, which would assume a quite sophisticated degree of development.

No well-defined termination to the Bronze Age in Scotland has been demonstrated. The weapons of the late Bronze Age suggest a warrior society, but the almost complete lack of pottery, burials, and settlement sites means that little is known about the people or their economy. Metal axes able to shape large quantities of timber were in use, and a Bronze Age crannog is known from Wigtownshire, proving that deforestation on a large scale was possible.

IRON AGE and EARLY HISTORY.

Iron-using communities appeared in Scotland sometime in the third or second century BC. The early Iron Age appears to have been a period of violent change and unrest. It is thought that all the Scottish hill forts, duns and brochs date from this period, and that they were the result of a considerable over-running of Scotland by dispossessed Celtic tribes from the more vulnerable regions of Britain south of the Cheviots.

North Knapdale would seem to have been heavily populated at this time. Within its 41 sq.miles are found 18 duns. Unfortunately none have been properly excavated. Nor is it known if they were occupied contemporaneously or if they were regularly inhabited. Some were certainly used in


Dùn Mòr
Castle Dounie
Kilmahumaig
Druim an Duin
Dunans
Barnluasgan
Dùn Beag
Dùn Buidhe
Dùn A'Chogaidh
Dùn A'Bhealaich
Dùn Bhronaig
Dùn Beag
Dùn Taynish
Dùn Mòr
Dùn Mhuirich
Dùn Rostan
Dùn Beag
NORTH KNAPDALE
IRON AGE DUNS
Dùn A'Chaisteil
1km

fairly recent times; Dùn Mhuilg, near Loch Craignish, was a militia post in the 1745 rebellion. Christison suggests that they were occupied only in times of trouble as none of them (with the exception of Dunadd) has a water supply. But water may well have been stored in skins. No one can doubt that a high degree of skill and a large labour force were needed for their construction, and this hints at a relatively prosperous, possibly "aristocratic" occupation. Gaily suggested in 1962 that the duns do not represent the total Iron Age settlement pattern.

The large number of duns would seem to indicate a relatively treeless landscape and a highly developed agriculture. Unstable times would have made arable farming a hazardous occupation and pastoralism probably predominated.

Several of the duns, e.g. Dùn Mhuirich (shown on the cover) have Prunus spinosa growing outside their walls. It has been claimed that this had been planted "to protect and strengthen the fortification", and this suggestion has been repeated more recently by Miss Campbell and Miss Sandeman. This Prunus produces suckers and, in theory, there is no reason why a hedge installed in Iron Age times should not persist until the present day. But if Hooper's Hedgerow Hypothesis, which claims that a new species is added to a hedge for each hundred years of its life, (i.e. a hedge 1000 years old should contain 10 shrubby species), is applicable to our area, we might expect to find a great many other species growing in the same situation.

During Iron Age times prehistory gradually gives way to history as the first documentary evidence appears. In the first half of the second century AD, Ptolemy compiled his map of Europe, thought to be based on material dating from the previous century. The outline of Scotland is recognisable. The Mull of Kintyre is marked Epidium promontorium and the whole of South Argyll is inhabited by the Epidii, the Horse People. Knapdale has long been famous for its horses, and there is an old Gaelic proverb "I will send you up to Knapdale where they put sense into the horses".

Much of the early historical information is contained within the Old Irish Annals. Traditionally Cairbre Riada, a descendant of the Celtic immigrants to Ireland, crossed over to Scotland in 283 AD, to found the Kingdom of Dalriada. One would expect him to settle in a district capable of

providing food supplies for all the incomers; an area well suited to defence in the event of attack by dispossessed natives or other enemies; and an area readily accessible to the north of Ireland. The general concensus of opinion is that he chose Mid-Argyll, and that Dunadd, situated just north of the present parish boundary, in the Mòine Mhór, is the ancient capital of Dalriada.

According to "traditional accounts of early date", in 498 AD a new wave of colonisation involving several hundred "men able to bear arms", together with women and children, took place from Ireland to Dalriada. This must have added several thousand Gaels to the population of Scottish Dalriada, and it is difficult to believe that the duns were not re-occupied, if indeed they had ever been abandoned. The excavation of Dunadd confirms its occupation during the sixth to the middle of the ninth centuries, with an earlier use dating from the early Iron Age.

There are strong local traditions of St Columba visiting North Knapdale. Certainly he first came to Dalriada in 563 AD, and in 574 he carried out the first Christian installation of a king in Britain at Dunadd. Many Early Christian (pre-10th cent.) sites and stones are found in the parish, some of which are shown in White's book (1875). Adamnan's Life of St Columba (680 AD), describes building with timber, and timber being sent to Iona from the mainland. The number of Early Christian relics would seem to imply a considerable population.

The Annals of Ulster tell of Dunadd being beseiged in 683, and in 736 Angus MacFergus, king of the Picts, "devastated" and "laid waste" the lands of Dalriada and succeeded in gaining Dunadd. A similar episode took place in 741. The early Norse invasions began about this time, the devastation of Iona occurring in 795. In 843 Kenneth MacAlpin, ruler of Dalriada, was able to impose his sovreignty on the Picts, who had been badly defeated in 839 by Danes attacking the east coast of Scotland. Not surprisingly he transferred the seat of royal government to the richer lands of the Pictish east. Dalriada and Dunadd both disappear from history and Argyll appears for the first time.

(End of First Part)