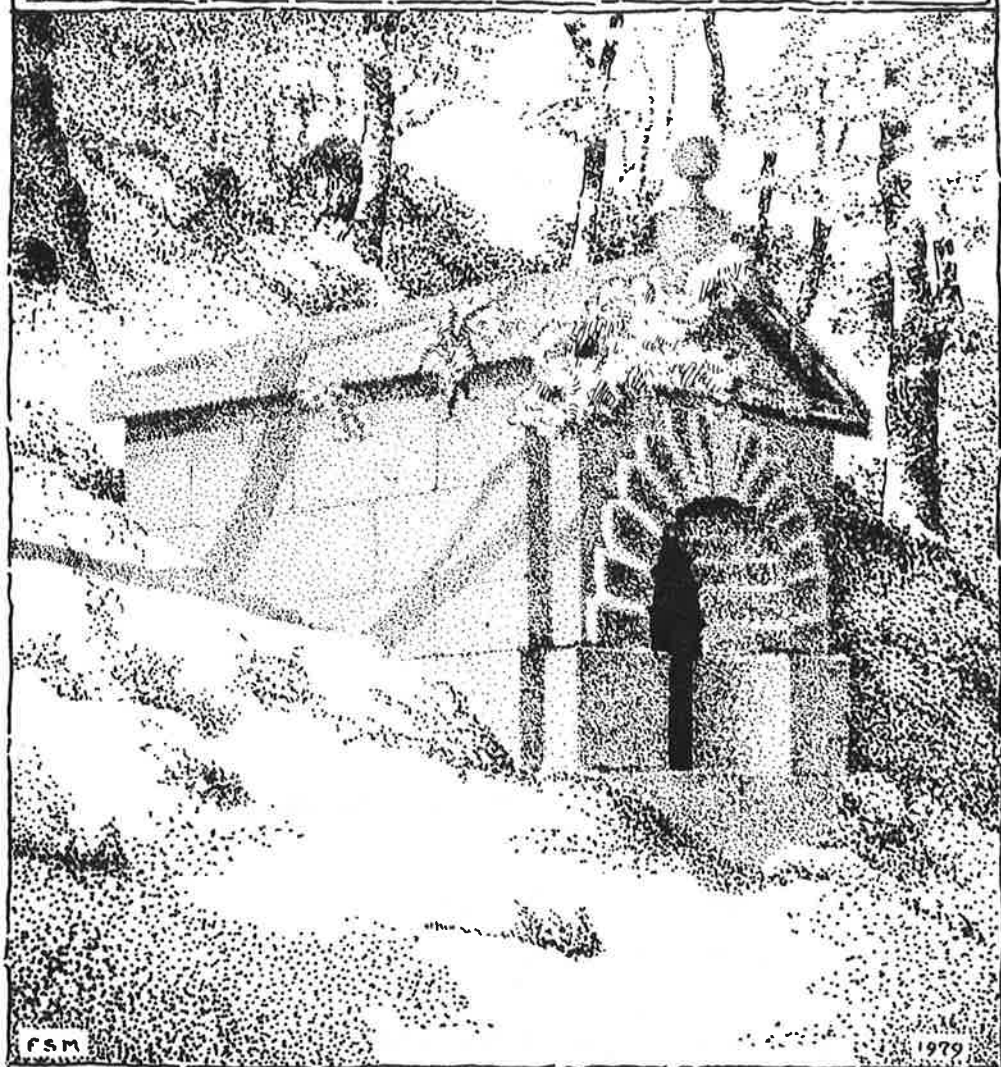


-:1749:-  
Bealach an Fhuarain, Inveraray



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The KIST : 22

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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NUMBER TWENTY-TWO: Autumn 1981

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## THE WESTERN VOYAGE OF ALEXANDER II

Marion Campbell

Readers of Kist 21 will have been reminded that Queen Victoria passed along the Crinan Canal in 1847, but they may not immediately recall that another monarch sailed in our waters, perhaps even took a line parallel to the Canal overland, some six hundred years earlier.

In 1249 Alexander II came by sea to the west. Historians have speculated about his purpose, agreeing only that he intended to meet Eòghann Lord of Argyll, his vassal for Lorn, who was also sub-king of the Southern Hebrides (Coll to Scarba) under the King of Norway. Eòghann was son of Duncan of Argyll, son of Dugald King of the Isles, son of Somerled the Great, and thus ancestor of the MacDougalls. At the time other descendants of Somerled held Islay and Jura, much of Kintyre, and from Morvern to the Butt of Lewis - all as tributaries to Norway, although in Kintyre the Scots King was acquiring control.

All sources confirm that Alexander sailed to Oban and landed on Kerrera on Saturday 8th July, but I have traced no attempt to reconstruct his route or study the composition of his fleet. An uncharacteristically glib remark by the late Professor J.D.Mackie, that he "sailed down the Clyde and round the Mull of Kintyre", can be set aside at once; nobody went round the Mull except of necessity before the coming of steam - and in 1249 there were Scottish exiles and edgy English occupying forces in northern Ireland, likely to react against a passing fleet.

We know the King's principal companions, for they witnessed a charter he granted on arrival in Kerrera, giving "the church of St Bride in Lorn" to the bishopric of Argyll. (This is Kilbride Lerags, in whose parish Kerrera lay). The witnesses were these:- Clement, Bishop of Dunblane and administrator of the See of Argyll (which had then been vacant for seven years); Alan the Doorward, Justiciar of Scotland; David de Lindesei (Lindsay), Justiciar of Lothian; Alexander the Steward, whose wife was a great-grand-daughter of Somerled; Walter de Moravia (Murray) of Duffus; William of Brechin, grandson of the King's uncle Earl David; Walter Bisset, whose mother had been a half-sister of the King and whose wife was Ada of Galloway; and Robert de Meyners (Menzies). These worthies might each require a ship of their own to carry their attend-

ants, while the King would need at least one for his staff.

Presumably the ships resembled Norse longships, of shallow draught, with one large square sail and with oars, highly manoeuvrable and able to beach on any sandy shore. A Manx document of fifteen years later mentions 24-oar and 12-oar ships as if these were standard types; while the 12-oars would perhaps carry no more than 25 of a crew, the bigger ones probably had two men to each oar and possibly two watches of oarsmen, giving a crew of around 100. (Some Norwegian ships in the 1263 Largs expedition carried up to 250 men).

I think the bulk of the fleet would be found by the Steward, from his Ayrshire possessions and his lordship of Bute. Some may have come from Arran, where Walter Bisset died in 1251; I have found no charter granting him the island, but he had lost his Aboyne lands when his family was implicated in the death of the Earl of Atholl, the Doorward's stepson, in 1242. Walter soon returned to royal favour, but his kinsmen remained in Ulster, serving Henry III of England. The Bishop might have a ship or two for duties in connection with the See of Argyll; and landholders along the route would certainly join the expedition to show their loyalty.

These landholders were mostly of one kinship, descendants of Anrothán of the Northern Úi Neill, an Irish prince who settled in Knapdale and Cowal in the 11th century. They comprised the Lamonts, MacEwens, MacLachlans and MacSorleys of Cowal and Loch Fyne; the MacGillichrists of Tarbert and southern Loch Awe; and Dugald ruadh MacSween, Lord of Glassary and of Skipness and Castle Sween, with his cousins the MacNeills and MacMhuirichs. All of these could be assumed to feel some degree of hostility to the heirs of Somerled, their rivals for command of western coastal waters.

Perhaps the Steward gathered the nucleus of the fleet at Rothesay, bringing the King and his party from the royal castle of Dunbarton. From there they would move either through the Kyles or outside Bute to reach Tarbert. Here, Donald MacGillichrist could offer the King quarters in a worthy castle while most of the ships were dragged over the isthmus along what was almost certainly a permanent timber "shiproad". Some ships would be left in the East Loch to maintain communications with the rest of the

kingdom - nobody could have guessed how badly they would soon be needed.

Alexander would either ride across to rejoin his ship in the West Loch or - perhaps more likely, as it would allow further contacts with loyal subjects - he might sail to Loch Gilp and ride by Dunardry to Crinan or by Dunadd to Duntroon. Dunadd was held by a MacLachlan, by grant from Dugald ruadh; one can only wonder if any tradition of its former greatness lingered, if anyone told the King that there his ancestors had begun to rule.

There cannot have been a set date for reaching Kerrera; half the point of the progress was to meet as many people as possible. At the same time, the local pilots would be watching the weather and reckoning the tides, and very probably Eòghann had his own informants monitoring the advance of the expedition.

The journey was taking place around new moon, with minor spring tides due on 6th-7th by my reckoning, giving a north-flowing stream from the Dorus Mòr off Crinan about 7.0 a.m. on 7th July, failing around noon. If the fleet got a fair wind as well, they could leave Crinan and be inside Luing before the tide turned; but they might not have found it so easy to come up from Loch Sween to Crinan against the ebb. (These tides are fairly unpredictable, the ebb especially depending on events outside Jura; I assume that the ships would make their way from the West Loch to Loch Sween in perhaps two tides, with some fast sailers making Carsaig and stragglers coming along a day or so later). Perhaps most of them gathered around the mouth of the Add to await favourable conditions for the last stages.

Assuming such conditions on 7th July, the ships could spread themselves around Kilchattan Bay, Ardinamar, and other anchorages and beaches - some possibly on the outside of Luing - crews would land to cook, eat and rest (nobody cooked aboard ship if they could help it - fire risks, smoked sails and scrambled meals were all to be avoided). For the King, there was the opportunity to confer honour on another local leader.

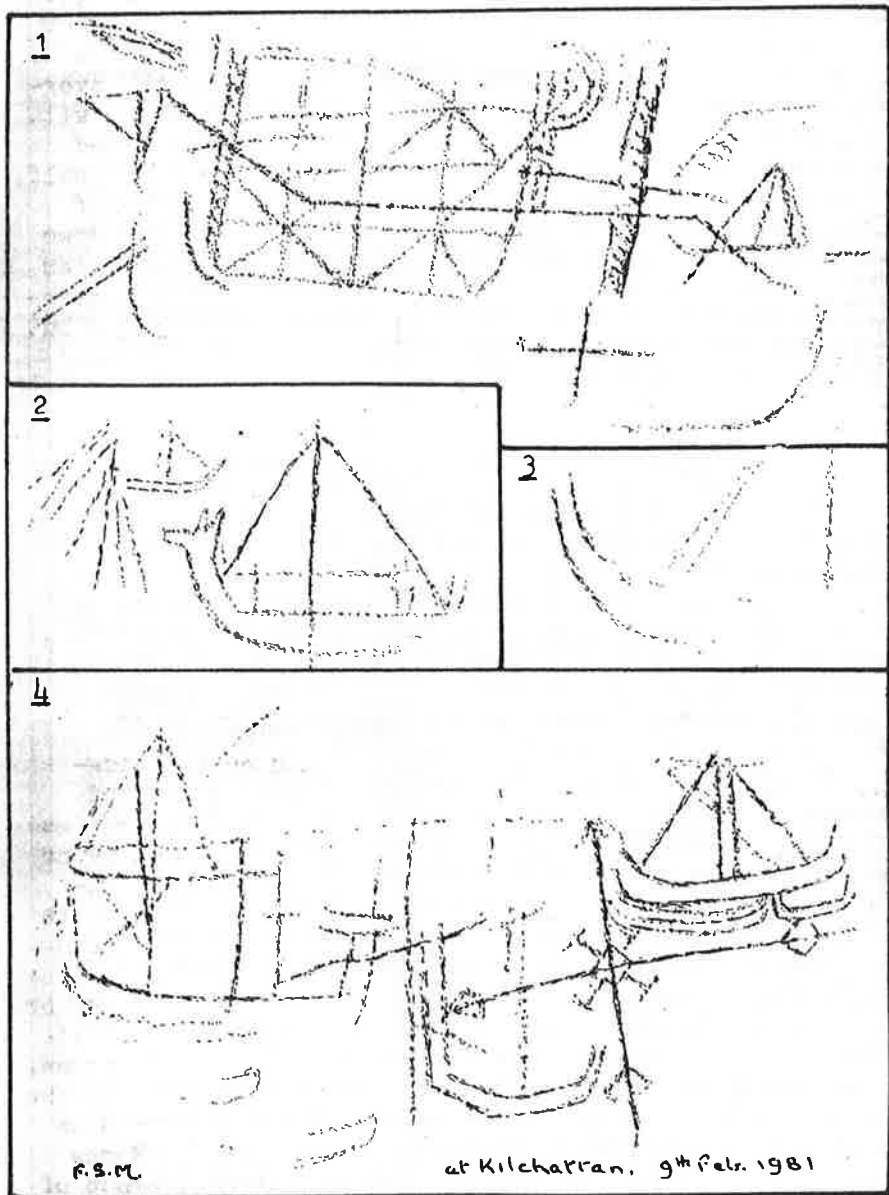
At the NE corner of Torsa Mòr, east of Luing, are the ruins of a small 13th-century castle. Its builder is unknown, but it lies well within the MacDougall sphere of influence (and indeed they held the castle in later times).

It seems possible that here the King spent the last night of his life, with an early start to get through the Cuan Sound at slack water. Re-forming outside, the fleet had a fair morning's run to go up Kerrera Sound on the tide and make a dashing approach under oars and sail to the Great Horseshoe.

There are several sources of information about the expedition - the Saga of King Haakon of Norway, the Chronica Majora of Matthew Paris of St Albans, the Chronicle of the Isle of Man. They give sketchy and conflicting accounts of King Alexander's intentions - good foreign-correspondent stuff, making what they could out of precious little and third-hand at that. Their suggestions include a pilgrimage to Iona, greedy illwill against a faithful noble, offers of "a greater realm within Scotland" in exchange for four island castles, and, from the Manx Chronicle, "to subdue the whole kingdom of the isles"; to which it adds tersely, "he reached Kerrera, where he was attacked by fever and died."

The political background is extremely complicated and would take far too long to unravel here. Eoghann was the King of Norway's viceroy for the moment; he learned of trouble in Man just before the Scots arrived, and had to leave immediately to get the heir to the Manx throne into safety from usurpers. Alexander reached Kerrera to find no anxious vassal waiting, dashed off his charter of Kilbride, and died (from whatever cause). Oddly, nobody seems to have suggested poison or witchcraft. The Saga says "then the Scots broke up their levy and bore the king's body up into Scotland". The phrase conceals a day and night of frantic activity as messengers were despatched, ships revictualled, plans laid and abandoned. By the following Thursday most if not all of the Kerrera party were to be at Scone, at the enthronement of the seven-year-old Alexander III. It would be many a long year before the Crown showed much interest in Argyll.

What the people of Argyll thought is not recorded, but there is just a faint chance that we can still see what they saw. On the outside walls of the 12th/13th century church of Kilchattan on Luing, overlooking the waters where I suggest the fleet lay on its passage northward, there are a series of graffiti of ships. These are shown in the LORN volume of the Royal Comm. on Ancient



Graffiti at Kilchattan, Luing.

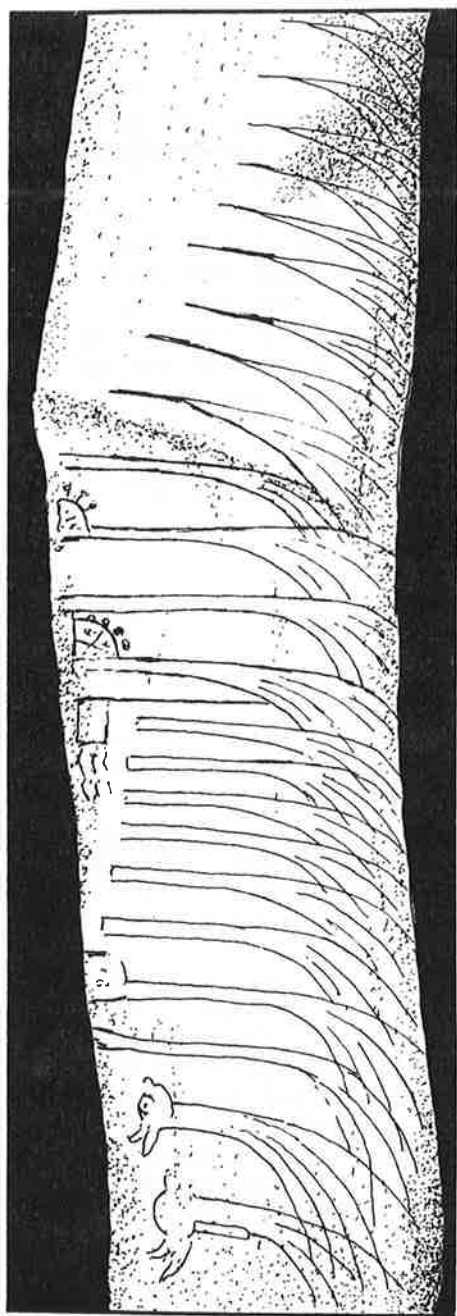
Monuments. The drawings are undateable except by reference to ships on 14th-15th century gravestones; most of those ships have stern-hung rudders, as the Kilchattan ships do not. There are many ships in the drawings, overlapping each other, some beached, some at anchor, one with an awning rigged over a lowered yard and a prick-eared figurehead of wolf or dog. Is it possible, I ask myself, that the luing people gathered to gaze at the flock of ships below, to pick out those they knew and to jot down the salient features of the unknown among them for later discussion and identification? Was Alexander II a passenger in that Seawolf or Warhound? We cannot tell - but one may be allowed to wonder.

#### Appendix:- Kilchattan Considered.

The Editor has kindly enabled me to visit Kilchattan Church to see the graffiti, and has produced Figs. 1-4 from drawings made on the spot (about 1/5th original size). He has also kindly made a sketch based on a drawing in Prof. Gwyn Jones's History of the Vikings (Oxford 1968) and on photographs in Bryggen i Bergen (Dr. A.E. Herteig's official account of the excavations of the old quays of Bergen), and Magnus Magnusson's Hammer of the North. The sketch is 1½ times the size of the original.

The Kilchattan graffiti are scratched on building-stones in the outside walls, mainly on slates and mud-stones. There are other markings, ranging from crosses to recent names. I must emphasise that there can be no proven connection with Alexander's fleet; however, the ships are of early type. Fig. 1 shows the largest, with a cable or gangplank laid out ahead; both bow and stern-post carry triangular attachments, for which see Fig. 5 and comment below. The sail may show brailing-lines, or the Campbell arms may have been added later to an invitingly empty rectangle. The hull encloses a small cross, perhaps older. Fig. 2 shows several ships and masts; the clearest has the 'Dog' figurehead. Its yard rests on crutches to support an awning, standard usage in Norse ships. Fig. 3 is an 'artist's impression' of a group of ships (this stone is not in the RCAMS volume). Fig. 4 has many ships, one with its yard crossed and sail furled; also two small crosses and one elaborated cross with tri-





Graffito on wood, Bergen (part only; total length c. 7"). First half of 13th. Cent.

angular terminals, etc.

By sheer chance, while working on this paper, I was reminded of a Norwegian wood-carving. This is a 7-inch length of knotty pine, found during excavations at Bergen and dated to between 1183 (reconstruction of the quay) and 1248 (severe fire damage). On one side are scratched a large ship and three prows, with a Runic inscription: 'Here sails the gallant seafarer'. On the other, part of which is shown in Fig. 5, is an array of 48 prows which gives a vivid impression of a large fleet. Two figureheads, (very like Fig. 2) and several triangular 'flags' are shown; in fact these are metal wind-vanes, sometimes also affixed to the mast-head or, as in Fig. 1, to both bow and stern. They were often made of gilded bronze; one such survived as the weathercock on a Norwegian country church's spire. They had a practical use, signalling the slightest shift of wind to the

helmsman; the Sagas speak of them 'waving like flames' over a fleet.

This Norwegian carving suggests a firm date for the Kilchattan carvings in the first half of the 13th century. There was a Norwegian fleet in western waters in 1229-30, but its movements are known and do not leave much scope for a call at Luing; the great Norse fleet of 1263 had many bigger ships and at least one high-sided English merchantman, commandeered as a storeship, and its course is well charted by King Haakon's Saga and the Manx Chronicle; it probably made a direct passage from Oban Bay to Islay. So perhaps we really are seeing an eyewitness record of a Scots fleet as it appeared in 1249.

Of one thing I am quite certain. I am going to spend a lot of time peering at the building-stones of ruined churches from now on.

...oooOooo...

#### WATCHMAN STONE: A POSTSCRIPT

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In a letter to the Editor, referring to the Watchman Stone paper in Kist 20 (p.14), Mr Duncan-Jones writes:- "Effigies is definitely not a plural but simply the Latin singular. The Latin word was adopted into English about 1600 (like species, series, congeries, which all entered the language about that time) and it was only gradually that its final letter was dropped, making effegie or effigy. The original Latin spelling continued in poetic or old-fashioned usage well into the 18th century, as the Watchman stone testifies."

We are grateful to Mr Duncan-Jones for clearing away all thoughts of a mason's mistake in the passage on the stone "This effigies which you sie heir ....". It was noted in the original article that Miss Campbell of Kilberry considered the apparent plural to have been common usage at that time, but the underlying reason had not occurred to us. On visiting the site again, early in 1981, we were surprised and delighted to find that the trough below the stone had been carefully cleaned out. The author of this good deed remains anonymous, but we are quite willing to allow it to be thought that the inspiration came from a reading of Kist 20! Editor.

## ADDITIONS to THE FLORA OF KINTYRE

Archie Kenneth

Foreword. Since the publication of Flora of Kintyre, a certain amount of botanical investigation has taken place, resulting in the discovery of several plants newly recorded for v.c.101 (Kintyre, Knapdale and adjacent islands), and further localities for other species. I have thought it desirable to record such additions periodically in Kist. The format is that adopted in the Flora, but apparent new vice-county records are indicated by \*. The 10 Km square in which the plants occur is indicated in curtailed form, i.e. 16/8-7- would be 87. When not otherwise indicated the records are those of A.G.Kenneth.

The most significant discovery included in this list is undoubtedly Dr Bignal's colony of Cirsium dissectum. How such a conspicuous and distinct plant remained undetected in its two Knapdale habitats until so recently is eloquent testimony to the lack of botanical investigation in the area.

Another record of more than usual interest is Hypericum x desetangsii nm. carinthiacum; for comment see text.

My thanks are due to E. Bignal for assistance in the preparation of this list, and to all those who contributed records or identified material.

.....

### BRYOPHYTES: HEPATICA

.....

Nardia compressa. On rock in stream, Torinturk. 76

Porella laevigata. Limestone outcrop nr. Barnagad,  
Achnamara. 78

Drepanolejeunea hamatifolia. Shore cliff between Torrisdale and Saddell, growing in Grimmia maritima. 73

Jubula hutchinsiae. Ravine south of Claonaig. det. P.Pitkin: also ravine, Saddell - Sunadale. 73,83,85

### MUSCI

\*Dicranoweisia crispula. Stones in grassland, Balliewilline Hill nr. Campbeltown. det. A.J.Smith. 72

Fissidens herzogii. The locality given for this at ardnoe Point is wrong. It occurs near Stronefield.  
det. M.Corley, as form. 77

Fissidens rufulus. The material on which this record is based has been reassessed. In consequence the taxon is not known to occur in v.c.101 and the entry should be deleted.

Fissidens taxifolius subsp. pallidicaulis. Ravine near Castle Sween. conf. E.C.Wallace. 77

Dryptodon (Grimmia) patens. The Dunans plant recorded as ?Grimmia sp. is referred to this. Also Cairnbaan ravine, both det. A.J.Smith. 79,88/89

\*Orthodontium lineare. Base of mature larch, also rotten twigs, Stronachullin, det. E.Watson: coastal woodland south of Claonaig. det P.Pitkin. 85,87

Grimmia trichophylla var. stirtonii. Exposed rock, Ballygroggan. det. A.J.Smith. 61

\*Bryum dunense. Dunes, Kilmory Knap. M.Corley. 67

\*Bryum gemmiferum. Gateway near Mill Loch, Gigha.  
J.Appleyard.1972 65

Bryum pseudotriquetrum var. bimum. Forestry road, Loch Choille-Bharr. M.Corley.

Neckera crispa. Limestone outcrop nr. Barnagad, Achnamara.  
78

Anomodon viticulosus. Limestone outcrop nr. Barnagad,  
Achnamara. 78

Drepanocladus sendtneri. Recorded in error; erase from  
Flora.

\*Amblystegium (Hygroamblystegium) tenax. On stones, margin of Loch Choille-Bharr. 79

Calliargon (Acrocladium) stamineum. Lochan near Loch Choille-Bharr. 78,79

\*Rhynchostegiella teesdalei. Balnabraid Glen. E.Signal 71

#### PTERIDOPHYTA.

Pilularia globulifera. Skipness. Col. Revd.Jas.Kerr, Aug. 1850 ex Hb. Dr Lauder Lindsay, comm. A.McG. Stirling, who reports that the specimen in Hb. R.B.G.

Edinburgh is correctly named.

ANGIOSPERMAE: DICOTYLEDONES.

.....  
Cardamine amara. Swampy ground, Crinan Canal, nr. Craighlass. 88

Arabis hirsuta. Largiebaan ravine. C.Ferreira. 61

\*Hypericum x desetangsii nm. carinthiacum (H. maculatum subsp. maculatum x H. perforatum). Skipness, Somerville, 31-7-1899. In Hb. British Museum, det. N.K.B. Robson 1979. This constitutes a new British record, although the hybrid H. x desetangsii nm desetangsii (H. maculatum subsp. obtusiusculum x H. perforatum) is well-known as a British plant. This should be sought at Skipness - no records of H. maculatum of either subspecies or of H. perforatum have been recently made in that area.

\*Rubus septentrionalis. nr. Barnluasgan. 79

\*Rubus furvicolor. Cairnbaan. 89

\*Rubus errabundus. nr. Carse; Inverlussa, Achnamara. 76, 78

Rubus sp. (see Flora p.20). This interesting plant is more closely allied to R. conjugens than to R. latifolius. It has a more extended range than indicated and is known to occur in 60-64, 71. It is common over much of this area and tends to be coastal.

Rubus sp.cf. macrophyllus. An interesting and distinctive plant with large ternate lvs., pink flowers, densely pilose stems and rachis. This is known to occur from nr. Crinan to east of Bellanoch; localities on the Moss and at the Lodge, Poltalloch; also nr. Kilmartin. 79, 89. A good fruiter with very large sweet insipid fruits lacking the usual bramble tang; the plant is a rampant grower with exceptionally stout stems.

All Rubus determinations, E.S.Eedes.

Sherardia arvensis. Kilberry Bay. Abundant in sandy turf. 76

Cirsium dissectum. Taynish Point. Dr E.Signal. 78  
The second locality known on the Scottish mainland.

Taraxacum lainzii. Forestry road, Gariob. det. A.J.  
Richards. 78

Taraxacum inane. nr. Obmore. det. A.J.Richards. 78

\*Taraxacum praeradians. nr. Obmore. det. A.J.Richards. 78

#### MONOCOTYLEDONES

Listera cordata. Under heather, hill west of Carse. 76

Carex acutiformis. Swampy ground, Crinan Canal, nr.  
Craiglass; moist meadow south of Bellanoch. 79,88

Carex paniculata. Swampy ground, Crinan Canal south of  
Craiglass. 88

Carex diandra. Basin mire with Phragmites, Keills pen-  
insula north of Cosandrochaid. E.Bignal 78.  
det. A.Silverside.

Agrostis vinealis. (A. canina sub.sp. montana). Fairy  
Isles. E.Bignal. 78. det. A.Silverside.

Agrostis stolonifera var. palustris. Swampy ground,  
Crinan Canal south of Craiglass. 88

....oooOooo....

#### THROUGH THE CRINAN CANAL WITH HORSE AND TRACKER

Dr Campbell's paper in Kist 21 about the Crinan Canal in earlier times reminded one of our members that she had some notes on the same subject, written many years ago by her late father, and we have been accorded the favour of selecting from them anything which might interest readers. No precise date is given, but the conditions described seem to indicate the early years of this century, before yacht engines became common. Editor.

"Entrance or exit from the sea-lock at Ardrishaig was governed by the state of the tide and there was a very real danger of running aground in the process. A runner would row out if you were waiting for the right conditions and unless you were too short of money to enable you to do so, you would engage him to help you through and also to arrange for a horse and tracker to be ready to get on with

the business of towing in due course. On the outward journey we could usually afford this; it was when we were returning that we were liable to find it necessary to tow the boat through ourselves - a tedious and exhausting business.

You got into the sea-lock by towing with the dinghy or by paddling if your size allowed it. Once through the lock you were man-handled into the Basin and perhaps on through to Lock 4, according to the time of day, etc. You were safe enough at the wharf at Lock 4 between 2 pm and noon next day; at other times it was reserved for the Linnet, which lay at Crinan overnight, ready to bring passengers back to Ardrishaig.

When the time came for your tow to start, your longest warp was made fast 8 or 10 feet up your mast, and hitched on to the chain trace behind the horse, and off you went. There were many hazards ahead - bushes beside the tow-path which got entangled with the rope, causing the boat to swing in to the bank. Unless this movement was quickly and judiciously checked the result was that the horse was in danger of being jerked into the canal. Another cause for worry, if you had a following wind and the boat had too much way on her, was that she could get ahead of the horse on approaching the gates obstructing the tow-path during the operation of opening and closing them. If the tow-line had to be disconnected, because of entanglement or for some other reason, and the tracker failed to appreciate the danger, the horse, feeling himself freed, was liable to conclude that his job was done and to set off homewards at a near-gallop, pursued by the yelling tracker.

In some places the canal widened greatly before the locks, and here there was a possibility that the tow-rope was insufficiently long, and this called for another disconnection. Circumspection was required in judging the right moment for casting off when approaching a lock; too early and the yacht lost way and drifted back - too late and your bowsprit was likely to be damaged when it collided with the lead-in wall or the top gate.

At Dunardry, where the locks occur in quick succession, the line was man-handled while the horse and his tracker had a rest at the bottom of the hill. There was a short piece of fencing here to which the horse was tethered.

Yet another anxiety occurred when opposing traffic was

met. If it were the Linnet - which could overtake you as well as appear in front of you - you headed for the bank and stayed there until she passed. The Cairnbaan and Dunardry locks were always kept in readiness when her time of arrival drew near, and this could cause great delay to other traffic, which could not proceed. Puffers were a great worry too, for they looked enormous when met head-on, particularly at the narrow parts between Bellanoch and Crinan, where in places it was impossible to get past them.

So far as ordinary traffic was concerned, the rule was that the east-going boat gave way by casting off the tow, and many a time re-connection could only be made by using the dinghy to take the rope back to the horse.

On entering a lock, in addition to seeing that you carried the right amount of way, much depended on the dexterity of the crew when it came to throwing up the warps - an ineffectual attempt, with the resultant failure to make fast, could cause trouble if there were a following wind or if the speed of entry had not been well judged.

The bridges too were a problem; the keepers seemed often to be somewhat handicapped when it came to hearing whistles or fog-horns, and in particular the little old woman who had charge of Miller's Bridge at Lochgilphead; she took a delight in remaining invisible until the very last moment which would allow her to open the bridge with only seconds to spare. We sometimes thought she enjoyed seeing the discomfiture of those whose nerve failed them and caused them to take to the bank in order to avoid what seemed to be certain collision with the bridge.

When we were forced by circumstances to dispense with a horse and tracker, the nine-mile tow seemed unending. If exhaustion tempted you to take a breather you paid for it in the extra effort needed to get way on the boat again. Help could sometimes be got from a hoisted foresail, but was not to be counted upon. Once engines became fairly common in yachts the Canal authorities forbade sailing, but this ordinance was not always observed.

Whether or not you had done the towing yourselves, the business of getting from Ardrishaig to Crinan or vice-versa was so strenuous that few of us felt equal, having just done it, to going out through the sea-lock without a night's rest in either basin."

.....



THE PALEOLITHIC AND MESOLITHIC OCCUPATION  
OF THE ISLE OF JURA

John Mercer

(Abridged by the Editor from a paper read at the 1976  
Mesolithic Conference in London)

Several recent papers have shown that W.Scotland was suitable for human habitation from 11000 or 10500 BC.

Early in Zone I (12380 - 10000 BC) there was a rapid rise in temperature, from less than 10°C as a July average to almost 17°C, though winters may have remained cold. This warmth appears to continue into Zone II (10000 - 8800 BC) without a break.

Clearly, then, Jura could have been occupied by man between 11000/10500 and 8800 BC, at least in the summers and, perhaps with Eskimo-like adaptation, possibly in the winters too. The Zone III (8800 - 8300 BC) comparative cold then intervened before the Post-Glacial amelioration.

All known Jura Mesolithic sites were made on their current shorelines. Thus, the human occupation proposed for the warm period of 2000 years would have been for the most of the time on the beaches of a rising sea-level. Shore-line camps of the period will thus have been washed away and so only rolled stone tools will now be found, in the current versions of the Zone II beach deposits. N.Jura has yielded several artefacts distinctive enough to be attributable to Zone II.

It is generally accepted that in Zone IV (8300 - 7600 BC) world sea-level stood at least 120 feet below that of the present. However the S.Hebrides would then still have been isostatically depressed and so, here again, the exact land-sea relationship is not known. Land recovery of only 65 feet would allow passage between Jura and Islay, and, probably, between Islay and Colonsay. The recovery of 120 feet would merge the S.Hebrides into a single landmass.

The main archaeological sites all lie upon the east shore of N.Jura, the nearest landing-place to the mainland. This suggests they were the camping grounds of migrating hunters.

Sea-level rose rapidly during Zones V (7600 - 7000 BC) and VI (7000 - 5500 BC). N.Jura was certainly occupied again from at least about 7000 BC. The final camps of

the N.Jura Mesolithic were clearly made on the rising beaches. The lowest site located is now about 20 feet above present sea-level and probably dates from around 3000 BC.

The island's most favoured habitat is the Lussa Valley; it provides an easy landing-place and camping ground, a salmon river and the main N.Jura pass through the interior to the west coast. Other sites occur farther north along the coast, at Lealt and Carn, all yielding immense numbers of microliths and other flint and quartz artefacts. Organic material survives only very rarely at the open-air sites, due to the acidity of the overlying peat.

Another site, at Glenpatrick, is the first on the west coast of the island to have been excavated. It stands on an extinct cliff at 59 feet OD. The hunters had camped on the shore of a sunken lagoon or waterhole.

There is an absence of Mesolithic axes on Jura, with only a few quartz tools at Lussa River sharpened by a cross-going blow.

So far only the excavation of the King's Cave, opposite the Glenpatrick Mesolithic site, has produced an early bone tool; this was a large point, just possibly once barbed. There is hope that Carn Cave holds late Mesolithic organic tools.

The arrival date on Jura of the Neolithic is unknown, since unquestionably Neolithic charcoal is not found on the Mesolithic sites; the excavation of a Neolithic dwelling in S.Jura is now almost completed and should provide C14 dates. A period of Neolithic activity and perhaps of interaction with the Mesolithic people is shown by various sites' leaf-shaped and transverse arrowheads and by the chips off a polished axe of Antrim porcellanite. The island Mesolithic is likely to have ended about 3000 BC, about a millennium after the arrival of the Neolithic in Scotland.

Only a few notes can be offered on early life on Jura, since so much has been lost with the disintegration of the organic relics. The many pollen analyses have shown that late in Zone VI (7000 - 5500 BC) Jura was well wooded with birch and hazel, with some pine and a little oak and elm; the charcoal used at Lussa Wood I to give the C14 dates in the seventh millennium BC was associated with other charcoal which was identified as hawthorn and maple (the latter is otherwise not known from Britain before the Neolithic).

The charcoal at Glenbatrick (Phase IB) was all oak (*Quercus robur*). From the opening of Zone VIIA (5500 - 3000 BC) the hazel was replaced by the alder, with birch and alder dominant to the end of this phase; there was more oak and elm than pine. At the upper Lussa River site, the charcoal associated with that which gave the C14 dates of around 3000 BC was identified as oak, elm, ash, hazel, a willow, blackthorn and probably birch.

The seeds recovered give evidence both on the vegetation and on food habits. Most sites have yielded hazel-nut shells. The upper Lussa River site produced acorn husks, the seeds of a bramble, the common chickweed and the barren strawberry (now absent from Jura) and just possibly a wild pear pip. There is no wild pear in Scotland now but a species does just survive near Plymouth - and at least the warmer Zone VIIA could have seen it in the Hebrides, as it certainly did at Tévéc (Morbihan).

All known camps are on the coast. There is no evidence for fishing. The meat supply probably depended not only upon deer but also on boar, recorded for Jura in the Middle Ages. The other large mammals of Scotland and Ireland, now extinct, may also have reached the S. Hebrides. The excavations yielded a few fragments of limpet and oyster shell.

The Mesolithic occupation left many pieces of red ochre, probably imported from one of the adjacent volcanic regions. The flint too was from outside; the main sources would have been Antrim, E. Scotland and S. Mull. The quartz crystal and milky quartz were both local and the accelerating use of the latter may be an index of increasing settlement on Jura. Various pitchstones were also knapped, primarily a dark green type resembling that of Arran. The local quartzite was shaped into heavy tools. One other possession the first islanders must have had, though there are no traces left, was the boat.

Although remote and usually including rain and ferocious insects amongst the working hazards, the region is in fact archaeologically favoured. As do other glaciated and indented coasts - usually already well-exploited by archaeologists - the area offers the changing land-sea relationships as a working aid. The overlying peat holds pollen. These factors help to overcome a customary disadvantage of British Mesolithic sites, that they usually

contain only a single occupation level. However, it is a disadvantage that organic finds are usually made only in the middens and the caves, though the latter are numerous in W.Scotland and were probably all occupiable during the late Mesolithic. The region's very remoteness means freedom from disturbance both in the past and during the excavation.

Perhaps the best approach would be to form a publicly-supported group with a base in the Hebrides. It could work first on the three largest of the Inner Hebrides: Islay, Mull and Skye. A three-fold preparatory campaign would be needed in each:

- 1) The land-sea relationships would be established and dated.
- 2) The vegetation sequence, land clearance and associated habitat evolution would be worked out and dated.
- 3) A series of sites potentially capable of being placed in a sequence would be located on each island.

Each aspect means a good deal of work, not least the shoreline evolution. The inconspicuous washing limit of the last high sea can usually only be found by cutting a trench right up the hillside. Coastal features in this region have been mapped by geographers or used by archaeologists without the backing of a thorough investigation of the sequence of deposits. Also, very accurate height measurement is essential, geared to Ordnance Datum (not always easy to contrive in remote islands).

The second phase of the work - begun once the background has been understood - would be to excavate the sites and, one hopes, fit all the different elements together to produce a broad picture of Mesolithic life in the Inner Hebrides. Remote islands may well have the advantage of giving clear-cut results, the outcome of their geographical restrictiveness on movement.

From the inner islands one would transfer both to the seemingly less-occupied outer islands and to the adjacent mainland coast. It would be important to understand each small area thoroughly first and then to move only a small distance away, so as to avoid losing contact with identified industries, shorelines and soil profiles, easy to do in an area of steeply-tilted isostasy. Approached systematically, the Inner Hebrides have unique possibilities for the study of the Mesolithic in Britain.

## WHEATEARS HOVERING

A.R.Duncan-Jones

On 17 June 1980 my wife and I were walking along the road between Barrananaoill and Turnalt when we noticed a pair of small birds hovering motionless in the air, exactly in the manner of kestrels, though with a much quicker and more delicate wingbeat. They proved to be Wheatears. They were at the top of a grassy slope rising 100-150 feet above the level of the road, and were poised 20-30 feet above its summit. At intervals of a minute or two one of the birds would dive into the grass, evidently after insects, and immediately rise up again to its hovering position. At intervals of five or ten minutes either the male or the female flew down 50 yards to feed one of three young birds which were perched on fence posts or on the dyke which presumably contained their nest, and then returned to its hovering position above the top of the slope. Only one of the young was fed on each occasion. We watched the birds from noon to 1.30 p.m., mostly from our car, which was 80 yards from the slope. Occasionally they disappeared from our view over the brow of the slope, but always came back. The morning had been wet, but there was broken sunshine after noon with a fresh breeze.

We had never seen such behaviour by wheatears before, and were interested to find how seldom it seems to have been recorded. The Handbook of British Birds (1943-4 ed.) does not mention it. Hollom (Popular Handbook of British Birds 4th ed. 1968) says "it occasionally hovers". Bannerman (Birds of the British Isles vol.III) once saw a wheatear hover briefly over the bonnet of his car in Glencoe; and he quotes fully an observation by Seton Gordon in Skye in 1942 of a single wheatear behaving in all respects like those we watched, except that it was not feeding young. But that is all. On the other hand, when we sent a description to Scottish Birds, the Editor replied "I have seen it happen several times, I think .... so it cannot be very unusual". So perhaps several other readers of Kist have seen it too.

.....  
Our Committee member, Mr Colin Fergusson, tells us that he has watched this phenomenon on two occasions. Editor.

EXTRACTS from ANNUAL REPORTS  
of the Medical Officer of Health for Argyll

By courtesy of Dr Ruth Cammock

1892. On Islay.

In one house I found a pig in a dirty sty under a bedroom, cattle kept in a sleeping apartment in the same house, and the manure allowed to accumulate in a large heap. In another house 4 or 5 cattle were stalled in the kitchen. One woman had a horse and a cow stalled in the room, and a calf in the kitchen.

1893. Tiree.

One house was without any thatch, the rafters were simply covered with sods; one end had fallen down and was covered with canvas .... there was no bedstead, nor almost any furniture; the interior was ruinous. I took note of this house, in order to certify it as unfit for human habitation. Nature, however, intervened. A gale blew before I left the Island and accomplished a work which, otherwise, might have been an unpleasant duty .... The occupants consisted of a woman and two young children.

The dwelling houses in Tiree are of different construction from that of any other part of the County or, indeed, of anywhere else so far as is known to me. The reason for this has been forcibly brought under my notice by the gale of November last which detained me for several days on that Island. The walls of houses in Tiree are about 5 feet thick, and 6 or 7 feet high. The walls consist, as a rule, of a facing of stone masonry on the inside and outside with sand between. As a rule, there are no overhanging eaves. On the contrary, the roof rests on the inner third or so of the wall. Until recently, the roof was invariably thatched, now, the majority are still thatched, a number are provided with felt roofs, some with corrugated iron, and a few are slated. The windows consist of tunnels, with a glass frame at about the inner end, while the door is met at the end of the passage through the thick wall which is called the doorway. On the top of the wall, between the roof and the outer edge, in some instances flowers or mint is planted and appear to grow well. These houses in Tiree, as a rule, are cleanly and well kept. Dr Buchanan informed me that in wet

weather, the walls in many cases are damp. This is only what might be expected as the roof-water runs to the top of the wall, and percolates through the middle stratum of sand. The soil being sandy and porous, and the roof-water pure, the water drains more easily, and neither the dampness nor the resultant injury is so marked as might otherwise be the case. New fangled notions have, however, penetrated even into this Island. In houses recently built or improved, all stages of development, from the extreme thick wall to the jerry built house with overhanging eaves, are to be found. One of those who ventured to adopt the latter, without making sufficient provision for the force of the wind as it sweeps over this unsheltered Island found, during a gale last year, his roof blown on to that of his neighbour's. Built in the orthodox style, a Tíree dwelling will stand a hurricane without the least injury. The whistle of the wind is no more heard within than in the interior of Ben Cruachan. As one may stand a little back from the edge of a precipice during the strongest gale that blows against it, almost in peaceful calm, so the roof of a Tíree dwelling is protected from the violence of the storm. The wind strikes against the walls, and shoots over the roof without scarcely touching it.

[The Editor is surprised that the roof of a Tíree house should have been thought unusual. In various parts of the country he has often remarked on the fact that the roofs of Black Houses and even some of later construction, rested on the top of the wall and did not overhang it. The advantages of this arrangement seem very obvious.]

#### 1899. Kintyre.

In the parish of Killeen and Kilkenzie, "one house, nicknamed 'The Ark', I suppose from the fact that three people, a cow, a pig, and a lot of hens all lived together in one apartment, and which was in danger of the roof falling in from the bulging of the walls, was repaired in April on condition that the cow, pig, etc., would be kept in the small byre adjoining the house."

[We are informed that this establishment was situated off the side-road between Kilchenzie and Tangy, near Drumalea. Its nickname is still known to local residents. Editor]

THE COVER: THE SPRINGHEAD, BEALACH AN FHUARAIN, INVERARAY

F.S.Mackenna

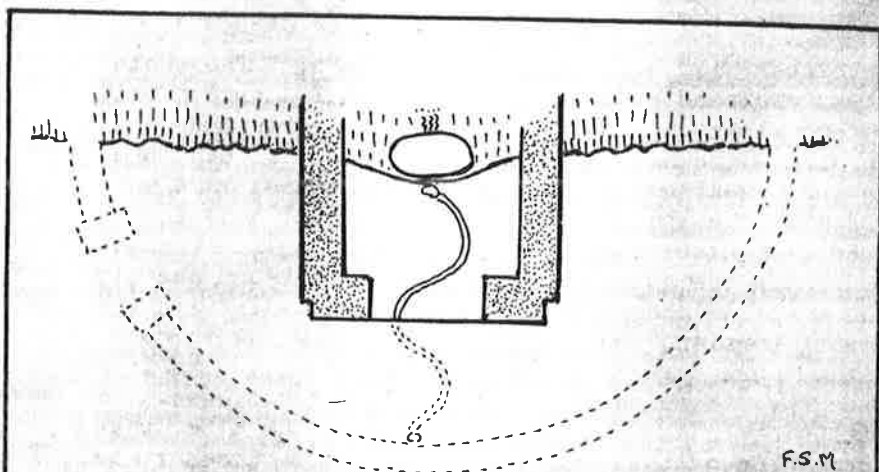
One of the lesser-visited architectural features of the ducal policies at Inveraray is the Springhead known as Bealach an Fhuarain, sited on the slope of Creag Dubh behind the town (NN088085). Charming and surprising though it be, it now presents an appearance which conveys a much reduced idea of its original effect.

The remaining building, as seen on our cover, is an engaging little classical structure, very solidly and skilfully realised in the chlorite schist which was used for the Castle. The roof is slabbed and the rear of the building, where it finally merges with the steep hillside, has a completely functionless but delightful little curve, a feature only to be seen if one scrambles up the slope to reach it. The actual building has only one area of decoration, on the voussoirs, which, excluding the keystone, have deeply-cut vermiculations both on the outer face and on the arched surface. There is a single ball-finial at the apex of the roof.

The interior is a source of fresh surprise. The floor is flagged and the side walls meet overhead in an arch. The back 'wall' is formed of the natural rock, sloping back as it rises and meets the roof. Half-way down, in the centre, is a narrow cleft from which issues a steady stream of water. This falls down the rock face to enter a shallow oval rock-cut basin, 6 feet by 3 feet, formed in the front by a foot-high vertical wall of natural rock. At the bottom of this basin, towards the centre-front, is a now-blocked outlet, in which the remains of a lead pipe can be seen and felt. The overflow is arranged so that it leaves the basin by an indentation in the front wall, falling into a very shallow flat-bottomed oval depression 18" x 15" cut in the floor. From this a sinuous channel  $2\frac{1}{2}$ " wide and rather less in depth, crosses the flagged floor to its present forward limit, but the water now escapes down a small opening a little short of the channel's termination.

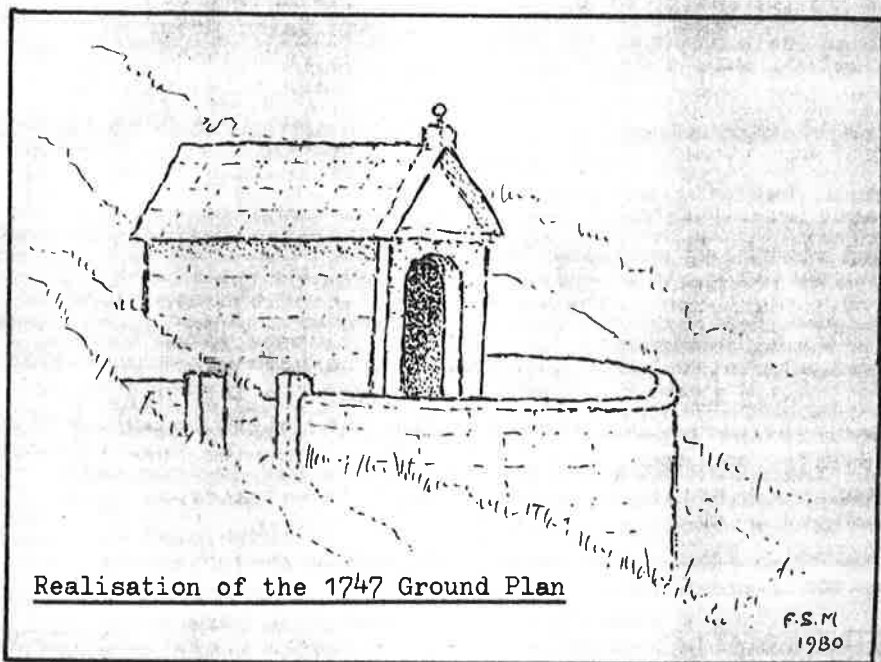
So much for the present appearance of the building. Its original formation can be gauged from a plan attributed to William Adam, dating from about 1747. Reference to





### Plan of the Springhead

Based on the design attributed to Wm. Adam, c. 1747  
(Solid outline = existing parts; missing parts dotted)



### Realisation of the 1747 Ground Plan

the sketches will help to explain matters. The whole site was enclosed by a semi-circular wall, merging into the steep slope at either end, with an entrance on the south side. The sinuous overflow channel is seen to continue in lessening curves until it terminates in a vent-hole beside the wall. The whole area must have been floored with slabs and on the same level as the present floor inside the house. This is proved beyond question by the overflow channel, which exactly fits in with the surviving portion, and which, being so shallow in construction must have lain horizontally along the whole of its length, otherwise it could not have functioned.

It is obvious, from an inspection of the site, that the provision of this horizontal paved area necessitated a wall of considerable height at the front, on account of the slope of the hill; an opinion supported by the lateral position of the entrance, where the wall would be at its lowest and there would probably be no need of steps.

Another supporting feature for there having been this forecourt lies in the now-unfinished-looking stonework right across the front of the base of the house, below the level of the floor. But the final conclusive proof of its onetime existence is found in Daniel Paterson's plan for the New Town (1756) which clearly shows this feature.

There is no record of the removal of the wall and paving, but it seems likely that the structure came to be regarded as a convenient quarry for well-dressed, ready-to-hand, building material.

It remains to take note of the iron gates inside the arched entrance, reaching from floor to roof. We are told by Mr Mackechnie, the noted historian of the district, that they were made in 1803 by Robert Napier (1760-1845) who was appointed Smith to Argyll. The need arose when "idle persons and boys were cutting away the lead and removing the iron plate through which the water was introduced into the pipe ..." (vide. post.). Napier came to the rescue: "Gentlemen, I hereby offer to put an iron gate on Bealach an Fhuarain with hinges ... a strong iron lock ... with six keys ... the whole to be finished plain of beat iron ... and to be painted invisible green ... the whole shall not exceed £14.10s." The gates are no longer "invisible green", but they are still remarkably

solid, and indeed if a little attention were paid to one of the lower hinges they would require only the addition of a modern padlock in order to render the interior safe from intruders. The "invisible green" would seem to be an early recognition of the merits of the device we now know as camouflage.

From being merely an ornamental conceit, the house by 1774 gave shelter to the water supply to the New Town, conducted by wooden pipes to a lead tank near the school and thence to the Town Well near the present Cross. Mr Mackechnie has part of this old pipe in his collection.

It is not absolutely proved that William Adam was the designer of the Springhead, but the evidence points almost conclusively to this being the case.

Some restoration and landscaping was carried out by Robert Mylne, the architect of the Castle, in 1785.

A degree of confusion exists regarding the Bealach an Fhuarain and the better-known Physic Well, which was situated away to the NNE in the Meadow, near Maltland. The site is still pointed out, in a level field, but the well-head was, for some unrecorded reason, demolished in 1775, only twenty years after its building, and the St Catherine's stone re-used in building two manses in Front Street.

Regarding the present (1980) condition of the Springhead building, apart from the missing portions of the design, as indicated, the interior is undamaged but externally, on the north side, some of the roof slabs have fallen and there is some damage to the angles of the pediment. There are the usual embellishments of squalid scratched initials, but some of them belong to a totally different category, for they were the work of trained stonemasons. Were they, perhaps, carved by the actual builders, as a form of 'mason's mark'?

Close by, to the south, there is an extremely large quarry, which has been worked off and on for upwards of 200 years, many of the town buildings, including the 1820 Gaol, All Saints Church and the Bell Tower, having been constructed from it.

Cordial acknowledgment is made of Mr Mackechnie's generous help with information, by letter and verbally as well as on a visit to the actual site.

.....  
Bealach = pass, defile, gate. Fuarain = well, spring.  
Fhuarain (gen.) looks alarming but is ooaran (oo as in wood)

## TWO (OR THREE) ISLANDS IN LOCH AWE

Ian M. Campbell

General Roy's mid-18th-century map covering Loch Awe shows, near the north end of the loch and only a little south of "Inishchowman", a short line of islands called "Fruich Islands". This line included the island known in the 13th century as Frechelan and now shown on Ordnance maps as Fraoch Eilean, also the present Eilean Beith, and a third island which will be described later in this note.

In 1798 W.H.Watts made watercolour paintings some of which were used to illustrate Dr T.Garnett's Observations on a Tour through the Highlands and part of the Western Isles of Scotland, published in 1800. One of the pictures not used for the book now belongs to me, and it shows a view from the east side of Loch Awe looking westwards up the Pass of Brander. In the centre is a group of three islands, the most northerly of which is Eilean Beith, in the middle is Frechelan with its castle ruins, and just south of Frechelan a third island is shown.

In 1817 this third island was added to the historical, and larger, Frechelan as a result of the loch being lowered by about seven feet. This operation was instructed by the Breadalbane Factor with a view to reducing the periodic flooding that affected low ground near the loch, especially in the area east of Kilchurn Castle. Even within the past twenty years I have seen Frechelan virtually as two islands when the loch was unusually high, and in 1979 I noted on our first visit for the year that the "flotsam was only one foot below the level of the sleepers on which our hut is erected, and accordingly the island at one time since last year must have been two islands with quite a distance between them".

I also have a print of another pre-1817 picture of Frechelan which has, in the foreground, the rocks and trees on the north shore of this third island while, across the water and in the centre, is the historical Frechelan with the south gable of the seventeenth-century tower house looking much as it does today; Ben Lui is discernable in the far distance. This picture appears in Angus Macnaghten's Chiefs of the Clan Macnaghten, and it was to Gillechrist MacNachdan that Alexander III granted "our Castle and island of Frechelan" in the 1267 charter that can still

be seen in the General Register House in Edinburgh.

It would be interesting to know whether this third island had a name before it became attached to the historical Frechelan. Its superficial area would be a little less than half that of Frechelan, and it is in form a ridge with fairly steep sides. On this ridge you find heather growing well, but on the historical Frechelan I cannot remember having seen heather. Could it be that it was called Eilean Fraoich (Island of Heather) up to 1817? The question is raised because there are today some people around Loch Awe who refer to Frechelan as "Eilean Fraoich" although the 1267 charter was of "Frechelan"; subsequent references in title deeds being to "Freeachyllan" or "Fraochyllan", while Roy has "Fruich Islands", and Pennant "Fraoch Elan".

The indefatigable English traveller Pennant wrote in his 1769 Tour in Scotland: "On Fraoch-Elan, the Hesperides of the Highlands, are the ruins of a Castle. The fair Mego longed for the delicious fruit of the isle, guarded by a dreadful serpent: the hero Fraoch goes to gather it, and is destroyed by the monster. This tale is sung in the Erse ballads, and is translated and published in the manner of Fingal". As a footnote to this account, Pennant correctly states "This island was granted by Alexander III in 1267 to Gillcrist M'Nachdan and his heirs for ever, on condition they should entertain the King whenever he passed that way" but, as will be remembered, when the then King of Scotland passed that way in 1308 the McNachdans fought against him in the Battle of the Pass of Brander, and it is therefore not surprising that ownership of the island of Frechelan thereafter passed to a branch of the Campbells, later to be known as Campbells of Inverawe.

Pennant made a further tour of Scotland in 1772, and this time his reference to "Fraoch Elan" was brief: "Pass under Fraoch Elan, a small but lofty island tufted with trees, with the ruins of a fortress appearing above". I think that in 1772 Pennant, while "passing under Fraoch Elan", could only see, above the trees, the 4-storey tower house that had been built in the 17th century at the east end of the original hall-house castle. The hall-house itself was basically only of two storeys with perhaps a garret storey above. The Royal Commission's Argyll, Vol. 3, published in 1980, gives the ground measurements

of Aros hall-house castle in Mull as 25.3m x 12.5m and of Ardtornish hall-house castle on the opposite side of the Sound as 17.2m x 8.8m, while in their Vol.2, Fraoch Eilean hall-house castle is shown with ground measurements of 21.7m x 12.6m. It will be noted that Ardtornish castle was considerably smaller than Frechelán, although the Royal Commission describe it as having been one of the principal residences of the Lords of the Isles, and refer to it as being the castle where "John, 4th Lord of the Isles, met the commissioners of Edward IV in council in 1462 to negotiate the well-known political alliance known as the Treaty of Ardtornish".

### EXTRACTS FROM 'OLD KILBERRY'S' DIARIES

#### Second Series. Pt.6

#### THE GREAT STORM OF 1881

(Miss Campbell says that the storm featured in these extracts was the one which caused the flooding of the Easdale slate-quarries. Kilberry and Mrs Campbell had been in Raasay and were trying to get home. Editor.)

1881. 19th November - Saturday. Nasty day. Raining hard & blowing hard from Southward. Maggie, Alma, Archie & I went on board the yacht and started at 11.15 on our way home. Got to Isle Ornsay at 1.45 & could not go any further as there was a very heavy sea & a gale of wind. Archie & I went ashore for a short time. Wild stormy night but we were in pretty good shelter.

20th - Sunday. Nasty stormy day. Strong gale & showers from Southward. Remained at anchor all day.

21st - Monday. Better weather but blowing very hard still. We left Isle Ornsay about 9.10 a.m. and after some very bad weather & heavy seas between Sleat point & Mull we got to Oban at 3.30 p.m. We had to keep a long way off the point and watch our chance of getting round between the heavy seas which sometimes swept the deck. No damage done. Alma, Maggie & Archie were all sick, especially the last. On arrival at Oban we landed and Alma & Archie went by 4 p.m. train to Edinburgh. Maggie & I went on board again and slept (or tried to sleep) there. The weather was pretty good in the early part of the night but

about 2 a.m. on the

22nd. - Tuesday, it came on to blow a regular hurricane from Southward. The gig got adrift and while they were securing her they did not see that we were dragging our Anchor. Let go another and gave them sixty fathoms of chain each. We dragged right across the bay and at last held fast just north of Great Western Hotel (we were at first off the South quay). There was a tremendous high tide, higher than has ever been known here. A sloop lying alongside of us dragged as we did, then broke her chain & went ashore over the sea wall and lay broadside on on the road. Her crew were saved from the shore. We could not help them except by blowing steam whistle to attract attention. The steamer Elfin sank at the north pier and a great lot of boats were lost (about 40). We were within 40 yards of the road when day broke and remained there in a terrific gale all day till about 3.30 when we hove up the anchors & steamed across to the South side where we were comparatively in shelter. We landed & tried to hire a carriage to take us to Paltalloch but owing to the road being much damaged by the tide & gale along Loch Feochan we could not persuade them to send us in the dark. Slept at Caledonian Hotel. No man can remember such a gale or such a tide and the damage done all over the country is immense. During the worst part of it the wind was about S.S.W.

23rd. - Wednesday. Nasty showery day. Still blowing very hard. We left Oban at 8.30 a.m. & drove to Paltalloch where we arrived about 2.30. I had telegraphed to Ardrishaig to order a carriage to meet us at Cuilfail but the wires were all wrong & so we had to go all the way with the same horses (resting at Cuilfail).

24th. - Saturday. [at Kilberry] ..... A good deal of damage was done by the gale of last Tuesday morning. Thirty-one trees were blown down. Four boats were smashed to bits and six corn stacks wrecked. No one here ever saw such a high tide or felt such a gale. A lot of lime belonging to me was washed away. At Ardrishaig saw J. Pollock (Ronachan) whose yacht (the Mouse, yawl) went ashore at the head of Loch Sween in the gale & lies on the grass near Achnamara.

(It was still there, in a "potato field" in the following July. See Kist 12. Editor).