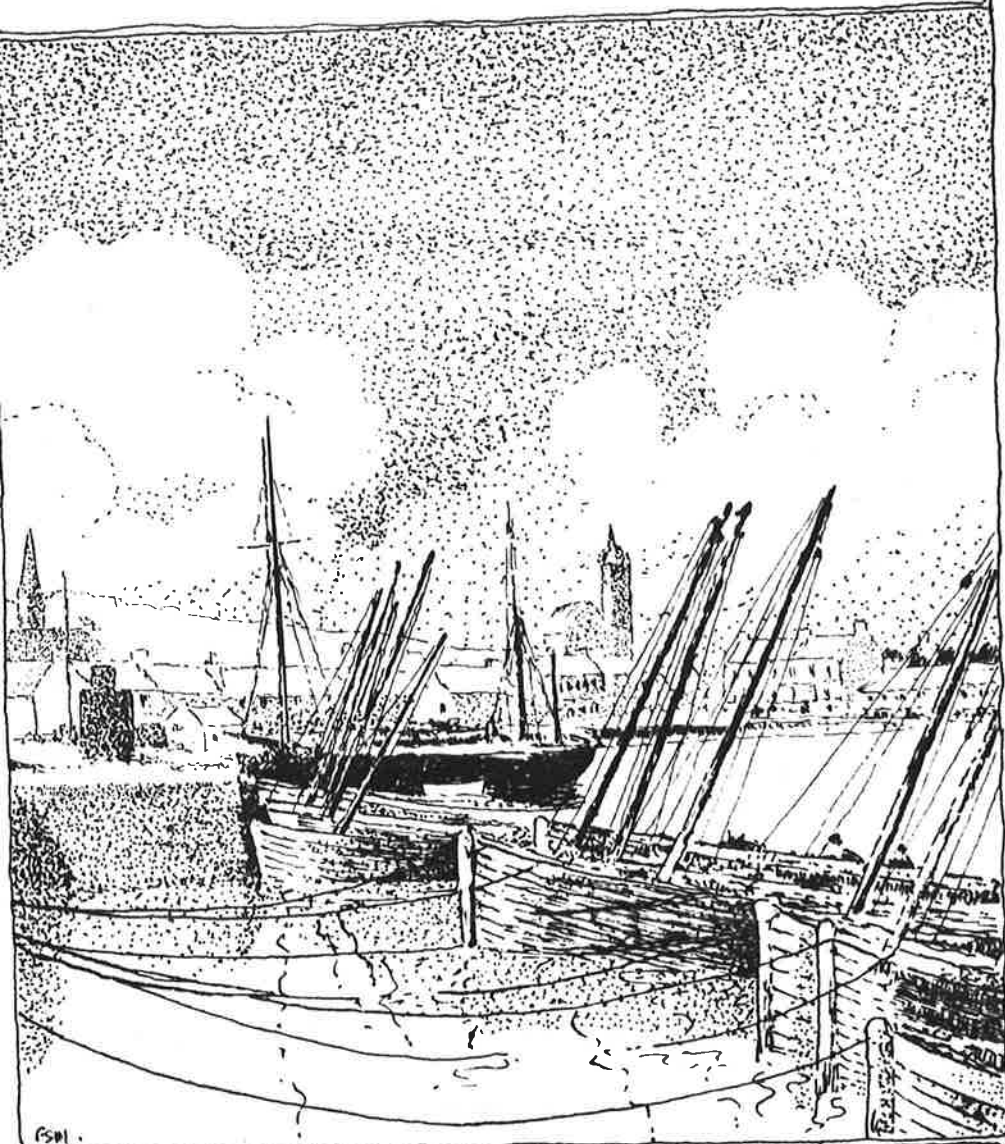


∴ Old Tarbert Skiffs ∴



CSM.

The KIST · 44

T H E K I S T

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SMALL FERRIES of the WEST LOCH.

Hilary Giles.

Before roads were metalled and cars commonplace, the West Loch was not regarded as a barrier between the settlements scattered along its Kintyre and Knapdale shores. Both the Kintyre administrative division of Argyll and the parish of Kilcalmonell straddled the loch; and linking the two shores were small ferries.

These two ferries were vital links in the ancient route from the North to Campbeltown and Islay. The 'road' was little more than a rough track, unsuitable for coaches. At Ormsary a choice could be made, either to continue to follow the coast over Kilberry Head to Ardpatrik, or to cross the high ground of Knapdale by following the glens of the Abhainn Mhor (the Ormsary Water) and the Abhainn na Guile to Avinagillan. This latter route is shown on Gen. Roy's map of c.1750.

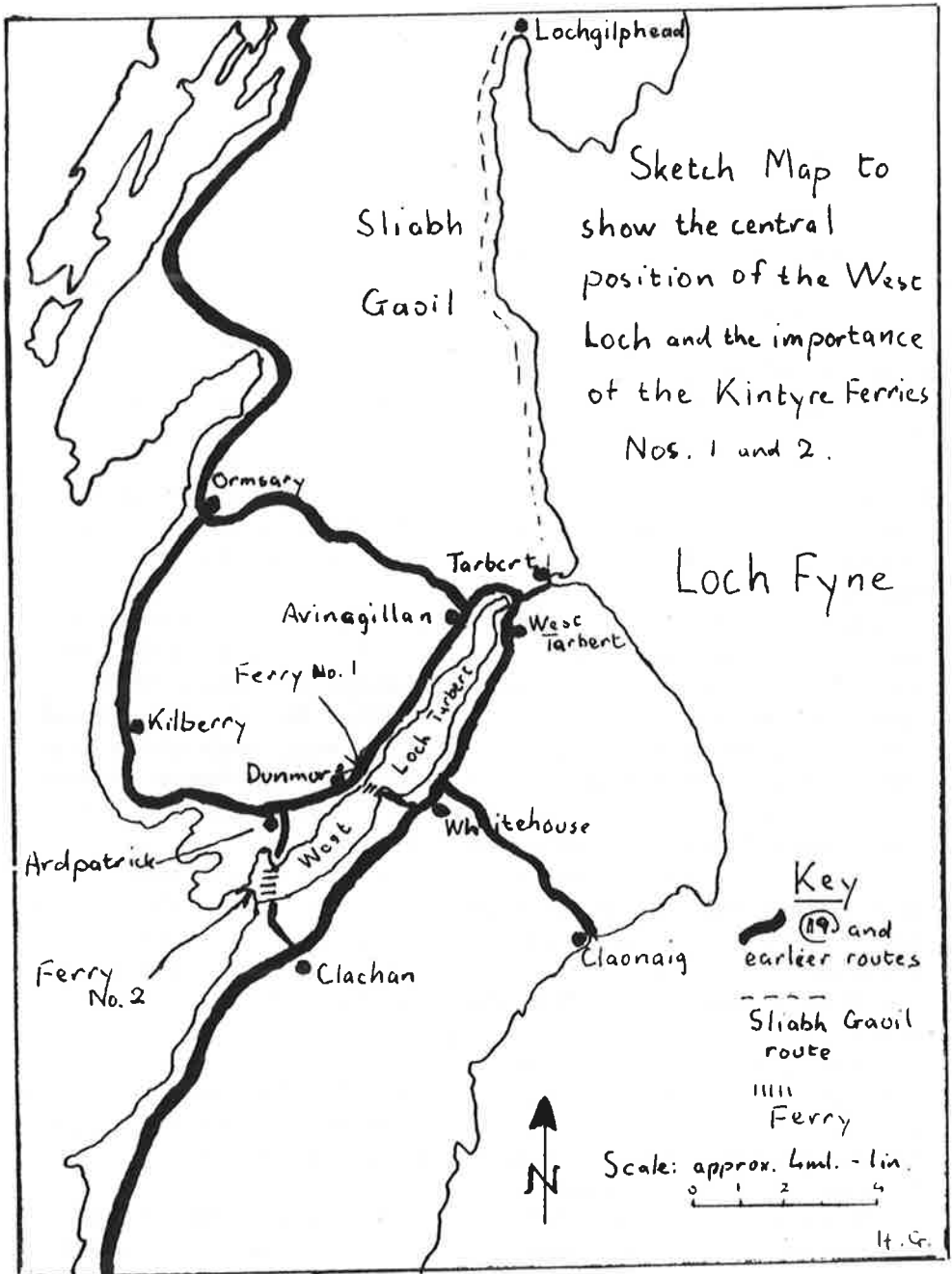
The first route led to the Ardpatrik - Portachoillan ferry. Portachoillan was - and still is - a farm on the shore about a mile from Clachan (Kintyre). Later this ferry became known as the Kintyre Ferry No. 2. The second route led, by turning South along the West Loch shore, to the Dunmore - Whitehouse ferry, which became known as the Kintyre Ferry No. 1. They were both long-established before the Commissioners of Supply in 1775 ordered the Road Trustees of the Kintyre District to start keeping minute-books of the ferries over which they had control, and which they referred to as the No. 1 and No. 2 ferries. Neither the Commissioners of Supply nor the County Council which succeeded the Commissioners in 1890 owned the ferries. The law stated that:

"The right of ferry across public rivers, straits or inlets of the sea belongs to the Crown for the benefit of the public. The right imports the monopoly privilege of carrying travellers, their luggage and, possibly, vehicles."

It goes on to state that:

"A right of private ferry is a monopoly grant by the Sovereign to an individual for the public benefit, implying a duty to provide a service and a right to levy fair and reasonable rates."

Thus after the 1775 Roads Act was passed the ferries



were controlled by the local authority via their Road Trustees, "owned" by the local landowners who had the ferry rights granted to them by the Crown, and operated by ferry-men employed by the landowners. The duty to provide the service of ferrying on demand fell on the ferrymen. Should they fail in their duty, the J.P.'s had powers to "enter-tain prosecution" against them. Successive ferrymen on the West Loch provided their own boats. There do not seem to have been any prosecutions entertained against them.

The job of ferryman was always part-time. The following advertisement appeared in the Argyll Advertiser on 24th February, 1877:

WANTED for Ardpatrik, West Loch Tarbert, Argyll-shire, a Good SHOEMAKER, who would also undertake the charge of a Ferry. A man with a family, able and willing to work, preferred. For particulars, apply to Captain Campbell, R.N., the proprietor, with references as to character and ability.

The successful applicant may have been Alan McLean, who in 1885 was the ferryman who was tenant of a cottage and garden at Achnacoan.

The Kintyre Ferry No.2 was in 1908 operated by the tenant of Portachoillan farm. His landowner, and "owner" of the ferry, was Duncan MacKinnon, of Balinakill and 16, Hyde Park Square, London. The ferryman complained that:

"Time lost to farm work, especially in fine weather, was not adequately compensated for by ferry remuneration". His complaint was just one echo of the dissatisfaction first heard in March, 1804, when a Mr Shawfield had petitioned the Road Trustees for an increase in the ferry dues at Ardpatrik. Clearly the ferryman had but a small share of the dues paid.

The charges on the Ardpatrik ferry show what was carried. As no charges for coaches are recorded we can assume none was ever carried - the boats were too small in any case. Only one horse is mentioned; described as "a very small pony" it seems to have been a regular traveller - could it have been the minister's? Cattle and bulls were 1s. or 2s. per head, calves and pigs 3d. to 6d. and lambs 3d. each. Accompanied bags and parcels were free, unaccompanied ones cost 3d. or 6d., unless they weighed over 1cwt. (Were

scales provided by the Road Trustees?). Then they cost 1s. each, as did barrels. Cost of moving furniture was left to the ferryman's discretion. As for passengers, if only one was carried on the $1\frac{1}{2}$ mile journey, the fare was 1s., but if there were two or more they were charged 6d. each. These dues were fixed by the Road Trustees in 1891.

The smaller Dunmore ferry - its boats had keel lengths of 14ft. and 12ft. in 1908, whereas the Ardpatrik ferry had boats of 16ft. and 14ft. - charged 6d. per person for the $\frac{3}{4}$ mile journey from the slip at Dunmore to the shore at Whitehouse, close to a coal depot still marked on the 1900 large-scale O.S. map. This little ferry was for passengers only, especially those heading for the Islay packet boat.

In 1908 the County Council required all Kintyre ferries to return schedules giving details of installation, boats, dues etc., and these were received completed on 7th April, 1909. They show that the ferries were already beginning to lose their importance as roads improved, cars became more numerous and public bus services were established. Absentee landlords and even the Road Trustees took less and less care of the ferries. The schedule noted that the pier at Portachoilan had not been repaired "since the late Sir William MacKinnon of Balinakill had lengthened and cemented it". (Sir William, b. 1823, d. 1893, was a founder-member of the British East Africa Company. He entertained many famous people at Balinakill, including the explorer Stanley, of Africa fame. He used the pier for his private yacht). The rough stone slips of the Dunmore ferry had had no maintenance at all; the landlord-proprietor was Mr Fraser Campbell of Dunmore, who was resident in America.

So, bit by bit, the ferries fell into disuse. They crossed the West Loch with less and less frequency. Their last journeys are unrecorded, but the writer has met one person who remembers using the Kintyre ferry No. 2 for a parish social event, and who knows it was not always necessary to take a long drive up one side of the water and down the other, just to visit a place only a mile distant across the West Loch.

The Kintyre Ferry No. 3 is still in operation - alas not on demand - from Tayinloan across to the Island of Gigha.

It should be remembered that the Knapdale route was, until the last quarter of the eighteenth century, the only

land link between Kintyre and the rest of Argyll. A map of 1776 marks "a new road now making" between Inverneill and Ashens - the difficult "Sliabh Gaoil" route which Campbell of Stonefield inspired. The A83 follows the route now.

[For articles on Early Roads in Mid-Argyll, see Kists 17, 18, 21 and 23. Ed.]

Some weeks after submitting the foregoing to the Editor, the writer, by great good fortune, met Mr Duncan Thomson, the last ferryman of the Kintyre Ferry No. 2, who supplied her with much additional information. He took over the ferry, he said, in 1931 or 1932, and continued until the need died away "in the fifties or sixties - well after the war". He and his father and four brothers provided the boats - two 22ft. ketches and a rowing boat; the job was still part-time, as the family were lobster fishermen. The fare had become "one shilling, single" for every passenger. It is interesting to note that Mr Thomson found the Kintyre jetty still properly concreted, and he refers to it being at Corran - the name used on Gen. Roy's map. The ferryman's house in Ardpatrik is still shown on the O.S. sheet 62 at NR 752589, and is clearly visible from Portachoillan. When the ferry was required on the Kintyre side, Mr MacMurchie at Portachoillan - or one of his family - waved a white towel. As for the Kintyre Ferry No. 1, it had "long ceased to run" in 1932, in spite of being marked on Bartholomew's $\frac{1}{2}$ in. revised map of 1933. The ferryman's cottage at Dunmore is now called Leven Cottage.

Mr Thomson has three outstanding memories of his days as ferryman. The first is of transferring passengers, luggage and bicycles either on to or off the Islay steamer in mid-loch; this was always a tricky job, as no line could be put aboard the "Pioneer" because of the turbulence from her paddle wheels. The "Pioneer" signalled by raising a flag; the ferry simply waited in mid-loch with passengers who wished to board the steamer. A smart getaway was needed before the paddle wheels started to turn again.

Mr Thomson has vivid memories of "the year of the Big Snow" (?1947). An area from Cretshengan in Knapdale to Ronachan in Kintyre depended on the ferry for all supplies for three weeks or more. Groceries, paraffin, newspapers and the mail were transferred from the steamer in mid-loch

in stormy, freezing conditions, to be met at the jetties by people who had struggled through five or six feet of snow, some leading horses to carry back the means of sustaining life. One 40gallon drum of paraffin was judged too heavy for the ferry, so it was dropped overboard. Mr Thomson waited anxiously for it to re-appear; it took so long that he thought he would have to pay for it, but eventually it surfaced and was towed to Corran, destined for Ronachan.

However dangerous handling all the goods during the Big Snow may have been, Mr Thomson's worst journey was bringing home the big cow his father had bought for £24. (The Thomsons did "a wee bit crofting" as well as lobster fishing and ferrying). At first Mr Thomson senior thought Duncan could walk the cow round the loch, but abandoned the idea as she was due to calve in a day or two. He tried to borrow one of the big wooden coal boxes, used when the puffer called, to tow her in. This, however, did not seem practical, so the ballast was removed from the "Alison" and the deck strengthened. Very gently and slowly the cow was haltered and tied in the bows. A sharp knife was put ready in case she proved difficult. There was no room to use the sail, so they rowed. The boat swayed without the ballast, the cow swayed even more. Once or twice a hand stretched out for the knife, but was withdrawn. Mrs Thomson refused to watch the "Alison's" slow progress. But eventually they landed safely, and the calf was born next morning.

The most frequent passengers were the minister, Mr MacNab, who made the return journey every second Sunday, and the blacksmith, who stayed in Knapdale for several days, travelling from farm to farm. In summer there were parties of hikers or cyclists, and people attending parish functions - who also brought their bikes. Mr Thomson cannot remember when he ferried his last passenger. Can any reader date a last trip on the historic and useful Kintyre Ferry No. 2 ?

Grateful thanks to Mr Murdo MacDonald for help with historical facts, and to Mr Duncan Thomson for sharing his memories.

...oooOooo...

KILMORY GRAVEYARD.

Allan Begg.

Of all the old graveyards I have visited in Mid Argyll this is the only one in which I have seen a mort-safe; it is over the grave of Sarah Cooke wife of Angus MacCallum, merchant in Lochgilphead. She died in 1839. No doubt there would be others, but these would probably have been broken up by rust.

Just inside from the gate is the burial place of the Crow family; it was this family who gifted the fine stained glass windows in Lochgilphead Parish Church. As with many others buried in old graveyards around the countryside, the relatives had the graves enclosed by high iron railings, and today those railed-in enclosures are usually a wilderness of grass and weeds. Another similar railed grave is at the back of the graveyard, with a large marble tombstone; the only name I could see through the tangle of growth is Maria Thomson, 13, died 1820. Nowadays the grass in graveyards is cut by means of the Flymo or some other mechanical grass-cutter which cannot be taken into these railed-in areas. It seems to me that it was only the affluent of those days who wished to retain their privacy even in death, and to this day still do. While the grass around the graves of the common folk is cut and kept tidy, those within their railed fastnesses are unkempt, and now an eyesore.

The names on stones which appeared most frequently in Kilmory were: MacEwans 50, MacTavishes 34, MacKellars 22, Dewars 21, MacIntyres 13, Mitchells 13, MacFarlanes 12, Kerrs 9, MacCallums 6.

Those whose professions or trades are recorded include 1 Accountant, 1 Builder, 1 Boat-builder, 1 Coppersmith, 1 Contractor, 2 Collectors of Excise, 6 Feuars, 3 Fishermen, 18 Farmers, 2 Gardeners, 1 Harbourmaster, 2 Joiners, 2 Lock-keepers, 1 Minister, 3 Masons, 6 Merchants, 4 Packet-masters, 1 Seaman, 2 Soldiers, 1 Subaltern Officer, 1 Supt. of Excise, 1 Shoemaker, 1 Saddler, 1 Slater, 1 Surgeon, 4 Tacksman, 1 Tobacconist, 1 Teacher.

Alexander Gordon, a shipmaster, Kilduskland, Ardris-

haig, died in 1777; James Crosbie, a wright in Lochgilphead, in 1793, Alex Sinclair aged 4, whose father was Donald Sinclair, a joiner in Lochgilphead, in 1797. Theophilus Rankin, smith, d. 1807. Daniel Cameron, coppersmith in Lochgilphead, d. 1809. Robert Morrison, packet-master, Lochgilphead, d. 1812. John Dalziel, innkeeper, Lochgilphead, d. 1816. Donald MacBrayne, boat-builder, Ardrishaig, d. 1817. Alexander Bruce, collector of excise, Lochgilphead, d. 1821. Donald Clark, contractor at Lochgilphead, d. 1822. John MacInnes, merchant, Lochgilphead, d. 1824. Sarah Turner, 49, wife of Murdoch Brodie, lock-keeper at Dunardry, d. 1824. Thomas Wells, saddler in Lochgilphead, d. 1831. Angus MacCallum, merchant in Lochgilphead, d. 1839. Duncan Robertson, wright in Lochgilphead, d. 1841. W.L.Diver, 45, officer of excise, Lochgilphead, d. 1845. John Bell, merchant, Lochgilphead, d. 1849. John Meikle, 84, supt. of excise, Lochgilphead, d. 1850. James Hutton, 70, merchant, Lochgilphead, d. 1860. Alex. Campbell, shoemaker in Lochgilphead, d. 1869. Dugal Campbell, 83, surgeon, d. 1882.

These are examples of the professional men and tradesmen buried here. There are many names recorded of people who once lived in the now ruined farms and settlements in the area - and in some places still in existence.

Ardchastle: Duncan MacLachlan, 16 days, d. 1855.
Alex. MacLachlan, 4 days. d. 1856.

Ardnaheir: Here lys the corps of John McCamie tenant of Ardnaheir to whose memory this stone is erected by Archd and Neil McCamie and Mary Campbell spouse to Neil McCamie tenant of Monydrain. d. 1797.
Mary MacEwan, 27. d. 1825.
Alex Crawford, 60, tenant. d. 1860.
Margaret MacTavish, 60, wife of Alex. Crawford. d. 1869.

Achnalephin: This stone is set up by Donald MacIver of Glasvaar, tenant of Achnalephin, in memory

of his son John MacIver, 22. d.1792
Duncan Campbell, 34, tenant. d.1842
Margaret Campbell, 70, wife of Duncan Campbell. d.1873

Ballimore Aird: Donald Stewart, 85. d.1882
Margaret MacLellan or Stewart. d.1900
Isabella Stewart, 8. d.1861
Anne Stewart, 11 months. d.1868
Robert Stewart, 58. d.1771
Erected by John and Alan Stewart.

Blarbuie: John Campbell, tacksman, died Succoth, Glassrie. 1819.
Mary Campbell, daughter, died Lochgilphead. 1833.

Carrick: Malcolm Clark, tenant 1756-1796.
(old stone in Lochgair).
Arch. MacEwan, 75, tenant. d.1838.
Donald MacTavish, 69. d.1851.
Mary Dewar, 70, wife of Donald MacTavish. d.1846.

Druim: Sarah Turner. d.1824.
John MacKellar. d.1826.

Duppin: Alexander Campbell, tenant. d.1826.
Elizabeth Campbell, wife of Alexander Campbell. d.1849.

Duncholigan: Catherine MacTavish, 24. d.1823.
Alex. MacTavish. d.1864.
Margaret MacTavish, 67, wife of Malcolm McLellan, tenant. d.1867

Dunamuck: Jane MacTavish, 89, wife of Archd. Stewart. d.1871.
Archd. Stewart, 77. d.1878.
Donald Stewart, 47, farmer. d.1876.
Mary MacAlpine, 59, wife of Donald Stewart. d.1896.

Gallanach: Donald Scott, tenant, for his wife Janet MacLachlan. d.1805.
(old stone in Lochgair).

Lingerton: Malcolm MacChruter, tenant. d.1780.
Erected by John MacChruter.

Finally I might just mention a few other very old gravestones in this old graveyard.

Duncan Campbell, 72, died 1727. This stone being brought here by his son Patrick, Shipmaster, Galloway.

Duncan Kerr, 62, tenant, Brenfeorlin, died 1773. Erected by Ann, Alex., Archd., Duncan and Donald.

Donald Kerr, 60, Brenfeorlin. d.1778.

Dugald Paterson, 7, Kilmory. d.1807.

Archd. Paterson, 13 months, Kilmory. d.1807.

Caroline Paterson, 27, Kilmory. d.1837.

and the last stone at the back of the graveyard almost hidden by a bush the grave of Quintin MacPherson aged 12 who died in 1836.

...oooOooo...

Beldarroch.

Progress on the "Old Houses" at Mealdarroch has not been so fast as hoped. However a squad of volunteers from Tarbert has cut bracken and kept the site reasonably clear. A professional survey is to be carried out in August 1992 by a team from ACFA, the Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists, and the site has been recommended for scheduling by the RCAHMS.

...oooOooo...

CORRECTION to KIST 43.

An unfortunate typographical error on p.4 at 1.40 resulted in Dr Johnson and James Boswell apparently crossing Loch Awe in 1753. The correct date is 1773.

...oooOooo...

TARBERT HARBOUR BEFORE 1925.

Duncan MacDougall.

Tarbert Harbour is one of the best natural harbours on the west coast of Scotland; it is about one half mile long and two hundred yards wide. It has an island across its mouth, with an entrance on either side. The tide in the harbour has a rise and fall of about eight feet at spring tides. The harbour is about three to four fathoms deep at low tide. The sea bed has a top layer of mud and blue clay below which is good holding ground using the fishermen's anchor made by the local blacksmith.

Shortly before 1925 there were about forty fishing skiffs in Tarbert, about half and half clinker and carvel, all open boats with a deck forward over the forecastle. There were twenty boats anchored close in along the shore from the Dubh-chaul Linne to Dickies' Yard, ten from the Battery to Black's coal-ree, and ten in the centre of the harbour. All these boats were built between about 1885 and 1910. There were no engines in them, just the lugsail and oars. They were about 36ft. to 38ft. long, 10ft. beam and drawing about 6ft. of water aft and 4ft. forward. They were divided up to suit the working of the ring-net: the hull was divided in three, a bulkhead with a sliding door to the forecastle from the hold - this door had to be kept closed when there was herring in the hold. There was a hatch on the deck to enter the forecastle. The hold extended from the forecastle to the pump-beam, with a bulkhead at the end of the hold. The bilge pump was fixed to the bulkhead.

Engines were first installed in Tarbert fishing boats about 1900, and it was not many years till all the boats had them. Most of the engines were Bergius Kelvins, mostly 15 - 20 H.P., though some boats had 8 - 10 H.P. Kelvins, and a small number had Gleniffer engines. The Lochfyne skiff's stern was not suitable for an engine: the stern-post was too narrow to take the stern tub, so the engine had to be set off centre at an angle. The shaft came through at an angle with a wooden chock inside and outside so that the blades of the propeller cleared the planking. The propeller was two-bladed, with folding blades so as not to catch the nets; the blades folded when the engine

was stopped, and opened when the engine started. The fly-wheel on the front of the engine was close to the hold bulk-head, and a box covered the engine.

Before about 1840 it was all drift nets, but about that time the Tarbert men started to make ring-nets to their own design. The fishermen in the other ports were all against the ring-net, and it was made illegal by the government. It was thought it was too deadly a net, and would finish the herring fishing. To enforce the law a Police Station was built at Tarbert on the site where the fire station now stands. It was called the Barracks and housed six policemen. (That side of the village is still called The Barracks). The Police had a ship called the "Jackal", which followed the fishing fleet to stop them from using the ring-net. That went on for a number of years, till the fishermen of Tarbert, Ardrishaig, Campbeltown and Carradale decided to send a deputation to the Houses of Parliament to get the ring-net made legal. Four of the leading fishermen from each of the four ports, sixteen men in all, travelled to London to get the whole thing sorted out. The dispute, however, lasted - up until a few years ago no boat using a ring-net would venture into Stornoway harbour.

There was an east - west difference in the use of the ring-net: on the west coast boats it was worked on the port side, on the east coast boats on the starboard side. When the west coast men shot the net they made their circle anti-clockwise, and the east coast men made theirs clockwise

The ring-net boats worked in pairs with four men in each boat. They made up crews at New Year time. Most of the boats were owned by two men who, with another man and a younger man to work the engine, made up the crew. The boats left the harbour in the afternoon to look for signs of herring. They were not allowed to catch herring until an hour before sunset on a Monday evening, or after an hour after sunrise on Saturday morning. The fishery cruiser patrolled the whole Firth of Clyde to enforce the law.

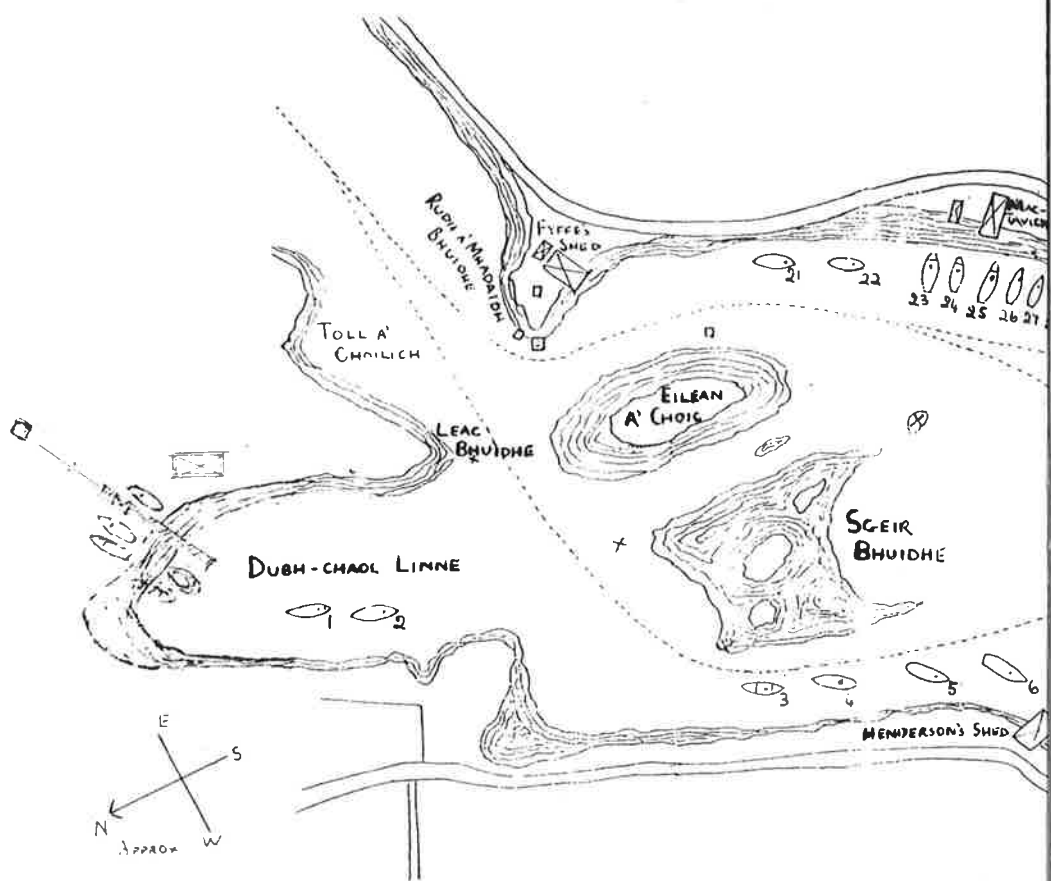
There were many traditional ways of locating herring. In the summertime the main way of knowing if there was herring about was the gannet; the two boats kept about one hundred yards apart waiting for the gannet to strike; if the gannet did dive down into the sea, the boat in the better position shot the net round the spot. The other boat came alongside, and two men jumped on board to help pull the net in; that

left six men on one boat and two in the other. A rope was then tied to the boat with the net out, and the other towed sideways to keep the net from getting under the boat. They kept towing till the net was on board except the bag. Then the herring was lifted from bag to hold in baskets, a desperately heavy job. When all the herring was in the hold the crew put up a double torch to let the buyer on the "screw" - the herring steamer, so called from its means of propulsion - know they had herring. The buyer came, and the they agreed on the price. The herring were then transferred to the "screw", which went full steam ahead for Fairlie to catch the train for the Glasgow fish market. A herring could be swimming in the sea off Skipness at nine o'clock at night and be frying on the pan in Glasgow at breakfast-time next morning.

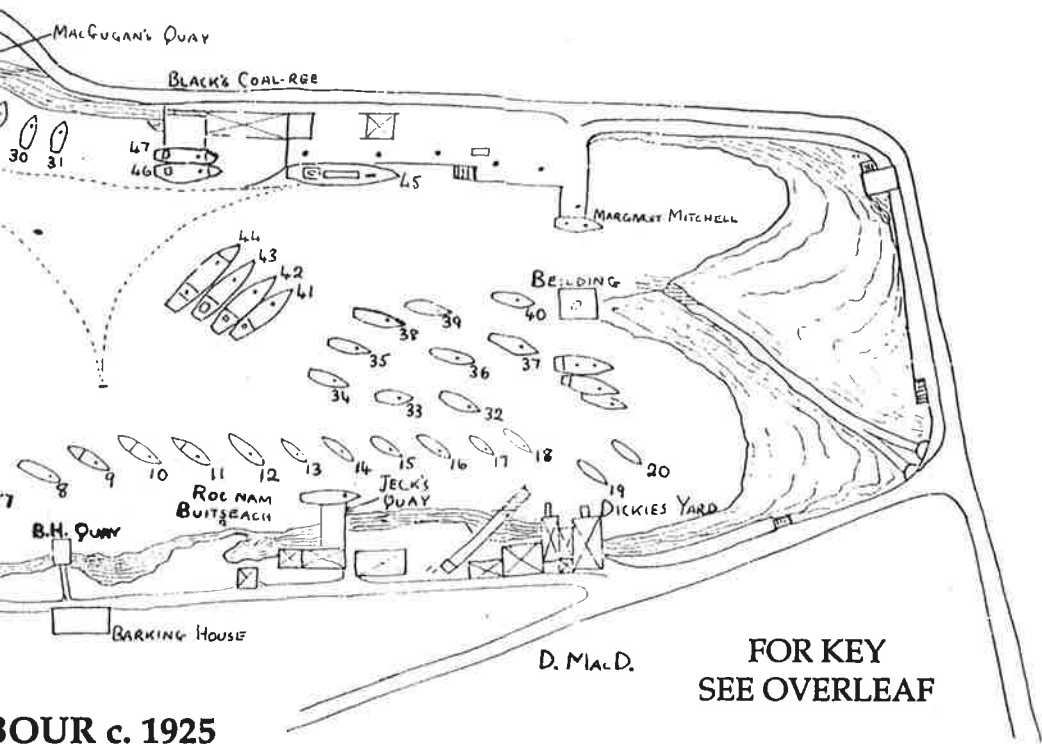
Saturday was the day for sharing the money from the week's catches. The eight men of the two crews went to one of the hotels where a small room was reserved for this purpose. The skippers of the two boats put all the money together and divided it in two. Each skipper then took his boat's money and shared it out. He first got all the bills for the oil, stores etc. for the week and showed them to his crew. All the bills were paid first; the remainder of the money was divided into five and a half shares. Each of the four men, including the owner of the boat, got his take-home share, and the remaining one and a half share was put into the bank to pay for new nets, repair to the engine etc. as required.

Saturday was also the day for getting next week's stores. These included:

- 20 gallons paraffin oil
- 5 gallons lubricating oil
- 1cwt. coal, and kindlings
- wick for the torch (or "flambeau")
- fresh water to fill the water-cask (or "breaker")
- twelve plain loaves
- two or three pounds butter
- two pounds sugar
- fine salt
- coarse salt
- three tins condensed milk
- two pots jam (if the fishing was good the previous week)
- one packet matches.



SKETCH PLAN OF TARBERT HARBOUR



BOUR c. 1925

KEY to PLAN.

Boats anchored from the Dubh-chaol Linne to Dickies' Yard, with names (and by-names) as far as known of their crews.

1. Lady Ileene: Donald MacDougall sen., Peter MacDougall.
2. Fisher Lass: Johnnie Weir sen., John Weir, Malcolm Smith (Skigar), Archie Smith (Skigar).
3. Kathleen: Archie Campbell sen. (Flunky), Sam Campbell, Callum Champbell [sic], Peter Smith (Stulan).
4. Clan MacDougall: Peter MacDougall (Peter Duggie), Lachlan MacDougall (Lach), Jonnie MacTavish, Johnie MacNab.
5. Thistle: Peter Smith (Peter Morach), Jamie Smith, Duncan MacFarlane (Dunks), John MacDougall (Tar).
6. Minerva: Dan Sinclair (Slate), Dougald Smith (Big Duggie), Huie Johnson (Huie in the Green), Jimmie Galbraith (Curry).
7. Mary MacLellan: John MacDougall (Johnnie Munkle), Sandy MacLeod, Dougald MacDougall (Doods), Malcolm Smith (Moll).
8. Senga: Johnnie Black sen., Archie Black (Lightning), Malcolm Smith (Molta), Archie Kerr (Young Cook).
9. Reliance: John MacFarlane (Dorie), Ewan MacFarlane, David MacFarlane (Davie in Larkfield), Angus Murray (Brickie).
10. Queen Alexandra: Duncan Smith (Dunkie Hairie), Peter Smith (Pochie), Bob Murray, Dougald Murray.
11. Sweet Marie: Archie MacFarlane (Archie Skabie), John Smith (Johnie Hairie), Dougald Smith (Dugsack), Duggie Smith.
12. Jeanie Fyffe: Robert Macallaster (Rab), Robert Johnston.
13. Mercury: Donald MacNeil (Wee Dan), Duncan MacNeil (Manie).
14. Isabella: John Johnson (John the Rawan), Angus Johnson, Duncan MacDonald, Robert MacNeil (Old Robbie Neil).
15. Flora: Tommy Jackson, Allick Jackson (Calabar), Duncan MacLachlan (Napoleon), George MacFarlane (Geordie in Larkfield).
16. Sweet Home: Willie Jackson (Bailey), John Black (Boff), Duncan Johnson, George Bruce (Geordie Coal).
17. Majestic: John MacFarlane sen. (Jod), Willie MacFarlane, Robert MacFarlane (Bumf), Robert MacFarlane (Robin).

18. Janet Mathieson: Donald Smith (Donnaly Morach), Johnie MacNeil, Hughie Blair, (Hughie Pope), Angus Law.
19. Columina: Pat MacAllister, Malcolm MacAllister, Molkie MacAllister, Archie MacAllister (Snesie).
20. Catriona: Archie MacAllister (Archag Og), Willie Johnson, Donald MacAllister (Donnaly Og), John MacFarlane (Scodie).

Boats anchored from the Battery to Black's Coal-ree, with names (and by-names) of the owners.

21. Britannia: Jamie MacFarlane (The Wee Jap).
22. Mary: Sandy MacFarlane (Faggie).
23. Victory: Malcolm Johnson, Jamie Wilson.
24. Peggy: Duncan Johnson, Sandy Johnson.
25. Isa Johnson: John Johnson (John Moley).
26. Isa MacGeachie: John Johnson (John Moley).
27. Molly: Jamie Johnson.
28. Ailsa: Johnny MacFarlane (The Bongan), Duncan MacFarlane (The Battag).
29. Glengarry: George Sinclair (Harry).
30. Eudora: Robert MacFarlane (Gummy).
31. Octopus: Archie Kerr (The Skiffler).

Boats in centre of Harbour, with names (and by-names) of the owners.

32. Roseberry: Allick Johnson (Big Allick).
33. Fiona: Archie MacMillan (Clyde).
34. Lizzie: Archie MacMillan (Clyde).
35. Constance Lloyd: Dougald MacAlpine (Dougald Murra).
36. Constitution: Archie MacCoaig.
37. Tina: Donald MacDonald (Cove).
38. Volunteer: Neilie Weir.
39. Neptune: John MacPherson, merchant.
40. Lapwing: John MacPherson, merchant.

- | | |
|---|-------------------------|
| 41. <u>Marie</u> . | 42. <u>Watchful</u> . |
| 43. <u>Gail</u> . | 44. <u>Rob Roy</u> . |
| Herring steamers ("screws"). | |
| 45. <u>Minard Castle</u> : Cargo steamer. | |
| 46. <u>Boar</u> . | 47. <u>Bloodhound</u> . |
| Coal boats (Puffers). | |

Editorial note: With regard to the term "screw" for a herring steamer, Mr MacDougall informs the Editor that the abbreviation "SS", now universally expanded to "steamship" stood originally for "steam screw", these being the two agents of propulsion. Chambers 20th Century Dictionary (7th ed.) offers the alternative "screw steamer".

Readers whose interest has been roused by Mr MacDougall's account are recommended to the excellent The Ring-net Fishermen by Angus Martin, published by John Donald. It is recently out of print, but occasionally obtainable.

...oooOooo...

THE MELODIOUS SWAN.

A.R. Duncan Jones.

In the first century B.C. the Roman poet Horace wrote an ode in honour of the Greek poet Pindar, in the course of which he called him a "swan". By this he meant a "lofty singer"; it was not a reference to the old tale about swans singing as they die (although it was known to at least some of the ancients) for many classical authors speak of swans singing, with no reference to their death. In the ninth Eclogue of Virgil, who was Horace's contemporary, an Arcadian shepherd, speaking of the ability of the poet to confer fame on a patron, says "... tuum nomen

cantantes sublime ferent ad sidera cycni."

"singing swans will carry your name aloft to the stars". His companion, admitting to being a poet himself, remarks "Evidently I sing nothing of worth, but cackle like a goose among melodious swans" - "...argutos inter ...anser olores". In his Aeneid also Virgil several times refers to singing swans; for example, when describing soldiers singing on the march, he compares them thus:

"ceu quondam nivei liquida inter nubila cycni
cum sese a pastu referent et longa canoros
dant per colla modos".

"like snow-white swans returning from pasture through filmy clouds, sending through outstretched necks clear-sounding calls".

They appear singing in Ovid too (he was some twenty years younger than Virgil and Horace); in describing Pluto's abduction of Proserpine beside Lake Pergus in Sicily he com-

paret it with Caÿster, a river-fed pool near Ephesus in Asia Minor (now Turkey) famous for its swans since Homer's day:

".....non illo plura Caystros

carmina cynorum labentibus audit in undis".

"not Caÿster itself hears more singing from the swans gliding on its waters". On a more practical note Lucretius, who was writing his long poem De Rerum Natura (On the Nature of the Universe) when Virgil was a teenager, says a short explanation is better than a long one, as "the brief song of the swan is better than the noisy chatter of cranes":

"parvus et ut cyni melior canor ille gruum quam clamor".

What all this seems to shew is that the only swan known to the ancients was the Whooper. The Mute Swan of course is not mute; but no-one would think of describing its snorts and hisses as a song. The reference books support this observation. The Mute Swan (*cygnus olor*), they say, is indeed found as far east as the Baltic, and sometimes now the Crimea: but not further South. The Whooper (*cygnus cygnus*) on the other hand, which breeds in the icy North, winters as far South as the Mediterranean and North Africa. So we in Scotland share this elegant visitor and its haunting cry not only with our contemporaries in the EC, but with the Mediterranean civilisation of a distant age. When in October or November I first hear its bugle-notes overhead, I am at one with the old Italian peasant of some two thousand years ago as he lifted his gaze from the soil; and when I watch them swimming on a West Highland loch chanting their echoing litany, I feel myself on the banks of Caÿster in Homer's day.

...oooOooo...

JOHN DAMSON'S ACRE.

Margaret I. MacPhee Smith.

May I offer a possible explanation of the names John Damsone and John Damsone's Acre?

'John Damsone' closely resembles 'Jock Tamson', which occurs in the old Scots saying "We're a' Jock Tamson's bairns". The Scottish National Dictionary interprets this as "an expression of our common humanity", while in the

Negro Spiritual the same sentiment is expressed as "We're all God's children". God and Jock Tamson are one and the same. If 'John Damsone' is a version of 'Jock Tamson', then John Damsone's Acre would be God's Acre, which the Oxford English Dictionary defines as 'a graveyard', and Chambers 20th Dictionary as 'a burial ground'. Was John Damsone's Acre a burial ground? There is evidence that it was, at least in part, a very ancient burial ground.

The name John Damsone's Acre was known in 1691 to be of great antiquity, as is evidenced by the use of the phrase "...of old called...". I have met the expression 'of auld' in early 17th century documents among the Craignish Papers - for example, "...of auld native men, servandis and dependaris to the house and surname of Clandule Cregnis" and "...of auld native and kyndlie men to Ronald Campbell of Barrechbean and his predecessors". In these examples 'of auld' means 'since time immemorial' and 'beyond the memory of man'. The designation 'of auld native and kyndlie men' signifies aboriginal descent. They were men who claimed a right of occupation of their land by reason - as they termed it - of their being kin to it, of belonging to it, the land.

John Damsone's Acre is identified as being situated "betwixt the east end of the church and the water", the latter being the Water of Add. At the present time the area beyond the east end of the church is part of the burial ground, and there is evidence that it has been part of a place of burial since time immemorial. The present church at Kilmichael Glassary stands - as did its predecessors - on a pagan burial mound, a feature of many ancient church sites in Scotland. The east side of the mound was part of John Damsone's Acre.

In conclusion, I offer the suggestion, based on the evidence presented above, 1) that 'John Damsone' is a version of 'Jock Tamson', 2) that the name 'John Damsone's Acre' is not to be taken literally, as recording the name of the owner (or tenant) of an acre of land and 3) that John Damsone's Acre was a God's Acre, a very ancient place of burial.

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KILBERRY PIPERS.

James Campbell.

[Reprinted here by kind permission of Seumas MacNeill,
editor of Piping Times].

The inspiration for this reflection came from an old photograph (here reproduced) which was sent to me recently by Seumas MacNeill. It had found its way to him through a purchaser from a junk shop in Inverness. It must at one time have had a certain circulation, because at least two other copies had surfaced many years ago in the hands of Colonel Grant of Rothiemurchus and Dr W.M. MacPhail. It stirs a reminiscence of life in a small piping community nearly a hundred years ago.

The story can start with an extract from a letter dated 12 April 1960 and written by my father (1) to Rothiemurchus in answer to an enquiry about this picture. "I enclose a sheet with the histories of the Kilberry pipers, and return the postcard. We used to have rather fun playing a band, without drummers, all over the roads on summer evenings. At New Year time we were augmented by the like of John MacColl and various pipe majors. There is not a piper of any kind in Kilberry nowadays. If we could have had instruction such as John MacDonald gave in S. Uist I believe that we could have bred piobaireachd players, for there was a considerable force of 'fans'." The sheet enclosed read thus:

Kilberry Pipers 1898 or 1899.

Standing, left to right

1. John MacFater, Coulaghailtro, farm worker for many years at Kilberry. A very gifted player for dancing, with thoroughly unorthodox fingering. His mother belonged to a famous Kintyre piping family called MacAlister, one of whom, John, took first prize at Falkirk in 1782.

2. John Black, Tiretigan, who emigrated to S. Africa and prospered in N. Rhodesia. About the best march player of the lot.

.....
(1) The late Archibald Campbell of Kilberry, author of The Kilberry Book of Ceol Mor, etc.



3. Angus MacMillan, Lergnahension, a good player of March, Strathspey and Reel, Piper to the Dowager Duchess of Argyll, and afterwards to my cousin Walter Campbell of Dudhope. Used to win all the "local" competitions in Argyllshire.

4. John Carruthers, son of the Kilberry farm manager and brother of "Mrs J. MacColl" and Jeannie Carruthers. A good player on the right shoulder (1).

5. Neil MacMillan, brother of Angus, a "country" piper.

6. Sandy MacNeill, coachman at Kilberry and later chauffeur. A good orthodox player of March, Strathspey and Reel and also a competent fiddler. His only child, a daughter, married a cousin of R.U. Brown and after her mother's death took Sandy up to Pluscarden where he stayed until he died. I used to visit him there when I came to Inverness for N.M. competitions.

.....
 (1) i.e. the 'wrong' shoulder for rigid orthodoxy. The author's elder brother Angus played on the right shoulder being strongly left-handed.

Sitting

A.C. now the only survivor. [Archibald Campbell].
The absentee Duncan MacMillan, brother of Neil and Angus,
is also dead now. (1).

A.C. 12/4/60

Further information comes from some irregular notes which my father made during his early piping days at the end of last century. The Kilberry pipe band had its beginnings at New Year time 1897, when "J. MacColl, MacKay (2), Sandy MacNeill, John MacFater and I played down to the shinty ground". Further progress was made that summer. "Being the Jubilee year we determined to have a pipe band to play down to the bonfire. The following were enlisted; A. MacNeill, A. and N. MacMillan, John MacFater, John McMurphy and John Black. We started practising in the evenings in the garden - John McMurphy and MacFater were conspicuous for their inability to 'step along with the rest', but before the day we had them drilled into something like shape. On the night of 23 June the band headed a procession down to Captain Bedford's knowe where the bonfire was to be lit. The tune was The Campbells are Coming and we kept it going merrily down to the laundry gate and through the soaking grass of Drimna Vounia [Druim a' Bhuinne, field name]. I was surprised to find it going so well but soon discovered the reason when we halted at the top of the brae looking down on Port a Churaidh. I discovered that John McMurphy had been walking along with his pipes under his arm because by a special intervention of providence his reeds had slipped into the bag when we started."

In December 1897 "I had some practice when I got home

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(1) A second absentee is mentioned in J.H. Shone's Kilberry Book of Letters (published 1980 by The International Piper Limited) at page 48. This was Duncan Black, first cousin of 2, who also emigrated to Rhodesia and before his death about 1942 was about the leading agriculturist in the Salisbury District.

(2) John MacKay, Pipe Major 4th (Renfrewshire) Militia Battalion 1885-1903 and thereafter of Liverpool Scottish 1903-1925. Originally of 93rd Sutherland Highlanders. Gold Medallist at Inverness in 1889, and at Oban in 1887.

and received able assistance from Pipe Major MacKay. The result was that on the 12th of January we mustered eleven pipers. They were MacKay, John MacColl, two MacMillans, Sandy MacNeill, John Carruthers, John MacFater, John McMurphy, Duncan Black (Dummy) and myself. The night of the ball the above number were augmented by John Mellish and eleven pipers played the carriage up to the barn (Sandy being required to look after the horses)."

The band continued to prosper in 1898. In April "I had practices twice a week. All attended regularly except John McMurphy, who has dropped out now. When Jock (1) came home in June he found a very different state of affairs to the scratch lot we had playing at the Jubilee. Some assistance was given us at this time by P.M.Ferguson of the 93rd at home on furlough from India. When I got home for Christmas I found that I was able to make arrangements for a competition. Helped by generous contributions from W.L.R. [Walter Campbell of Dudhope] and A.S.D. [Alice Denison, a family friend] as well as a challenge medal from Jock we were able to offer four small prizes for march playing and the same for strathspeys and reels. J.D.R. [J.Douglas (later Sir Douglas) Ramsay of Banff] judged and awarded as follows:

Marches for medal and prizes:

1st	John Carruthers	The Drunken Piper
2nd	Angus MacMillan	Loch Katrine
3rd	A.MacNeill	93rd
4th	J.Black	Loch Katrine

Strathspeys and Reels for prizes

1st	A.MacMillan	Roderick MacDonald, Duntroon
2nd	J.Carruthers	Sandy King, Moulie Dubh
3rd	N.MacMillan	Sandy King, Christmas Carousel
4th	J.MacFater	Mary Doctor, Moulie Dubh ."

The 1898 notes are spiced with anecdotes of other piping activities, and sometimes discretion was outstripped by enthusiasm. Thus there is recorded an episode at Cambridge "when I got into a horrible row for playing 'Her Golden Hair' about midnight in college one night for a lot of ruf-

.....
 (1) His elder brother John Campbell of Kilberry, then a serving soldier and on leave from India.

fians to dance to on the grass." And later there is mention of a visit to Banff where "I distinguished myself by playing the Long Reveille under the dining room windows when Sir James was reading prayers therein." But these are digressions from the story of the Kilberry pipers, who began the New Year of 1899 with a band of 12 on the 12th, and there is mention of a threesome "by John MacColl, Sandy MacNeill and myself when after being soaked through and through, two hard games, and very vigorous dancing on the gravel, we played the Concourse from the house to the stead-ing with the 93rd." Then, in April, "Found the band going well. Photographed. Good playing at concert." And in June "we had several practices of the band and used to march out about 9 o'clock on the long summer evenings dressed in the kilt while the whole population turned out to listen. There would be a group at the stable yard, another at the stead-ing while the Coulaghailtro folk would be at the top gate and the Dulchairn people at their own doors."

But the end was approaching. In August 1899 there was a visit to Surbiton for the Indian Civil Service Examination. (His indulgent hosts at Surbiton were not spared - "I would blow in the garden after dinner. However they preferred secular tunes best and things like Bonny Dundee"). There-after India beckoned, and though there was another year's activity before departure no further notes have survived. So let the last words come from Angus MacMillan, forty five years later. "Yes, we could play in those days and we hadn't a white hair in our heads. The old days were very happy when one thinks of all the harmless fun we used to have in the Pipe Band. Well, after all we had our days." [Quoted by J.H.Shone, op. cit. at page 45].

[The Editor is indebted to Miss Marion Campbell for several notes additional to the original text].

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NOTE on the COVER.

Dr Mackenna's drawing is based on a Tarbert postcard of c.1900, of which an enlarged version can be seen framed and hanging on the wall of the front office of the Clydesdale Bank in Tarbert.

...oooOooo...

GRASS.

Denis Rixson.

What can be specifically Highland about grass? Granted it grows here in abundance, but so it does elsewhere. Why should it be of interest to readers of Kist? Well....

In 1768 Archibald Menzies, General Inspector for the Commissioners of the Forfeited Estates (the estates of certain rebel chiefs forfeited to the Crown after Culloden), visited Knoydart to inspect the Barrisdale estate. He commented on the tenants as follows:

"They are good managers of cattle, which are esteemed of a quality equal to any of the West Highlands Their grass, where best managed, is divided into summer, harvest, winter and spring grasses, which is laid out in some parts in districts They have the grass for each season divided into as many divisions as it will admit of, as they look upon it of consequence to change their grass often It is remarkable the skill they show in chusing their pasturages for the different seasons. It is not the local situation but the quality of the grasses they study. Every farmer is so far a botanist as to distinguish the particular season each grass is in perfection."

Grass then was a subject of the first importance to the clansmen of the Highlands who were primarily pastoralists. In parts of the Highlands there was some arable land which was tilled, but in the area of the Rough Bounds in particular this was sparse and inadequate. Between Ardnamurchan and Glenelg there are few fertile patches, and Clanranald, for instance, was considered to have his "mensal" lands (those which supplied his table) in Uist rather than by his headquarters at Castle Tioram in Moidart. The economy of the Rough Bounds was dependent on cattle and to a lesser extent on sheep and goats.

Livestock was taken up to the hill pastures for the summer months, to take advantage of high grazings that were inaccessible in the winter, and allow the grass beside their houses in the glens and on the coast a chance to recover from over-grazing. The period spent at the shielings was obviously viewed as one of the high points of the year. The weather was, if not good, then certainly tolerable, the privations of the winter were past and time could be spent

in courtship and dalliance as well as the mundane tasks of butter and cheese making. We have already seen that the Highlanders regarded it as important to change their grass often and much of the time spent at the shielings must have been occupied by the need to watch and round up their wandering herds. The kind and condition of the natural grasses available was a matter therefore not just of interest but of the first importance. No wonder the Knoydart tenants were so practised in observing when each grass was in perfection - each grass, for they were well aware of the different strains of grass they encountered. For proof of this we have no better authority than Duncan Ban Macintyre the 18th century Gaelic poet. Thus , in the "Song to Misty Corrie" :

"'Tis round Ruadh Aisridh the tussocks flourished
sheltering, curly, handsome, tall;
and every green plot hath its herbage swaying
as the wind sweepeth it to and fro;
the root of deer's hair grass, the tip of arrow grass,
erect rye-grass, knee'd foxtail grass,
the potent bent grass and copious groundsel
are round the secluded covert, haunt of the stags."

Here was a man who was heir to generations of Highland pastoralists, who inherited a tradition of close observation and gradually accumulated knowledge about the natural grasses of the Highlands and how they affected man's livestock. Not only had he imbibed a huge body of natural lore since childhood but his keen eye and love of nature enabled him to study and comprehend the grassy mantle of the hills he spent so many of his formative years tramping in pursuit of deer. His love of and respect for nature might have made him unsympathetic to modern industrial farming methods; we find him commenting disparagingly on "midden grass", whose greenness he may have despised because of its parentage. What would he have thought of chemical fertilisers, pesticides and insecticides? He might well be turning in his grave.

In his poem "Praise of Ben Dobhrain" we come across reasons Highlanders paid so much attention to their grass. To it they ascribed virtues and qualities which affected the condition of their livestock. Duncan Ban Macintyre was less interested in cattle than in his beloved deer, but the principle remains the same - the quality and nature

of the grass was believed to affect the condition of animals grazing on it. Here is his summary of the effects of grass on deer:

"The hind is in the forest as she ought to be, where she may have sweet grass, clean, fine-bladed; heath-rush and deer's hair grass, herbs in which strength resides, and which would make her flanks plump and fat-covered; a spring in which there is abundant water-cress she deems more sweet than wine and would drink of it; sorrel and rye grass which flourish on the moor she prefers as food to rank field grass. Of her fare she deemed these the delicacies: primrose, St John's wort and tormentil flowers; tender spotted orchis, forked, spiked and glossy, on meadows where, in clusters, it flourishes. Such was the dietary that would increase their strength, that would pull them through in the stormy days."

Only when we see this close attention to natural detail can we gauge what almost all of us in the modern industrial world have lost - the proximity to and knowledge of natural life. How many now could recognise more than two or three types of grass? or the grazing plants mentioned?

The translations from Duncan Ban Macintyre are by Angus Macleod.

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The TAYNISH NATIONAL NATURE RESERVE.

A detailed description of the Reserve appeared in Kist 38 (Autumn 1989). Three years have seen much work carried out in management and maintenance. The approach road has been improved and the car-park enlarged. New 'visitor-friendly' signs and interpretative boards have been set up and an information leaflet including a plan of the Reserve is available from the Lochgilphead Tourist Office. People are free to visit and explore the Reserve at any time. Despite this, the 1990-1991 Annual Report remarks that "ordinary visitor usage is very low". The Reserve is used regularly by specialists and educational groups, and guided

walks are arranged.

The rich and varied plant life of the different areas is flourishing and increasing. Over 100 species of birds come to the Reserve, many of them summer visitors; 20 species of butterfly occur, and 400 species of moth; dragonflies too are to be seen; roe deer, badgers and otters are common. Non-native trees such as sycamore are being gradually replaced with native trees - oak, ash and hazel - and the invasive rhododendron ponticum cleared. A walk through this microcosm of the natural environment of Argyll, untroubled by traffic, is heartily to be recommended.

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