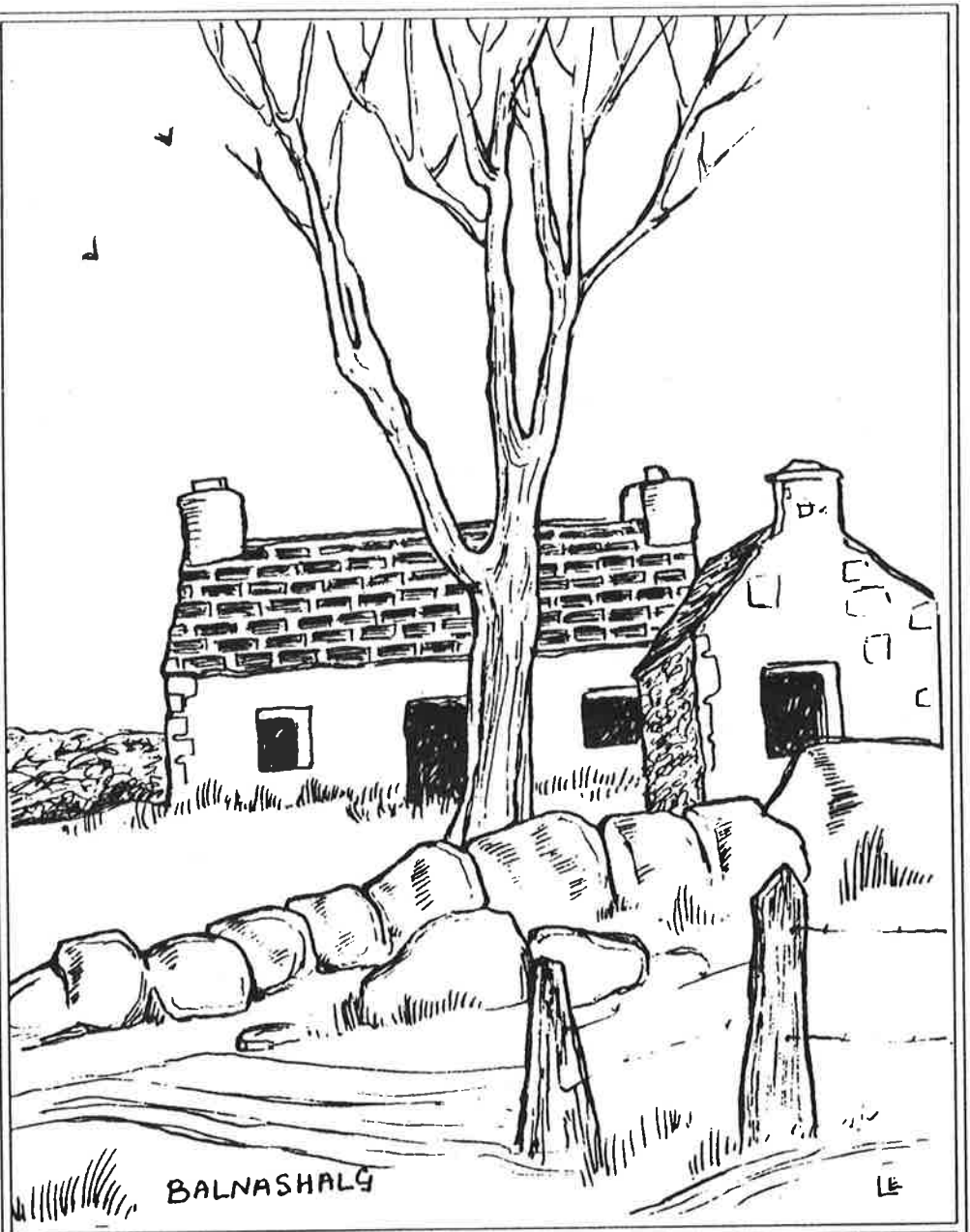

The KIST 49

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There are six winter lectures and six summer outings.

THE POLTALLOCH "JET" SPACER PLATE NECKLACE

Some new research by Alison Sheridan and Mary Davis,
National Museums of Scotland, Edinburgh

Introduction

The four thousand year old spacer plate necklace found in a cist at Kill y Kiaran in 1928 has long been recognised as one of the finest examples of this type of Early Bronze Age artefact - so fine indeed, that it featured in a special exhibition prepared for the visit of HM the Queen and Prince Philip to the Royal Museum of Scotland in July 1994.

Despite being so well known, and despite J Hewat Craw's excellent 1929 publication, there were still several unanswered questions about this necklace when the present authors started to examine it in 1990: what exactly was it made of? Where was it made? How was it strung? Using non-destructive analysis, and by close and thorough investigation of each of the component pieces (much of the latter work done by NMS illustrator Helen Jackson), we were able to suggest answers to most of these questions. Furthermore, by comparing the Poltalloch necklace with all the other Scottish spacer plate necklaces, some new and exciting observations could be made about its importance to the "jet set" elite of Early Bronze Age Strathclyde.

Discovery and initial study

Craw's account in Volume 63 of the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland (1928-29) makes it clear that the necklace was excavated under less than ideal conditions: the cist in which it was found lay under a massive elm tree, necessitating entry from one end, and the contents were choked with densely matted tree roots. A bent wire was used to extract the artefacts and human remains, "and it took six and a half hours before all the contents were cleared out"! The excavation was undertaken by Sir Ian Malcolm, assisted by Craw. Despite the adverse conditions, it produced important information. The N by E-orientated cist had formed part of a cemetery set into the crest of a gravel promontory, a classic location for Early Bronze Age cemeteries. A groove in one of the side walls suggested that it may have had a wooden lining - a feature of the elaborately made cists which are relatively common in Argyll - and the human remains may well have represented an initial crouched

inhumation, followed by the insertion of partly incinerated remains of a second individual (together with some oak charcoal, probably from the pyre). The age of the unburnt interment was estimated at the early 20's, and although no definitive indications of sex were obtained, Professor Bryce concluded that it could have been female. Grave goods consisted of the necklace, a flint knife, and small lumps of ochre and ochre-stained quartz pebbles. The positions of the finds in the cist offer some clues as to the original disposition of the burials. The necklace and knife were found in the SW area of the cist, and if one assumes that the necklace was around the corpse's neck, this suggests that the body was placed on its left side, with the head at the SW end of the cist, facing NW. The burnt bones and charcoal were found "in a circular area in the middle of the north half of the cist": this suggests possible deposition within a container, above the legs of the crouched inhumation.

The necklace

According to Craw's account, the excavated remains comprised two triangular terminal plates, two pairs of trapezoidal spacer plates, 110 fusiform (barrel-shaped) beads, and a small triangular plate with two perforations, similar to those seen on one of the terminal plates. Craw correctly identified this last piece as a fastener, refuting earlier claims that such items were pendants through his careful observations on its position when found and the pattern of wear marks on its surfaces. The terminal and spacer plates were decorated with lightly bored dot designs featuring lozenges and/or saltires. Some of the dots were filled with a white chalk-like substance, "which must have made the design a much more striking feature of the necklace in its original state".

Craw was particularly interested in the correct reconstruction of the necklace. He recognised that the function of the terminal and spacer plates was to create a crescent-shaped necklace, with the number of strands increasing from three at the back to seven at the front. He also pointed out, for the first time, that this shape closely echoed that of the gold lunulae (principally found in Ireland) and of the amber spacer plate necklaces (then known from Wessex and Denmark). The tightness of the stringing of the spacer plate necklaces was reflected in the wear marks on the fastener and terminal plates. Craw's arrangement of the beads in the

Fig. 1. The Poltalloch necklace, reconstructed according to Craw's scheme. (From a photograph).

front of the necklace in a criss-cross pattern (fig. 1) was based on his observations, and those of Callander in his excavation of a similar necklace at Burgie Lodge Farm, Moray, in 1913. The beads had appeared to lie in this arrangement within the cist; yet while Callander reconstructed the Burgie Lodge necklace with the criss-cross beads forming a pendant arrangement, Craw made them an integral part of the crescent. As we shall see, subsequent work has demonstrated that both versions were incorrect; Craw's reconstruction,

however, formed the prototype for virtually all museum reconstructions for the next half century.

NMS research on the necklace

The principal aim of this research was to ascertain what was the raw material of the necklace, and whether the necklace had been made locally or imported from Whitby. Craw had hedged his bets, stating that it was "of jet or some allied substance such as lignite or cannel coal" - the latter materials being available within Strathclyde. When Craw wrote, there was no way of distinguishing between the various candidate materials in a non-destructive manner; but the advent of such methods during the 1970's allowed this research to proceed. It also permitted the identification of the aforementioned white chalky substance. Detailed examination of the size, shape and wear of the necklace's component parts - part of the process of producing line illustrations for the eventual corpus of all Scottish prehistoric "jet" jewellery - also allowed us to reconsider Craw's reconstruction, and to make other fresh observations.

Raw material and provenance

X-ray fluorescence examination revealed that all but 24 of the 117 component parts of the necklace are of Whitby jet, whilst the remainder are of cannel coal. Cannel coal is harder than jet to source, but extensive deposits are known from Ayrshire and the Central belt, and outcrops are also known from the Campbeltown area. The nature of the cannel coal components is interesting: these comprise the fastener, eleven beads of similar dimensions to those elsewhere in the necklace, and a group of twelve distinctive beads. The latter are all quite "skinny" in comparison with the other beads, and most are relatively small. (The overall range of Poltalloch bead lengths is 10.25mm-27.5mm; all but one of the set of twelve are between 10.4mm-15.5mm long). Furthermore, they appear to form a distinct compositional cluster - as if they had been made from a single lump of cannel coal. (Not all of the twelve beads have been subject to detailed compositional analysis yet, but the results so far suggest this).

This breakdown of material, and our observations on other Scottish spacer plate necklaces, suggests to us that the necklace had been imported as a finished artefact from Whitby (as suggested in 1973 by Ian Shepherd). The normal-sized cannel coal beads may represent more locally-made substit-

utes for broken jet beads; as for the set of twelve distinctive beads, we shall return to this below.

The white substance in the dot design

Electron microprobe analysis revealed that this consisted of calcium and barium sulphate, with an organic binder. This discovery is of considerable relevance to a long-standing debate about the significance of the whitish or brown material seen in several similar necklaces. Essentially, three possibilities had been raised: i) that the material simply derives from sediment in the cist, and is an accidental inclusion: ii) that it represents the remains of a polishing agent, such as the whitish rottenstone or rouge traditionally used by Whitby jet workers (Shepherd 1981); and iii) that it is a deliberate filler, used for aesthetic purposes to highlight the decoration. Craw favoured the last interpretation for the white material in the Poltalloch necklace. Our analyses have confirmed that the filler is not rottenstone (decomposed siliceous limestone), and although the calcium could have had abrasive properties, the barium sulphate is regarded principally as a whitening agent. We therefore incline to the view that its purpose was mainly decorative. Interestingly, no other filler so far examined has matched the composition of the Poltalloch specimen.

The form and condition of the necklace

Examination of the size, shape and wear marks on the component parts has led us to the following conclusions:

- The front strands of the necklace were plain strung, rather than strung in Craw's criss-cross pattern. Indeed, several other pieces of information indicate that Craw's arrangement is incorrect; these include the experimental reconstruction of a spacer plate necklace by the late Dorothy Marshall, and also observation of the distinctive end damage caused - in the recent past - by tightly stringing the beads in this way. Given the various post-depositional processes which operated within cist burials, it is hardly surprising that upon excavation, the beads may appear to lie in a criss-cross or star-shaped formation.
- The upper pair of spacer plates were bored in such a way that four beads could have been accommodated above the plates. (See fig. 2 overleaf).
- We agree with Craw that only a few beads are missing: the schematic reconstruction shown in fig. 2 suggests that the

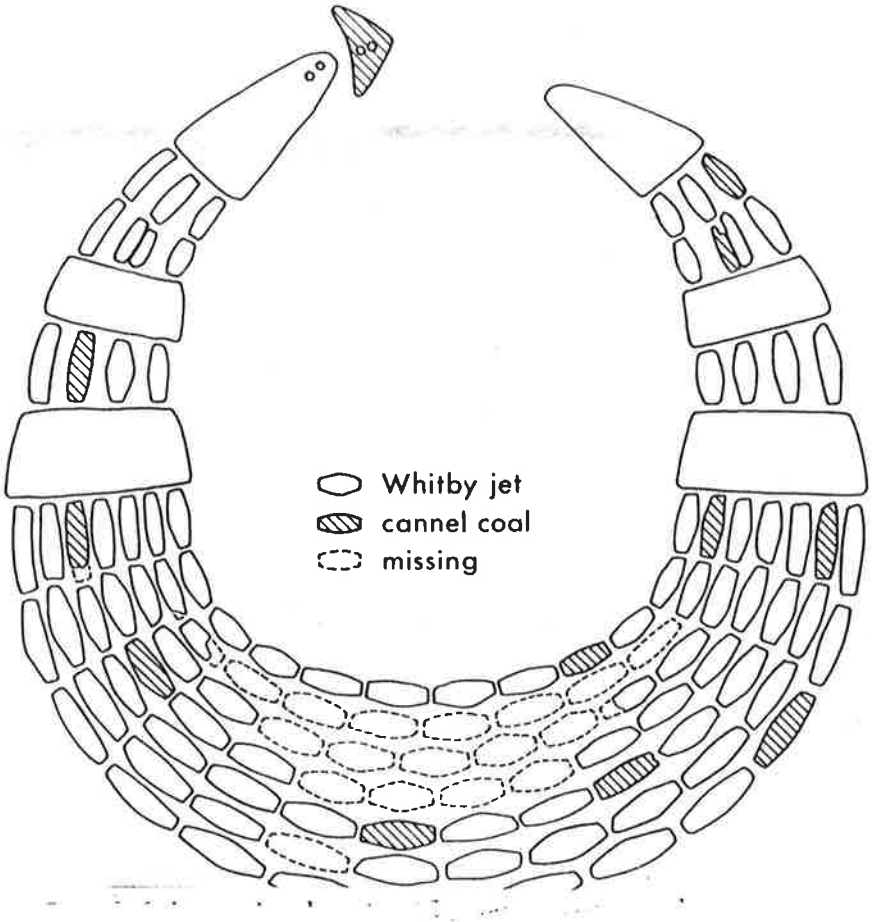

Fig. 2. Schematic drawing of the necklace, showing the distribution of jet and cannel coal pieces. Note: i) the decoration on the plates is not shown; ii) one of the beads counted by Craw is omitted, as it is a spall from another bead; iii) the set of 12 unusual cannel coal beads are omitted from this reconstruction.

original total of fusiform beads would have been 114. (The fact that this figure is far lower than the 140 beads found with a complete/near-complete necklace at Balcalk, Angus, is not surprising since the latter contained more strands throughout). Whether the missing beads were simply missed during the excavation is not known.

The fact that the component parts do not show excessive wear, and that virtually all of the original parts of the necklace are present, indicates that the Poltalloch necklace was not very old or heavily worn when deposited in the grave - in contrast to many other necklaces.

The group of twelve distinctive cannel coal beads raise a question: were they really part of this necklace? or were they, perhaps, part of a bracelet - whose position on the crouched body would have been very close to the necklace? We know, from other necklace burials in Strathclyde and elsewhere, that corpses were sometimes buried with one or two bracelets - part of a matching set of jewellery. The bracelets resemble miniature spacer plate necklaces. Indeed, at Melfort, a magnificent pair of bronze armlets decorated with a repoussé bead-like design was found accompanying a spacer plate necklace. We also know, from Edward Peltenburg's excavation at Kintyre Nurseries, Campbeltown (1979) that bracelet parts can spatially be virtually indistinguishable from necklace parts. Against our suggestion, however, is the fact that no bracelet plates were recovered at Poltalloch. Furthermore, the equally fine necklace from Mount Stewart, Bute (Bryce 1904) also contains a set of fourteen tiny beads. Whilst these, too, could be from an unrecognised bracelet, they may simply confirm that necklaces could contain some very small components.

Whether or not the twelve small beads were part of a bracelet, their distinctive nature suggests manufacture by a local (or at least non-Whitby) craft worker - perhaps a different hand from the one(s) responsible for the other cannel coal components.

Poltalloch in its wider context

The Poltalloch necklace is one of fourteen from Strathclyde: together they form one of the several regional clusters of this kind of necklace. Comparison with the rest of the Strathclyde group has revealed substantial variation in the composition and condition of these necklaces, with the following three groupings emerging:

1. Those exclusively or mainly of Whitby jet, substantially complete and in relatively unworn condition: the Poltalloch and Mount Stewart, Bute examples fall into this category, and we await the results of analysis of the two specimens with undecorated plates from Campbeltown to see whether they belong too.
2. Those exclusively of material which might have derived from a Strathclyde source: pending confirmation by analysis,

we suspect that the specimens from Tormore, Arran and Inchmarnock cist 3, Bute examples fall into this category. These, too, show relatively little wear, and the Inchmarnock necklace was substantially complete when found. This necklace also shows a characteristic noted on some other non-jet spacer plate necklaces: the number of strands is greater than normal, starting with four at the back and progressing to ten at the front.

3. Those featuring a mixture of material, and including components from more than one necklace; these usually include some heavily worn pieces, and may be incomplete and/or may have an unconvential number of components. The specimens from Houston, Renfrewshire, and Melfort, Monybachach and Brackley, Argyll, belong to this category. The Melfort necklace incorporates components from three necklaces, and could not have been strung in a conventional arrangement; whilst the Monybachach necklace (comprising roughly 50:50 ratio of Whitby jet to lignite beads, and with one cannel coal bead) includes a right hand terminal plate from a worn jet necklace which has been reversed to form a left hand plate.

Our project has revealed that a similar pattern can be identified in the other Scottish clusters. Although this pattern could be interpreted in various ways, one thing is clear: the spacer plate necklace was a valuable and desirable prestige object in Early Bronze Age society. This is underlined by the fact that many of these necklaces come from graves which were special in additional ways - in the elaborate construction of the cist, the size of the overlying cairn, etc. Perhaps the "Type 1" necklaces represent the pinnacle of the prestige-good hierarchy, obtained by those who were "wealthy" enough - in the Bronze Age meaning of the word - to acquire them. It may well be that part of the desirability of real jet derives from its electrostatic properties, which might have been regarded as magical. (There is a long tradition of beliefs, stretching at least as far back as the Roman period, about the supernatural and medicinal properties of jet).

The "Type 2" necklaces could then be interpreted as the attempts of Strathclyde-based craft specialists to emulate the Whitby jetworkers: a modern (but inexact) parallel is offered by the makers of counterfeit Rolex watches. Perhaps the consumers of these well-made "fakes" were not able to obtain the "real thing", but they used their necklaces in

the same way, burying them when relatively unworn. It may be that the superabundance of strands seen in the Inchmarnock necklace was a way of compensating for the fact that it lacked the magical properties of jet.

The "Type 3" necklaces superficially appear to represent the bottom of the prestige ladder - although one should not underestimate their potential symbolic value as heirlooms, or map present-day perceptions on to the Early Bronze Age.

Whatever the contemporary value system was, it is clear that the removal of these valuable artefacts from daily life through burial conferred special status on the corpse.

The presence of this cluster of spacer plate necklaces in Strathclyde (principally in the southern part of Argyll and Bute district) is not surprising, given the other indications of local wealth at the time. These include the large and elaborate graves of the Kilmartin Valley, complete with their carvings and Irish-style Food Vessels - which may have been imports themselves. The wealth of metalwork, and the carvings of axeheads, suggest that this area probably played a key role in early metallurgy - either by controlling the import and movement of material from Ireland, or by producing copper ore, or both. More work on the possibility of early metallurgical activity is needed to clarify this point.

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The Editor regrets that due to lack of space Part 2 of Duncan Beaton's The Early History of the Clan Mackellar is postponed to Kist 50 (the September issue).

MEGALITHS AND PREHISTORIC ROCK CARVINGS IN SWITZERLAND

Andreas Trottmann

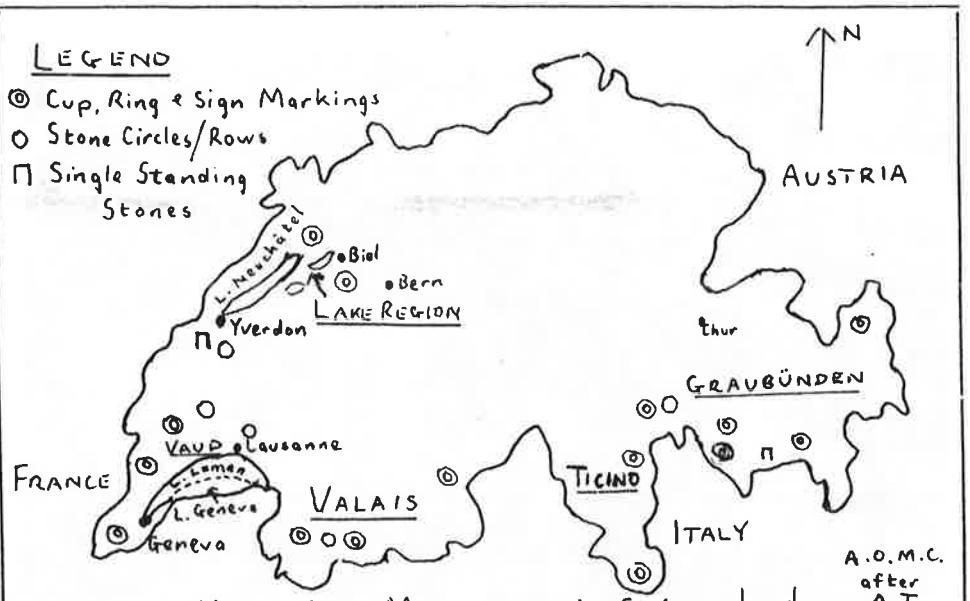
If speaking of megalithic monuments and rock carvings, always the famous sites in Britain - Avebury, Callanish, Stonehenge - and in Brittany - Carnac - come first to mind. [and of course Achnabreac. Ed.]. Nevertheless Switzerland has much to offer in this respect; but the sites are often secluded, unpublicised and therefore hard to find.

Due to its changeful history and its topography Switzerland is divided into four language areas - Swiss/German, French, Italian and Romantsch (a language directly connected to Latin), and each has its own cultural and historical background.

On the shores of Lake Geneva (or Lake Leman as it is correctly called) between Geneva and Lausanne are located many rocks with cup and ring markings, one with 15 cup-marks actually in the courtyard of the old Saint-Antoine prison in the centre of Geneva. Two remarkable rocks are in the woods near the villages of Mont-la-Ville and Bursins: the Mont-la-Ville stone has 37 cups, the largest with a circumference of 23cm, as well as carved grooves; the one at Bursins has 52 cup markings.

In the area marked Vaud on the map between Lausanne, Yverdon and the entrance to the Valais are to be found two of the largest megalithic constructions in Switzerland. The one at Yverdon-les-Bains on the south shore of lake Neuchâtel is composed of 45 standing stones; the tallest measures about 4.5m in height and has a weight of about 5 tonnes; the stones are grouped in two alignments and four half-circles. In the mediaeval city of Lutry, again on the shore of Lake Geneva, is a row of 24 standing stones, on one of which are carved some interesting objects.

On the north shore of Lake Neuchâtel (on the map indicated as Lake Region, as there several interconnected lakes) are to be found many standing stones, remains of Neolithic chambered tombs and cup markings. This region is of course world famous for its Iron Age habitations and sacrifice sites such as La Tène which has given its name to the second phase of the Celtic Iron Age in Europe. Between here and Bern and Biel-Bienne, still in the Lake Region but already crossing to the Swiss/German part, are many cup-mar-

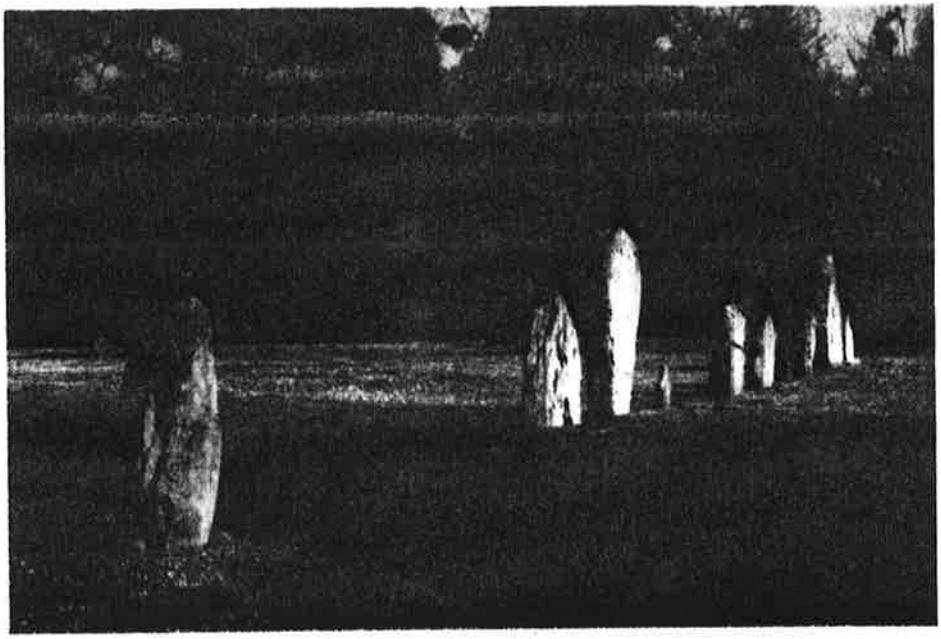


Areas of Megalithic Monuments in Switzerland

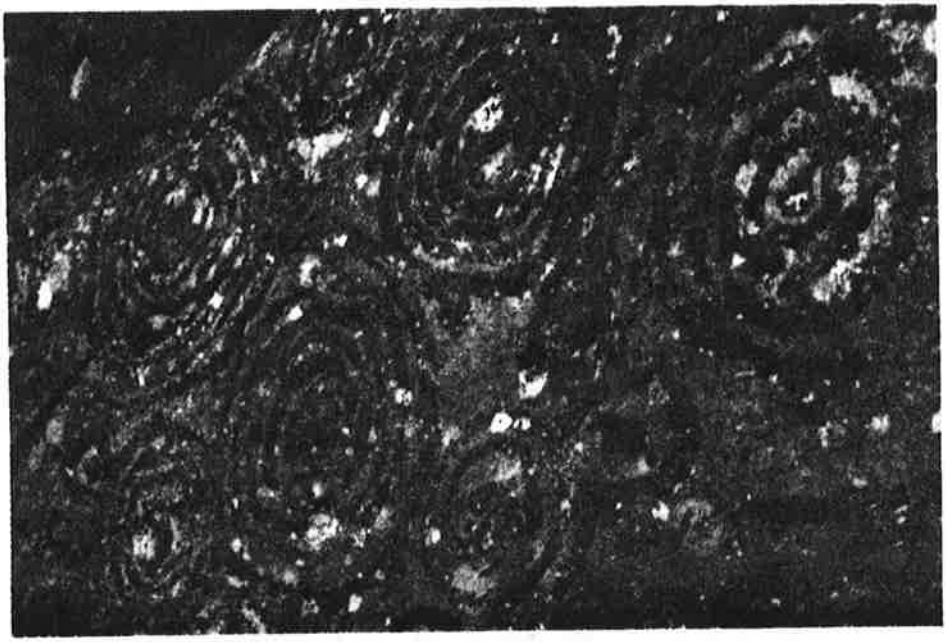
In a rough sketch at this tiny scale geographical positions, especially of towns, are very approximate.

ked rocks, mainly grouped on hillsides and in woods overlooking the lake region. An exceptionally large one is to be found on a meadow above the village of Le Landeron with more than 90 cup markings; another, known as the "Druidenstein" with 11 cup-marks, is above the village of Tüscherz. Also in and around Bern there are remarkable cup-marked rocks , but this is rather the exception in the Swiss/German part.

The Valais is a huge valley stretching from Lake Geneva a long way up into the Alps. In the first part, up to Sierre, the language spoken is French; then it changes into a beautiful but quite special Swiss-German dialect (even for a Swiss-German sometimes difficult to understand. In the modern suburb of the capital of this canton, Sion, is a huge megalithic complex composed of 13 standing stones and a large cist grave. One of the stones has human figures and other objects carved on its surface. An exceptional tombstone with 17 cup-marks is housed in the Cathedral, Notre Dame de Valère, on the Valeria hill above the town. [The local archaeological museum is worth a visit for its



Yverdon-les-Bains. Megalithic stone complex.



Carschenna. Cup and ring marked rock.

neolithic exhibition].

Several large and remarkable cup-marked rocks are to be found in the mountain valleys of the Valais. Some have the reputation of being pagan sites of human and animal sacrifices and are therefore locally known as "Opfersteine", Sacrifice Stones. Certainly worth a visit are those of Grimentz (Val d'Anniviers), several cup-, footprint- and sign-marked rocks around the Pirra Martera at a site called the "Clasche" which was probably used for pagan executions; the large cup-marked rock called "Pierre des Sauvages" above the village of St. Luc, also in the Val d'Anniviers, with more than 350 cup marks; and the "Pierre des Immolés" above the village of Evolène (Val d'Hérens) with about 170 cup marks, where several cup-, cross- and groove-marked stones are to be found around the main stone.

Crossing the highest pass of Switzerland, the Nufenen (2478m, 7434ft) will bring us down into one of the most charming cantons, the Ticino, where the mother tongue of the locals is Italian. In this part of Switzerland are located many secluded cup- and sign-marked rocks; to the ancient markings were often added different forms of crosses, another visual proof for some that Christianity succeeded in defeating the pagan religions by marking the old holy sites with its own signs. For the enthusiast the following sites are of great interest:

- the village of Boschetto in the Valle Maggia. This small village composed of old "rusticos" (little stone houses) is full of stones with ancient, and some modern, cups, signs, crosses, human and animal figures, squares and rectangles. A similarity to the carvings of the nearby and very famous Valle Camonica in Italy is apparent.
- the Masso della Predescia high above the charming village of Gandria. A huge rock with more than 80 cup marks, footprints, crosses and squares has a commanding view over the Lago di Lugano.
- the Valle Calanca and the Valle Mesolina, not far from the capital Bellinzona, have many secluded cup-and sign-marked rocks.

Crossing the Italian border and back into Switzerland near the town of Chiavenna one reaches the Val Bregaglia; from history and traditions it is oriented to Italy and the Ticino (the locals speak Italian) but from the political structure it belongs to the canton of Graubünden, the largest

canton of Switzerland and certainly paradise for the researcher of prehistoric rock carvings in my country. In the Val Bregaglia there are many intriguing cup- and cross-marked stones, as well as some standing stones, but they are difficult to find; a most interesting rock with 14 pairs of human footprints was found near the village of Soglio, but it is now unsignposted and forgotten in a garden in the town of Chur in Graubünden.

Crossing the Maloja pass into the Engadin, the Romantsch-speaking part of this country brings you to the three superb cup-, footprint-, cross- and square-marked rocks of Tarasp and Boscha; these are known in the Engadin as "Hexenplatten", Witches' Stones: tradition tells that witches danced on these rocks and the imprints of their broomsticks left the cupmarks. The rock at Tarasp was also used as an execution place.

Crossing another pass (either the Albula or the Julier) brings you to two of the most impressive prehistoric sites. On a mountain pasture near the village of Sils im Domleschg are the famous rock carvings of Carschenna; eleven rocks are covered with beautiful cup and ring marks, as well as animal, human and other unidentified carvings. It is quite breathtaking. Altogether there are about 300 cups, most with several rings; some crosses were added at a later date.

[It should be noted that to drive near to the mountain pasture a permit is needed. Contact the Gemeindekanzlei at Sils im Domleschg].

About half an hour from Sils im Domleschg near the winter resorts of Flims and Lax lies the village of Falera. On an ancient holy site, Planezzas, just a little above the village, is a most impressive megalithic site, not such huge stones as at Yverdon-les-Bains or Sion, but a complex of 27 stones, inside which stands the church of St. Remigius; near the entrance to the cemetery is a stone with cross- and cup-markings. In a wood on the same hill is carved on a rock a smiling (!) human figure, quite similar to the one in the Rätische Museum in Chur. Near the village are to be found many more cupmarks. Some of the local churches and cemeteries own cup-marked or other carved rocks.

I have not mentioned the Swiss/German part of Switzerland, but its rock carvings are not so important.

Only co-operative research and exchange of information may provide the answer to these prehistoric enignmas.

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THREE TALES OF ALEXANDER CAMPBELL, SURVEYOR AT INVERARY

Frances Wilkins

"The student of the eighteenth century has ... a series of great quarries from which he may extract virtually unlimited amounts of information". [M S Anderson: Europe in the Eighteenth Century]. One of the most exciting such sources of information is the custom house letterbooks containing transcripts of the correspondence between the Board of Customs in Edinburgh and the local outports. This treasure trove of Scottish history was discovered while researching the true role of the Isle of Man in smuggling history. According to the government, that island was a major storehouse of goods which were subsequently smuggled on to the neighbouring coasts; thus if the fiscal rights of the Isle were purchased from the Duke of Atholl all smuggling would cease. In an attempt to investigate this contention the custom house letterbooks for north Wales, north-west England and the west coast of Scotland were studied over the period spanning 1765. The most rewarding side-effect of this research was the realisation that the Scottish custom house letterbooks were virtually untapped as a source of eighteenth century history. They include so much information that it is possible to recreate events in vivid detail. This led to research into Strathclyde's smuggling history; but it soon became apparent that smuggling was only a fraction of the local history included, and a listing was made of all the types of material available for Strathclyde.

Sadly not all the stories found in the customs letters can be used in books - this would lead to overkill! Instead any opportunity to use the more local information is welcomed; hence this paper on one customs official at Inverary during the 1780's.

Inverary Custom House

Despite the distance from the head port, Inverary creek, as also Lochgilphead creek, came under the Port Glasgow/ Greenock customs collection. The CE60 series of custom house letterbooks held at Strathclyde Regional Archives in Glasgow provide most of the information about this area. The material tends to be buried within the other letters concerning this large collection; but there are two specific books of orders from the Board to the tidewaiter at

Lochgilphead (1820-1823) and the coastwaiter at Inverary (1816-1825).

During the 1780's there appear to have been two customs officers at Inverary - the surveyor, Alexander Campbell, who was in charge of all customs matters at the creek, directly under the collector and comptroller at Port Glasgow, and the tidesman, Archibald McGibbon. An insight into the working of the creek is given in the following extract of a letter from Alexander Campbell to Port Glasgow. "The method of landing coals here is by the 5 bushels barrel and the vessel is never allowed to land but in the presence of either Archibald McGibbon or me. The want of a boat puts it much out of our power to board vessels when they are coming into the harbour but we always do it how soon they come to an anchor and that we can get their own boat. I afterwards grant a sufferance to the tidesman here for landing the cargo, which he attends to till the whole is out".

The Tale of a Burned Boat

This tale gives a clue to Alexander Campbell's social standing in the town. In June 1785 he seized a boat loaded with three chalders of coals; he outlined the calendar of events in a letter to Port Glasgow dated December 1787.

25 June 1785 reported that the coal boat under seizure at Inverary was going to ruin.

2 July the coals were landed and stored in a cellar which had been loaned for the purpose.

29 July a new return of seizure was submitted in Archibald McGibbon's name.

9 August the estimated value of the boat and coals was sent to the collector.

29 July 1786 the boat was still going to ruin, the cellar was "demanded of me" and "if an order for selling the boat and coals was not got immediately they would not pay the expenses".

22 September the boat was burned. "There was bonfires in town that night on account of the Marquis of Lorn's birthday. As I passed the evening at his Grace the Duke of Argyll's I knew nothing of the boat's being burnt till next day. Commissary Duncan Campbell of this place had a very good boat burnt the same night".

24 December 1787 "till this day neither he [Duncan Campbell] nor I could find out who burned them though we are convinced it was done by a parcel of blackguards".

On 18 December 1787 the collector at Port Glasgow concluded that the boat had been destroyed "by boys in a paroxysm of juvenile entertainment". The coals were put up for sale on 25 December 1787 at 18s per chalder.

The Tale of a Parcel of Salt

All salt used in the curing of fish had to be accounted for by both the fish curers and the local custom house. In 1787 a parcel of 40 bushels of salt was sent from Greenock to Inverary: 13 bushels in the Nancy, Alexander Weir master, from John McVicar to Patrick McDougal and 27 bushels in the Jessie sent by John Grahame and Duncan Angus for the Isles fishing.

Despite the mention of Patrick McDougal, all this salt appeared to go into the custody of Hugh Wright, a Glasgow man who had gone to Inverary to cure fish but left the town without going to the custom house to make up his account. Wright entered at Inverary 18 barrels of herrings cured with part of the salt [20 bushels or 5 barrels] so that there were 20 bushels [contained in 4 barrels] still to be accounted for by him. "Upon enquiry ... I am informed he sold it in this country for how soon he entered it here he carried off the rest of the salt to St Catherines (opposite to this town) where the herring fleet lay and never came back here again".

In an attempt to complete his salt accounts Campbell wrote to Grahame, and to Lym whom he believed to be John McVicar's partner, in Greenock. John Grahame replied on 21 April 1788 "Please know that I know nothing about Hugh Wright nor did I ever sell him any salt. The persons to whom I sold it was Dugald McCallum, master of the Inverary packet, who told me that the salt was accounted for and that a certificate might be obtained for it any time. The quantity was six barrels containing 27 bushels. You'll therefore stop McCallum's vessel, the Jessie, until the salt is accounted for as I can give no further account of it. Indeed I intended to have sent to you for a certificate in a few days". Robert Lym replied the same day "As for that man Hugh Wright I never sold him one pound of no kind of salt. Besides I never knew such a man, and indeed he was very impertinent in taking my name in vain and I hear he has done the same on John Grahame. For John McVicar I do not know what he has done but I spoke to him and he told me that he sold to different people in your town, which is [reported] in your custom house. I had

30 tons [of salt] from Liverpool some time ago and in the meantime I gave John McVicar the one half of the same, which is recorded in our custom house, each man to account for himself ... I did not sell one pound of salt to Argyll shore this season".

Alexander Campbell, Archibald McGibbon and Alexander McIntyre, messenger in Inverary, who was to act as constable, went by ferry, Donald Fletcher boatman, to St Catherines on 14 May 1788. They searched all the houses and only found part of a barrel of salt in the custody of Margaret McDougal, who was described as being "well acquainted with Wright". Precognitions were taken from five witnesses, Nicol McNichol aged 74 years, Donald Bell (70, married), James Fisher (73, married), Margaret McDougal (60, a widow) and Robert McNabb (50,unmarried). According to their evidence:

- two barrels of salt were lodged by Wright in Nicol McNichol's house. After the fishing season was over, Peter Forbes and Donald McBryden, both from Ardghoiline [?], came with a horse and sledge and carried off one barrel. Either Peter Forbes or his father James Forbes, tackman at Ardghoiline, paid 9 or 10s to Donald McBryden as the price of the barrel.
- about six weeks later, one McArthur, servant to James Campbell, tackman in Pollockorkadale, near Lochgoilhead, took another barrel for his master.
- near the end of the fishing season Hugh Wright sold or gave away a barrel of salt to the master of a fishing boat belonging to Otter, Peter McIlchattan master, who gave Margaret Mc Dougal's daughter 2s sterling to pay for the barrel which contained the salt.
- a fourth barrel, about half full of salt, was left with Margaret McDougal. This was "delivered" to Alexander Campbell.

At the beginning of January 1788 Wright was in the country, collecting the price of his salt.

On 5 July 1788 Alexander Campbell received reimbursement for his expenses on the St Catherines trip: ferry 6s; the constable 5s; four people who emitted declarations 4s, and his own and the party's expense 6s 6d, totalling £1 1s 6d.

The Tale of a Possible Wine Smuggle

This was a busy time for Alexander Campbell. During May 1788 he was involved in an enquiry into a cargo of coal and culm for James Campbell of Silvercraigs, Esq., provost of

Inverary. Here is a summary of the events:
Saturday 10 May: the sloop Anderson, John McPherson master, loaded 4 chalders of coal and 14 chalders of culm at Irvine, leaving that port in the early evening.
Monday 12 May: the sloop arrived at Inverary "before any person in town was up". Archibald McGibbon was at the quay, supervising the unloading of a vessel of coals from the Clyde for the Duke of Argyll. Campbell "desired him to hail or call the sloop's boat that we saw at anchor". McGibbon boarded the sloop and returned with the master, McPherson, who reported that he had coal and culm for the provost. At this stage James Campbell applied to the surveyor "for liberty to land the coal at Dunderave castle, where he always stays for six months of the year".
Tuesday 13 May: six barrels or 30 bushels of coal,given by the provost "for the use of a woollen manufactory about four miles from this place" was"put on board of a boat alongside of the vessel without coming on shore at all as the boat could land the coals within a mile of the factory. To this I was personally present". Then the vessel went to Dunderave with Archibald on board.
Wednesday 14 May: the sloop returned to Inverary. "I was on the quay when she arrived and observed she was higher on the water than she ought to have been for landing 4 chalders of coals, on which I called Archibald McGibbon and told him I suspected they had more than 4 chalders of coal on board and that he had not attended his duty properly ... Upon which he told me there was 4 chalders of culm landed as well as 4 chalders of coals". Next the master applied for a sufferance to take the remaining 10 chalders of culm to Lochgilphead "which is part of the estate of provost Campbell, he at the same time telling me it was intended for burning lime to improve a moss there". The sloop sailed for Lochgilphead between one and two o'clock in the afternoon as the surveyor and McGibbon "saw her from St Catherines, where we were then, sailing out of this Loch".

This was not the end of the story as an anonymous letter had been sent to the collector at Port Glasgow dated Inverary 13 May 1788. "Notwithstanding the exertions of the government to suppress smuggling yet it is carried on in this to a great height. So much so that in the face of the officers of the revenue stationed here a sloop commanded by a McPherson has last night anchored in this harbour under

pretext of landing a cargo of coals from Irvine but the true story is that she carries a considerable quantity of wine to the address of the only entered cellar for the commodity in this place [belonging to provost Campbell]. I do not say that the officers here know it but it is no less true and if you immediately despatch the proper officer here he will find the liquor in the cellar and the vessel in the harbour. You will take care to keep this letter as perhaps the hand may be known and if this as well as the other parts of this letter be not attended to I will have recourse to a higher Board. I am not sure but you will hear from me again".

As a result of this letter, the collector sent Alexander Thomson, coxswain of the Greenock boat, overland to Inverary. He arrived there about 7 o'clock in the morning of the 16th. Two men were left to guard the cellar, one man was sent by land "to prevent any notice (which was almost impossible) being given of our going" while Alexander Campbell, McGibbon and a constable [presumably Alexander McIntyre again] joined the Greenock party on a boat which took them to Dunderave. "Mr Thomson, I and the whole party found the culm put up in a heap against the outside of the court of the castle and the coal in a broken house within it". They then searched all the other outhouses and the countryside "nigh" but found no sign of any uncustomed goods. Back at Inverary they"procured an account of Mr Campbell's stock of wine there from the excise officer. We found the quantity in his cellar to be under the credit stated by the excise officer".

The surveyor was convinced that there was something wrong about the time taken by the vessel in coming from Irvine. Saturday evening to "before any person was out of bed on the morning of Monday the 12th [was] an uncommon quick passage". But on 5 June 1788 Port Glasgow reported on the anonymous letter to the Board in Edinburgh. "From the circumstances stated we are aware that there is not a proper foundation to attach the vessel as having run the wine therein mentioned".

Thomson's expenses for himself and his men, Alexander Jamieson,Robert Panton, John Campbell, Donald McLachlan, Joseph Rosburgh, Duncan Campbell and Dougald McKellar from Greenock and Duncan Campbell and John Christie from Port Glasgow totalled £1 18s 5d; they included: May 15, supper for ten men at Lochgoilhead 5s; one bottle of whisky 1s 4d; May 16, breakfast at St Catherines ferry 5s; 4 pints beer 1s; crossing the ferry to Inverary 2s 3d; dinner at Inverary 9s;

crossing the ferry back 2s 3d; supper at Lochgoilhead 5s; 5 pints of beer 1s 3d. May 17, breakfast 5s; one bottle whisky 1s 4d. [One wonders if the bottles of whisky had paid the full excise duty]. In comparison, Campbell's expenses for the hire of the boat from Inverary to Lochgilphead and the constable's fee came to £1 2s 8d.

Reference: CE60 1/20 Letters from the collector at Port Glasgow to the Board.

Editorial note; Mrs Wilkins adds that her recommendation of the letterbooks as source material is intended to encourage others to study and use them as it is no longer feasible for her to do so.

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THE PORT ASKAIG TO FEOLIN FERRY

Walter Weyndling

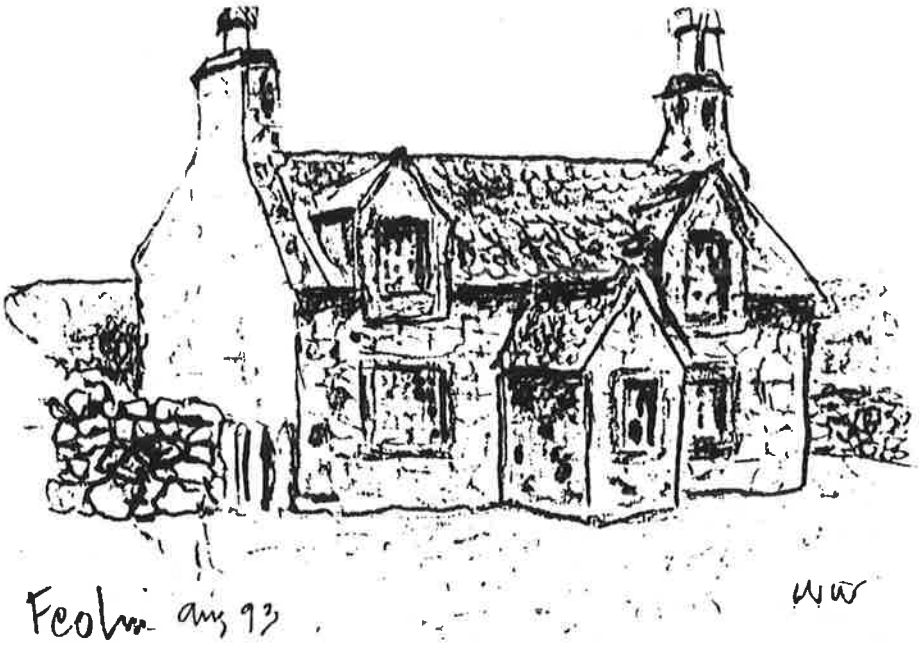
The ferry crosses the one-mile-wide narrows of the Sound of Islay which separates Islay from Jura. Port Askaig is the harbour on the Islay side of the Sound; approaching it from the interior of Islay one is treated to a spectacular skyline of the three Paps of Jura, almost too perfect in their geometry. It is one of the few harbours on the coasts of Islay which are safe in most weathers, being sheltered from the west by cliffs on the Islay side and from the east by Jura hills; only when a north-easterly funnels down the Sound do ships have to shift their anchors across the Sound to Whitefarland Bay. The tide runs fast in the narrows; it can race to five knots, and to an untutored eye the course of the ferry boat can be baffling. Starting from the Jura pier of Feolin the boat charges about half a mile upstream from Port Askaig only to be carried crabwise by the current to its proper destination. The crossing calls for ferrymen of great skill. Such were the MacPhee brothers, Peter, and Archie commonly known as The Gordie: a pair of incomparable boatmen and respectively the coxswain and the mechanic of the first Islay lifeboat. Between them they worked the ferry from Port Askaig for nearly half a century.

On the ferry Peter was in command and Archie the mate and chief engineer. Peter was a man of few words and stuck to

his Gaelic. Passengers' inquiries, if granted Peter's nodding permission, had to be addressed to The Gordie, who usually could be coaxed to translate question and answer. The questioner would then perhaps be initiated into one of the mysteries of the Sound. The ferrymen's knowledge of the Sound was as unique as their fare structure; usually half-a-crown for a local, but a tweedy gentleman in a deerstalker would be assessed as an "English Toorist" and be charged a pound. Should he be so misguided as to sport a kilt as well as a deerstalker he would be classed as a "toff" and billed for perhaps thirty shillings. The MacPhees were no respecters of persons, not even those "of the cloth". It has been said that a "Wee Free" minister, Jura-church-bound from Islay on a Sunday, had to spend the night on the wrong side of the Sound because he protested that his conscience did not allow him to handle money on the Sabbath.

Archie and Peter resided on the Port Askaig side of the narrows: Archie in the Rock House, literally tucked into the cliff protecting the harbour from the west, and Peter in a wee cottage in the next bay, known as Freeport, some few hundred yards to the north. Other than at scheduled times the ferry had to be summoned by phoning Rock House, whose number was conveniently Port Askaig 200. Holidaymakers in occupation of Feolin Cottage on the Jura side, which was some ten miles from the nearest telephone box, had to adopt other means of communication. Alastair Borthwick, Scottish journalist and broadcaster, told me of having had Feolin Cottage for a home in the first year of his married life. When a small expansion of his family became imminent he arranged with Archie a signal flag system to be applied in emergency. The prospective father kept running out of cigarettes as tension and excitement mounted and on two successive evenings he hailed the ferry to get him to the Port Askaig shop. When on the third day the flag went up the brothers took their time to respond and the newcomer had to be given a DIY reception on Jura instead of in the comfort of the Islay Cottage Hospital!

The MacPhee brothers operated with two motor boats. The larger one much resembled a standard 24ft ship's motor lifeboat and bore the name of Rothesay Castle. (The fact that a Union Castle cargo ship of that name went aground in the Sound of Islay soon after the last war is of course a coincidence!). Rothesay Castle replaced the Tritonia, herself



salvaged from a wreck on the Atlantic coast of the island. The smaller ferryboat Kilroy carried a mast and a lugsail, which The Gordie maintained was the most efficient form of life-saving equipment; "She's bound to blow to one shore or the other".

Until quite late in the 18th century haymaking was uncommon in the islands, which made it necessary for a large proportion of livestock to be disposed of each autumn. In 1772 it was estimated that 1700 cattle were ferried from Islay to Jura. Statistics for the years 1801-1807 show the average annual number to have risen to 2600. The Port Askaig to Feolin crossing became then a crucial link in the drove route from Islay via Jura to the mainland by the Lagg-Keills ferry. Feolin boasted one of the four ferry inns or "change houses" of Jura, the others being at Lagg, Kinuachdrach and Corran. The Feolin pier, a mighty creation of Thomas Telford, with ramps on either side and a cattle enclosure, still stands solid bearing testimony to its importance in bygone days. In 1787 Islay drovers complained of the lack of a fank for enclosing their beasts while waiting for the ferry at Port Askaig. In that year one was established on 60-80 acres, which speaks for the size of the droves. At the turn of the century the ferry tenant was

instructed to keep the stone slipway in order so as to prevent cattle tripping. He was also to "adjudicate in disputes between drovers as to priority in getting on the ferry". In 1824 a traveller described the noisy scene at the Port Askaig ferry and concluded that whisky did not tend to diminish the hustle and vociferation amongst the drovers and the boatmen. This is of interest because only six years earlier the local Stent Committee did away with the unlimited issue of whisky to the ferrymen on account of "the surplus quantity being often injurious to the cattle and proprietors thereof". The allowance was fixed at 1 mutchkin (an English pint) for every 30 cattle ferried.

At the turn of the century there was still a ferry from the Jura as well as from the Islay side, the last (rowing) ferryman being James Sutherland. He lived in the ferry house, which still stands, and marked his initials JS and the date 1886 on the northern ramp of the Feolin pier. It is understood that he died in 1919.

In the mid 1960's a 100ft long steel landing craft, the Isle of Gigha managed by John Rose, a sailor/engineer/entrepreneur started to trade around Islay as a free-lance vehicle ferry. Archie did not take kindly to this intrusion, and in order to stop John Rose using the Feolin slip he cemented in solid iron spikes one weekend so that the ramp could not go down. Come Monday morning when John Rose with the Isle of Gigha swept round the point and saw the position, without hesitation he lowered the heavy ramp and proceeded to shear off the spikes. In 1966 the Isle of Gigha capsized on a passage from Gigha to Islay with the loss of two lives and four lorries. The salvaged vessel had her range of stability improved by the erection of buoyancy tanks on deck, port and starboard. She recommenced trading under the flag of the newly formed Western Ferries Company and was renamed the Sound of Islay. Following the demise of Peter and the retirement of Archie in 1969 the Sound of Gigha dressed in the Western Ferries red and white colours and irreverently christened by The Gordie "Sgadan Dearg" (Red Herring) took up the ferry service between Islay and Jura, now of the roll-on-roll-off kind. She successfully plies across those narrows with passengers and vehicles at the time of writing. The service has vastly grown in importance since Calmac have discontinued their sailings to Jura, leaving the Port Askaig-Feolin ferry as

the only means of transport to that island. So it is likely to remain unless the periodically resuscitated idea of an "overland" route to Islay via a short crossing between Keills on the mainland and Lagg on Jura ever comes to pass.

Long after his retirement The Gordie could be seen in his Para Handy cap on Port Askaig pier chatting with his friends, be it one of the Astors of Jura, Fraser, Lord Margadale's keeper, or Willy "Fish" the Islay Lifeboat mechanic; or he could be overheard muttering under his breath to those on the bridge of a Calmac or Western Ferries ship manoeuvring to make a landfall at Port Askaig "Give me the telegraph here and I'll bring her in".

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NOTE on the COVER

Anne M. Kahane

Barnashalg, now deserted,lies in the hills about a mile south of Carsaig Bay, on a gently sloping terrace sheltered from the prevailing SW wind, but open enough to be sunny. References go back to the 18th century; it is known that Campbells were there in the 1800's and that the McGilp family worked the farm and lived there until the late 1950's.

There are the remains of three large handsome barns, one of which has an outside stone stair to the first floor; the most easterly has a horse-gang or mill attached to its east wall, much of the works surviving, and a threshing machine, of Ayrshire manufacture, still in place inside. The main dwelling, consisting of three linked units, has some of its tongue-and-groove pine lining still attached to the walls. There is another house west of that. Across the burn, further west still, the gable ends of another three buildings can be seen, so quite a big community lived here once.

The old track to Barnashalg is now rather wet and overgrown, but has been beautifully constructed, terraced into the hillside where necessary, and built up with huge blocks of stone on the down slope, like so many old tracks in the district.

It is hoped that a fuller account of the place and its people will be published in a future issue of Kist.

...oooOooo...

AFTER CULLODEN: Jacobite Prisoners in Barbados.

Gloria Siggins

In the aftermath of the battle of Culloden some 270 of the captured rebels were sentenced to be transported to the West Indies.

Since the meteoric ascendancy of sugar cultivation in the 1640's, transportation for life - introduced in 1597 for the "Punishment of Rogues, Vagabonds and Sturdy Beggars" - had become the expedient solution to the problem of the disposal of prisoners. It had the merit of removing miscreants and their baleful example far from England's shores, while usefully supplying cheap labour to the plantations. It was also profitable for, once pardoned, a batch of prisoners became a marketable commodity and could change hands more than once. Barbados was so frequently the destination of deportees that in 1654 a visitor observed "this Island is the Dunghill on which England doth cast forth her rubig ... it maintains more souls than any peice of land in the bigness of the wordell". And this was barely thirty years after colonisation had begun! By the mid 18th century every suitable corner of the island was under sugar and there was a teeming and disaffected population made up of descendants of the early influx of voluntary settlers; of transported felons; of political prisoners resulting from uprisings (over a thousand Royalists were summarily banished or fled there after the Civil War); and further of many innocent individuals, men and boys, forcibly recruited or "barbadosed" in the scramble to meet the insatiable demand for plantation labour. African slaves were not numerous at first, but as the advantages of negro labour over white became apparent, importation accelerated greatly and as early as 1700 Africans formed the majority of the population.

A list of the transported prisoners of the '45, compiled from London sources, gives the name, age, home and occupation of each man and sometimes odd details considered of possible interest to a new employer. Ages range mainly from 18 to 60 with a preponderance of men in their 40's and 50's. There are also two boys aged 13 and 14. The great majority of the prisoners had of course worked on the land: "husbandry", "farmer", "herded cattle" appear against many names, but a number of other skills and occupations are

also represented: miller, farrier, weaver, brewer and shoemaker among them, plus peddlers and beggars, and of course the servants of people of rank, captives themselves, such as the Master of Lovat and Lord Cromarty. Several could play the fiddle. It was noted that a tailor from Inverness was club-footed.

There is not room to quote extensively from this poignant document but the following entries have been selected for their Argyll connections. The erratic spelling illustrates well the difficulty the authorities had in understanding Highland speech and writing it down.

Caguhoon of Colquoun, Archibald	32	Argyllshire. Farmer in Appin
MacDonald, Donald	-	Morven, Argyll. Farmer at Fivepenny, Bigg
MacDonald, Ranald or Ronald	-	Morven, Argyll. Farmer at Grinlin Higg
MacDonald, Roger or Roderick	22	Isle of Rigg. Farmer at Kirktown, Rogg
MacKenzie, Alexander	13	Argyllshire. Tailor
Maclean, John	16	Argyll. Labourer
MacPhee, Murdoch	43	Morven, Argyll. Farmer, Sandvegg
Morrison, Alexander	50	Lewis. Distiller, Isle of Mull
Stewart, Duncan	21	Argyllshire.

While their future was being decided the prisoners were held at Tilbury Fort - the "low fellows" referred to in A Concomitant of the 1745 Rebellion (Kist 40) - where in grim conditions many died before they could be despatched to either Jamaica or Barbados.

We can follow the Barbados consigment further. Among records preserved in Bridgetown is a Deed with a list appended of 127 persons, including at least one from Argyll, who arrived in the island in September 1748 in the ship Frere. The Deed states at great length that having been pardoned for their part in the "Unnatural Rebellion", the "Several Persons" listed were now bound "servant and apprentice" to one Samuel Smith, a London merchant, for shipment to the island colonies or plantations of America. Once at their destination the men must be employed in work to which they were accustomed and for the rest of their

lives must be provided with "Meat Drinks Clothes Washing Lodging". Failure to comply with these terms attracted a £50 fine. A Memorandum with the Deed records the further conveyance of the "Several Persons" to John Hanbury, another London merchant. The terms of this transaction are much as stated in the Deed but this time a period of seven years servitude is specified, with freedom to be granted at the end of it.

The list of names against which the 127 men signed formal acceptance of their fate - the majority with an X - contains anomalies which make positive matching with names on the full list difficult. There are further misspellings and several men with the same name - five John Grants and three John Mackenzies, for example - but no personal details to tell which is which. All the MacDonalds appear to have been sent to Barbados and their name is now spelt in the Irish way, Donal McDonell.

So, nearly four years after their capture, the men of the '45 were dispersed to the plantations to begin what amounted to a life sentence. Needless to say a master could and often did disregard his side of the contract with impunity and many indentured servants succumbed to ill-usage and the rigours of the climate long before their sentences expired. For those who survived, "freedom" often meant a feckless existence in poverty and social isolation, objects of curiosity to visitors to the island and an embarrassment to the government.

Men of the '45 formed the last single batch of prisoners to be shipped to Barbados. Demand for labour was declining and soon, with the loss of the American colonies, the practice of transportation virtually ceased - until, that is, the year 1787 when 788 convicts sailed with the First Fleet to the new colony of Australia.

Ref: Dr E J McConney, Prisoners of the '45 Rising. Journal of the Barbados Museum and Historical Society, May 1963.

Postscript.

By a coincidence, Kist 40 happened to arrive during a visit from a Barbadian friend who has found he is descended on his mother's side from James Grant of Blair, Glen Moriston. His family tree which thanks to modern research facilities is almost complete also contains two other names which can be found on Dr McConney's list.

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MACPHERSONS in the WEST of SCOTLAND and IRELAND

James McPherson

Most Macphersons would assume perhaps erroneously that their roots are in the Badenoch region of Inverness-shire. Not many are aware of their possible origins in the West Highlands and Islands of Scotland and also in Ireland. The following is an extract from The Posterity of the Three Brethren, Fourth Edition, by Alan G Macpherson, published by the Clan Macpherson Association, Canada:

"In addition to individuals of unknown clan affiliation, Aeneas MacDonnell (Aongus Ilach) of Sanda, "called MacParson" is on record as a younger son of that John Cahanagh MacDonell of Duniveg, chief of the Clann Iain Mhor or Clan Donald South of Islay, Kintyre and the Glens of Antrim who was executed at Edinburgh in 1499. Whether he was ancestral to any of the Macphersons of South Kintyre or Antrim is uncertain. Rory MacAlasdair MacDonald, rector or persun of Kilchoan (Ardnamurchan), Arisaig and Knoydart, and Dean of Morven in 1545, a younger half-brother of John Moydartach, the famous chief of Clanranald, was probably the father of Allan MacPerson vic Alester one of the leaders of the Clanranald who obtained a royal pardon in 1548, and as such the eponymous ancestor of the Macphersons of Ardnamurchan and Moidart. There is also record in the early seventeenth century of one Robert Munro "alias McFersoun" of Creich (north shore of the Dornoch Firth), of the Munros of Assynt and Auchnes. These men conform to the Irish pattern of association with leading lineages of distinct clans within their own territories, as did Duncan MacChoinneach of the Siol Ghillechatain and Clann Mhuirich, Parson of Laggan.

The Clann a'Phearsain descended from Dugald the Parson, a son of Colin mor Campbell of Lochow (patronymic ancestor of the Earls and Dukes of Argyle), appears to have been represented in its senior line by the Macphersons of Dubpenyg (Dowpin) and Ardcalmisaig, baronies in the Lordship of Glassarie on Lochfyneside. The first bearer of the name on record was Donald McPersun (or McInpersuyn), a minor baron of Argyle who was present at an inquest at Inverleacan in 1355, and members of the family are on record till about 1600. In the 18th century the leading family would appear to have been the Macphersons of Larig in Glenurquhie

and the Braes of Glenfyne. Meanwhile, junior branches moved out as Campbell influence spread; into Cowal by 1451; into Menteith and Glenogle by 1490; into Bute where the Macphersons of Kerrytonlia are on record from 1506 till the 19th century (and whence some went to Hillsborough in Ulster); into South Kintyre and the Rinns of Islay by 1541; and by the 18th century a scattering of families has passed through Breadalbyn into Rannoch and Mid-Atholl - always and everywhere associated with Campbell lairds and tacksmen.

A century earlier Argyleshire clansmen, usually in the company of Campbells, were scattered across the "plantation" lands of Ulster: James McParson in the Ards of Co. Down and Walter McParson, a sword-and-pikeman in the "redshank" barony of Strabane, Co. Tyrone, both in 1631; John McIlpherson, a resident of Rameltan, Co. Donegal, in 1665; John McFarson, a ruling elder of the Laggan presbytery at Letterkenny in the same county, between 1672 and 1700; and Allin McO Farsan, a resident of the parish of Templemore who married in Derry Cathedral in 1699. The name, despite its variations, and as distinct from its occurrence in the other provinces, was a surname in Ulster among both Catholics and Protestants of Scots origin.

The Clann a'Phearsain Ruaidh was of later origin than the Glassarie and Badenoch clans. It was founded by an O Docherty warrior-scholar from the heart of the Lordship of the Isles in Islay, who accompanied Hugh MacDonald to Skye in the later years of the 15th century to wrest Sleat from the MacLeods and thus establish the Clann Huistean or Clan Donald North in Skye. Descended from an O Docherty gallowglass captain who came to Islay from Ulster in the "Irish Retinue" that accompanied Aine O Cahan when she married Angus og of the Isles (ob.c. 1329), the Pearsain Ruadh or "Red-haired Parson" was, therefore, of the Cenel Connaill and Ui Neill of Irish Ulster. He resided at Ostaig in Sleat, whence his descendants spread through Sleat, Trotternish and North Uist with the MacDonalds, bearing with them the twin traditions of the warrior and learned classes of Gaeldom. The senior line began with a succession of hereditary standard-bearers which ended with John ban MacMhartuinn Macpherson, the leader of the victorious MacDonalds at Blar a'Chullin in 1601; he was later killed defending Castle Knock single-handed. It continued with two centuries of service in the church, in Sleat, Barra and Duirinish, before leaving the Highlands to

occupy a wider stage. In 1760 Dr. John Macpherson of Sleat, a scholar of some distinction himself, entertained and gave assistance to James Macpherson of Ruthven in his quest for Ossianic poems in the Western Highlands, and in 1778 his daughter married one of the Macphersons of Uvie in Badenoch, associations which perhaps gave rise to the notion that "the little clan in Skye" was a branch of the Badenoch clan. "

My own family are on record in the Parish of Craignish from 1758 to 1871; after consultation with the author we have concluded that they are descended from the Clann a' Phearsain and the Macphersons of Dubpenyg and Ardcalmisaig although this is impossible to prove conclusively.

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Miss Marion Campbell has kindly supplied a few notes to the above for Kist readers.

1) For the non Gaelic reader it should be noted that the surname means only "son of (any) parson", originally distinguishing when so many personal names were identical.

2) Dubpenyg (Black Pennyland) is Dippen, a township beside Blarbuie; Ardcalmisaig was (probably) nearby.

3) James Macpherson was not "of Ruthven" in the Scots sense but was the son of a farmer in Ruthven.

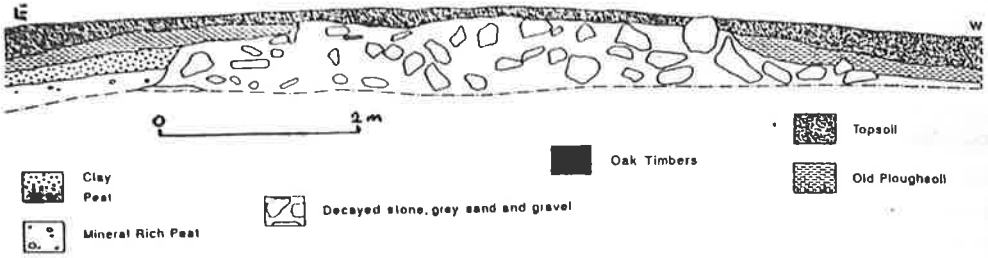
...oooOooo...

AN TAIRBEART: THE PORTAGE

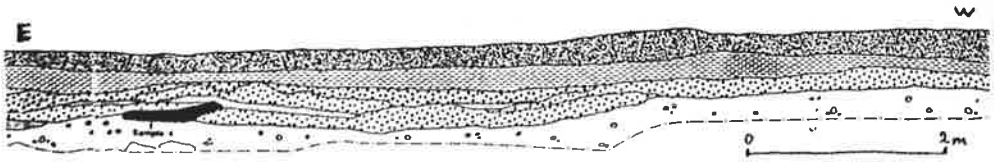
The following is a summary of a report made by AOC (Scotland) Ltd. on discoveries made in a field (map ref. NR 853 682) just south of Tarbert, Kintyre. It has kindly been made available to Kist by Dr and Mrs Duncan of Baravalla.

On a rocky outcrop are the foundations of a small rectangular building, possibly the peel built at West Tarbert on the orders of Robert the Bruce in 1326. [See Kist 34]. Tarbert means in Gaelic an 'over-bringing', a place where boats were hauled overland from one body of water to another. The portage across the narrow, low-lying isthmus at Tarbert was the scene of an incident recorded in the Orkneyinga Saga: in 1097 Magnus Barelegs was drawn across it in a skiff in order to claim Kintyre for Norway. The saga writer commented that ships were regularly hauled across at this place.

Traditionally, ships were hauled across using tree-trunks as rollers, so when deep ploughing of the field brought up



The section. Southern face of the drainage ditch.



Continuation of section. (Join right side of this strip to left side of strip above).

several large pieces of timber some three to four years ago, it was conjectured that these might be the remnants of the original surface of the portage, laid down where the surface was boggy. One of these timbers remained in situ, some 55cm below the present ground surface, in the face of a drainage ditch cut through the centre of the field. The ditch had also cut through a discrete area of large boulders and stones. It was conjectured that these stones might be a surface relating to the use of the building on the outcrop. Some six timbers were sampled for dendrochronological analysis and the section in the drainage ditch was cleaned and recorded.

The timbers were all oak (Quercus sp.) and all were decayed to varying degree due to exposure and desiccation. As a result none retained any sapwood and the heartwood/sapwood boundary was also damaged and decayed. The timbers were long and very straight-grained, the longest being 4.96m in length. There were only two branch scars visible along this length. Only forest-grown oaks would produce straight-grained boles of this length with few branch attachments. Only fragments of the original cross-section of each timber remained. As there was no toolworking visible, the timbers had either been shaped by cleaving or had split naturally.

Cross-sections of each timber, 10cm wide, were sampled

and the surfaces were prepared so that the tree-ring pattern was clear. This was done using a razor blade to produce a smooth glossy surface into which powdered chalk was rubbed to highlight the large springwood pores. The samples were then measured using standard dendrochronological equipment and cross-matched. The six samples produced promising long ring-patterns and pairs of samples cross-matched well together: samples 1 and 2 correlated well, but the correlation between Samples 5 and 6 was so close as to suggest an origin in the same tree. The samples in each pair were averaged together to form two sub-masters and were then run against each other and the remaining samples 3 and 4. No further matches were found. The four sequences, Samples 3, 4, and sub-masters 1/2 and 5/6 were then run against a suite of calendrically-dated chronologies from Ireland, Scotland and northern England spanning the last two millennia. However, no significant and consistent position of match could be found, and so the Tarbert timbers must remain undated.

The southern face of the drainage ditch was cleaned and recorded along a 20m section. The earliest feature visible is a pile of large boulders and stones, 7m across and 0.75m high, which had been dumped directly on to a subsoil of raised beach sands and gravels. To the west this feature peters out and the overlying ploughsoil lies directly on the subsoil. To the east a series of deposits had built up behind the pile of stones. A peat with bands of grey clay alternating with bands of mixed peat and clay had developed over the subsoil. The oaken timber, Sample 4, lay on one of the grey clay layers.

The field is poorly drained and the bands of grey clay probably represent episodic flooding. The stone pile may represent an attempt to provide a stable surface over the boggy ground; if it is a surface it is running roughly north-south in a line from the rocky outcrop to the higher land along which the present A83 runs. Peat started developing on the poorly-drained land and the timbers may have been a further attempt to provide a dry surface. Unfortunately, in the absence of dendrochronological dates these features cannot be dated.

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BOOK REVIEW

A NATURALIST in the HIGHLANDS 1767-1777. James Robertson. Ed. D M Henderson & J H Dickson. Scottish Academic Press. £15.

The Editor's suggestion that we might undertake an assessment of this volume was accepted with a definite lack of enthusiasm owing to the fact that we lay no claims to any particular interest in things botanical. In that state of mind we started on a reading, and having reached the last pages at once turned again to the beginning and came to the end with regret.

We have the text of three extensive tours on foot by James Robertson in 1767, 1768 and 1770, with a visit to Orkney and Shetland in 1769. Each of these gives us, in addition to details of plants of particular interest, descriptions of the terrain, the inhabitants, their mode of life - including the uses to which they put their plants - in short everything a traveller at that time would have noted. Wisely the editors have scrupulously retained the original form of the manuscript, including spelling, and have taken great trouble to identify in copious notes the place-names which the non-Gaelic-speaking author mangled to such a degree that most of them are at first glance incomprehensible. The notes are extremely helpful and represent an immense amount of research.

The areas covered by the expeditions are roughly these: 1767; from Edinburgh by Aberdeen, Nairn, Inverness, Tongue, Durness, back to Inverness and home. 1768; Hamilton, Irvine, Ayr, Girvan, Stranraer, Arran, Bute (both very detailed), Cowal, Inveraray, Oban, Mull, Ardnamurchan, Arisaig, Skye, Inverness, Perth and home. 1769; Orkney and Shetland (a less complete section). 1771; Perth, Braemar, Cairngorm, Dornoch, Inverness, Fort William, Killin, Loch Lomond, Glasgow and home.

There is a chapter on the Flora and Fauna of the Islands, and one on those of Ben Hope and Ben More. Amongst the several appendices is an illuminating 'Account of the Expence of a Botanik Expedition'. For a record of conditions in the Highlands in the second half of the 18th century the text is outstanding and in several respects surpasses Pennant and Boswell. There is real pleasure in encountering a volume which shows such a degree of care in its production.

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A review of George Moore and Friends by Frances Wilkins is unvoidably postponed to Kist 50 (the September issue).