



The 5.
Kist

T H E K I S T

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

.....

NUMBER FIVE: Whitsun 1973

Editor: F.S.Mackenna, M.A., F.S.A.

CONTENTS

Editorial I

Loch Awe Crannog Survey

C.M.McArdle, M.A., F.S.A.Scot. and
T.D.McArdle, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.Scot.2

Bird Watching in Mid-Argyll

Air vice-Marshal Gordon YoungI3

Rough-legged BuzzardI4

Thoughts on H.M's Mails in the 1850s

I.D.Jex Long, F.R.P.S.L.I5

Helen's Well

Mr James AllinghamI6

Bellanoch (part 2)

Mr Hugh GrahamI7

An Uncommon Fern

F.S.Mackenna, M.A., F.S.A.I8

"Come Away In"

Miss M.L.S.SandemanI9

Secretary's Notes27

...oOo...

Secretary:

Gordon Davis
Harbour Ho. Crinan

Price 20p
(by post 25p)
Free to Members

EDITORIAL

The present issue of Kist has a much greater claim to attention than most earlier numbers. Dr and Mrs McArdle have most generously allowed us to be the vehicle for the first public announcement of their work on the Loch Awe crannogs. There will be few readers who are not startled to learn of the number of these structures which have already been located there, and, as the writers say, it is quite obvious that drastic re-thinking must take place amongst archaeologists. To be the first to publish a report of this highly important development is indeed a very great honour; if we were a daily newspaper we might allude to it as a "scoop".

In consequence of the length of this paper, and the text of the delightful and nostalgic talk which Miss Sandeman gave us during the winter.... an occasion which we will long remember with the greatest pleasure.....we have had to curtail our other contributions slightly, but hope that any disappointment on the part of our member-authors will not modify their enjoyment of this issue.

We thank all who have sent us papers, notes or queries, and would repeat our plea for continued support in this direction; we can never have too great or varied a selection for our pages. Kist is your magazine, and its increasing success can only be maintained by your active practical support.

An event of great interest has been the publication of another book by our President. It is a strange mystical tale of haunting and disturbing beauty. The characters have been created with a tenderness and understanding which serves to mask the author's profound knowledge of the remote era of which she writes. (The Dark Twin: Marion Campbell. Turnstone Books. £1.95)

Our cover design is taken from an old Highland brass plaid brooch of a pattern almost the same as one shown in P.S.A.S. 1887, p.261; indeed the two are probably from a single source. It is shown 'life-size'.

LOCH AWE CRANNOG SURVEY

C.M.McArdle, M.A., F.S.A.Scot. and
T.D.McArdle, M.A., Ph.D., F.S.A.Scot.

Aims.

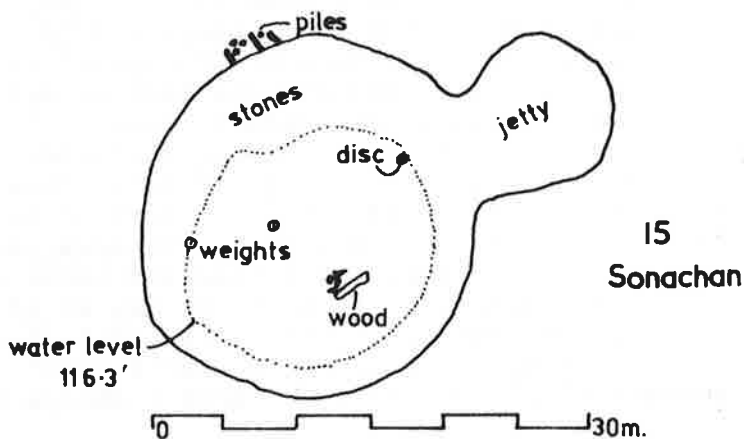
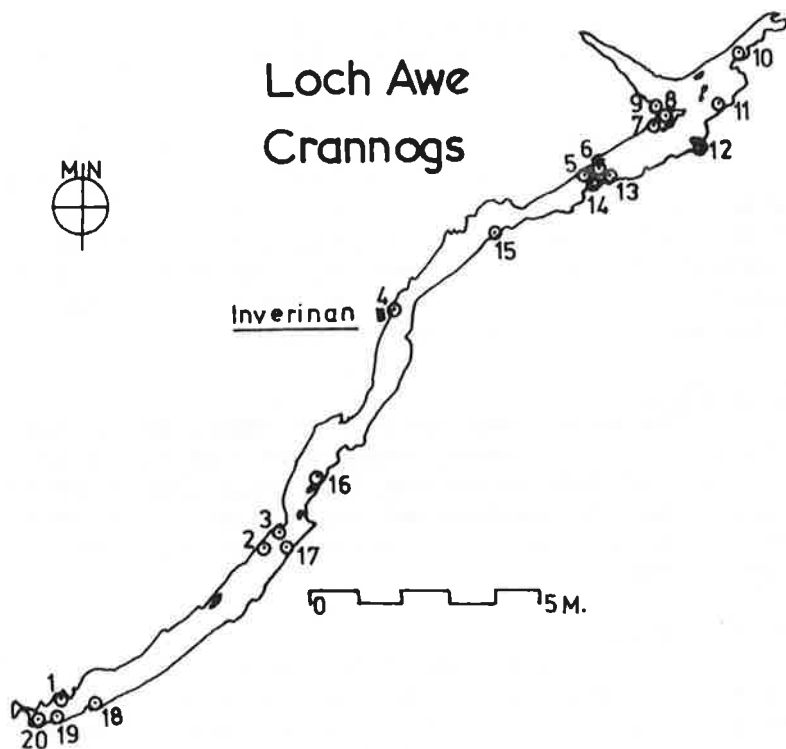
The aims of this survey were to locate and define the lake-dwellings (crannogs) of Loch Awe. Since most of them are normally wholly or largely submerged, diving is the only present means of study. The intention was to find and observe known examples, search probable sites for others, and, if time permitted, survey any found.

Personnel.

The team, consisting of Naval Air Command Sub-Aqua Club divers, under Sub.Lieut. Hardy, and members of Liverpool and Edinburgh Universities, under the archaeological direction of the writers, was based at Inverinan during September and October, 1972.

Background.

Crannogs, as early settlements, are mainly known from the land drainages of the 1860s-90s, when many, formerly under water, were exposed. Some were excavated and described at the time, principally by Munro (1882). Blundell (1913), Ritchie (1942), Scott (1960) and C.M.Piggott (1952) have excavated in this century, the last at Milton Loch I, the most informative site to date. A recent CI4 sample from this crannog, collected by the writers, yielded a date of c.500 B.C. This confirms the previous date for the plough stilt from that site. Despite this work, crannogs have been considered a rarity, and little was known of their relative importance as settlements, or of their dates, and nothing of their distribution or density in Scotland. In Loch Awe itself Campbell and Sandeman (1961) put forward three crannogs as



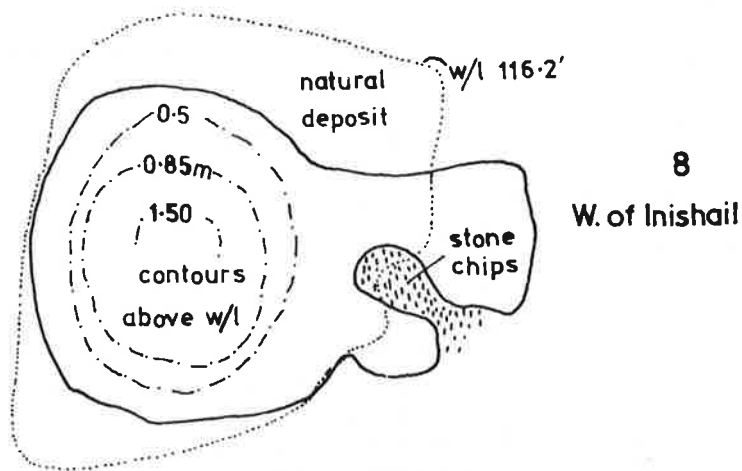
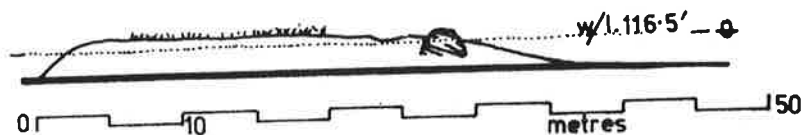
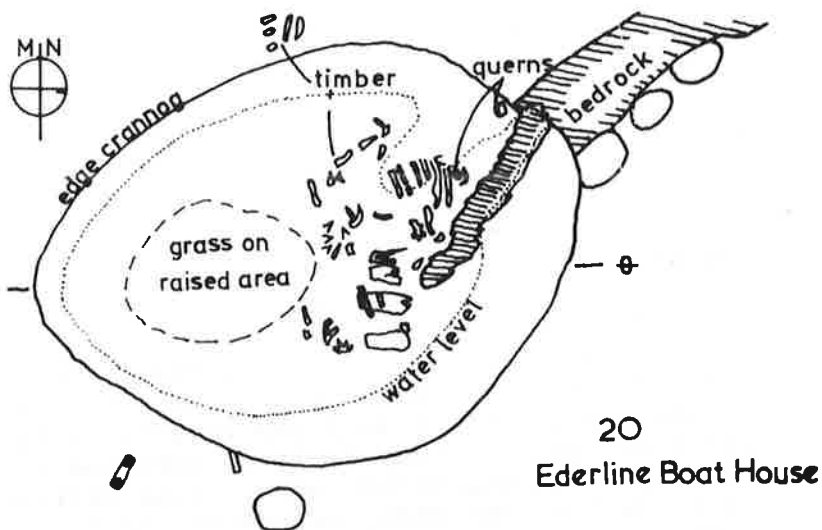
definite, and the recent Royal Commission survey of Lorn considered all the Lorn specimens as dubious. This highlights the lack of any definite knowledge of crannogs when we began our work.

At the beginning of our survey we had prepared a list of 60 sites for examination. These were all on likely stretches of bottom (i.e. less than 30' deep), and were taken from aerial photographs, the 3" to the mile charts of Scottish lochs, the 6" to the mile O.S. maps, and local information. Details from the North of Scotland Hydro-Electric Board suggested that the level of Loch Awe at this time should have been 121' O.D.; however, when we arrived in September the level was 117.1' O.D., dropping a further 1.5' during the survey (to 115.6', a very low level). This greatly aided our pilot survey as large portions of the crannogs were uncovered, but leaving outlying features such as harbours, causeways and jetties still under water.

Results.

20 crannogs were found along the length of the loch. The team had split into two, usually with six divers to a boat, each boat being directed by one of the writers. 60 sites in all were visited and briefly examined above and below water, where the natural was more easily distinguished from the artificial. On the surface the difference was sometimes blurred by quantities of vegetation, erosion etc. All the man-made mounds were composed of regular-sized stones which a man could comfortably lift, usually with an open structure, (i.e. no sand or gravel mixed in between). The crannogs also had a quite different gradient of slope from the natural surface, usually much steeper, which was especially noticeable under water. Some outlying features were noticed in this first-stage search, but very little timber.

The second stage of the project involved (a) surveying the crannogs, (b) a systematic search around. During this part of the operation most of the important finds were made, but search was very



greatly inhibited by the deep mud surrounding the crannogs. Apart from a few trial probings, the mud was deliberately left undisturbed because we are as yet unsure of the exact rate of bottom deposition in the lochs, and it would be easy to disturb informative strata. Results are as follows:

1. Timbers.

Timbers were a common feature in 9 out of the 20 crannogs (Nos. 4,5,6,12,13,14,15,16,20). It is likely that we can now confidently state that most crannogs are wooden structures with a facing of stone to prevent erosion; this had been suggested in the past, but had not been confirmed in the field before.

2. Worked Timbers.

Many of the timbers seen were trimmed beams; one had a slot to hold another timber (No.20, see plan), two had half-checks cut out (Nos.5,6), and a plank with 2 mortise holes, 7" square, had been seen previously off No.20. In one case (No.16) a radiating pattern of beams was visible in the surface (compare the Lochan Dugaill crannog, Argyll, Munro, (1893), fig.1). On No.6 a pattern of overlapping criss-cross timbers was traced for several square metres among and under the surface stones. This is again a style of construction that has been noticed in earlier excavations, and represents the main framework of the wood core of the artificial island. On No.5 a smooth plank embedded in the surface stones might be a re-used canoe bottom. On No.20 a large quantity of trunks and beams had been exposed when the surface stone was taken away in the past to build up one end of the crannog (presumably a later occupation).

3. Surface Stone Features.

No. 14 had a line of stones ending in a right-angle corner visible on the surface, probably a house foundation from a late occupation. On one side a vertical stone was set into the surface. No.13 showed a squarish low stone setting on its

surface, on top of many visible timbers with possibly a radial pattern (? late house on an earlier one). No.17 had a circular stone hearth(?) on the highest point, composed of two or three courses. On No.20 several stones were set edgewise into the surface; possibly reminiscent of "Box-like" cists from a crannog in Loch Gruinart, Argyll (Valdar, 1961).

4. Stone Chippings.

In six cases areas of stone shippings were noticed (Nos.1,4,8(see fig),13,16,19). These were presumably to give a firmer footing when stepping out of a boat onto the crannog, and were definite angular chips and not glacial gravel. In Nos.8 and 19 the inside of the harbour was given a surface of these small stone chippings.

5. Outlying Features.

Before this survey we were only prepared to find possibly lines of wooden piles around the crannogs (to act as breakwaters), and causeways, which were thought to be the standard method of communication with the shore for the crannog dwellers. In Loch Awe we found three cases of crannogs with harbours (Nos.8,19 and maybe 20); four with jetties (Nos.7,11,13,15(see plan)); four (or maybe six) with causeways (Nos.1,2,12,17, and ?4 and 14); and two with stone heaps off them (Nos.19,20). All of these were stone built, except the two doubtful causeways which were sand and mud, and may have hidden traces of earlier timber causeways. The stones were most probably supports for timber harbours now vanished, but in the case of the jetties may have been used just as they appear today.

Causeways. Timber causeways are known from many other crannogs (e.g. Milton Loch I, Loch Lee (Munro, 1882, pl.II; etc.), as well as stone-built, and even stepping-stones were used: both these last two types are in Loch Awe. But this survey has shown that it was commonest in this area to reach the crannog by canoe, and that most were not connected to the shore.

Stone Heaps. These occur off two crannogs, (Nos.19 and 20). In the first they appear as circular heaps on a mud and gravel bottom, just off the entrance to the harbour; at No.20 there are 3 such shallow heaps off the south side. In both cases they may be the remains of support for timber piles reaching to the surface.

Harbours. These were of two types: one example, on No.20, was a small bay on the crannog surface next to the spur of bedrock by which it was built, and with a shelving bottom to allow a boat to be drawn up. However, on two crannogs in Loch Awe, Nos.3 and 14, there are modern versions created by fishermen which are very similar. The other type of harbour, off Nos.8 (see plan) and 19, was designed with two projecting arms of stone. Inside the harbour area the surface is covered with small-size stones to give a sure footing when climbing up onto the crannog; these continue partly up the crannog face. Both these harbours are very similar to that found off Milton Loch, Crannog I (Piggott, 1952) during excavation, and two conclusions can be drawn from this: first, that these features are not so rare as previously thought, and second, that they may be of the same date as Milton Loch I, c.500 B.C.

Jetties. These occurred in four instances, (Nos.7,11,13,15) and here again are generally unrecognised features; no crannog mentioned in the literature to date has had such an outwork. Like the harbours, the stones visible at the moment may just have been the supporting base for a timber pier; whether this is the case or not, they were evidently used to aid persons getting onto the crannog. Even now many of these crannogs in Loch Awe are too steep-sided to climb onto unless the water level is high enough to step out from the boat onto the top, and some system like a pier or a jetty would have been a great convenience to the lake-dwellers. The only other crannog we know to have a similar stone projection from it is in Loch Tay.

Piles. We found no rings of piles around the crannogs, probably due to our policy of leaving the bottom deposits undisturbed, but at the bottom of the rear slope of No.15 four short piles were noticed between flat surface timbers. These retained the stone facing of the crannog on the very steep slope shelving off into the loch; similar use of piles has been noted in the past in many crannogs.

Middens. Refuse heaps or middens are very difficult to distinguish from the natural muddy loch bottom, as they would normally appear as low mounds only. In one instance, however, off No.5, a refuse heap had accumulated in the angle between the crannog slope and the natural glacial ridge on which it was built, in the shape of a semicircle. This had a vertical edge, in which it was possible to trace strata of various materials, the most interesting being a line of trimmed timbers about 0.30m. from the top of the midden lying in a stratum of what appeared to be twigs, grass and leaves. One of the timbers had a circular half-check cut out of it (a construction technique known from other crannogs elsewhere), and it is possible that what is now visible in this section is the remains from the destruction of the house which once stood on the crannog.

6. Small Finds.

It was not part of this survey to seek finds on and around the crannogs, as this is best left to a specific excavation, so that the finds can be placed in context, and with conservation facilities etc. at hand. However, in the course of the survey several came to light; these were left in situ apart from a fragile piece of bronze sheet. Most are finds common to other known crannogs.

Two querns were found on No.20, one of rotary type, the other a saddle quern. Another fragment of a rotary quern was found on the shore opposite. Several pierced weights, for use with nets or to hold thatch in place, came from various crannogs; although a common find from other lochs, of no particular date. A roughly pointed stone, c.0.60m

long, with a central hole, may be an anchor (No.16); a whetstone (No.4); a grooved awl-sharpening stone (No.3); a round chipped stone disc, c.0.16m across, may be a pot lid (No.15); and a fragment of tinned bronze sheet (No.5), of at least Mediaeval date, (this analysis and suggestion of date is thanks to Dr. Hugh MacKerrill, National Museum Laboratory, Edinburgh), complete the total of finds.

Conclusions.

This project represents the first large-scale survey of a group of Scottish crannogs. As a result of this pilot work we now know it is feasible to locate and identify crannogs in large Scottish lochs and to survey them with precision, diving capability and sound archaeological knowledge being essential. This is the preliminary stage in a larger project of surveying and wood sampling to be undertaken by the writers.

With the fresh evidence on twenty in Loch Awe, a single loch, we have taken a fresh look at the antiquarian literature on crannogs, and it appears that there must be at least 300 in Scotland, widely distributed in the Highland and Lowland areas. Many of these, let alone the undiscovered examples, must be Iron Age, under later Mediaeval structures. The rarity of crannogs implied in the most recent distribution maps of Scotland is no longer true. We must now start to consider crannogs as a major class of early monuments.

Thanks.

Our thanks to the Naval Air Command and their Sub-Aqua Club divers on their expedition, who made the survey possible in manpower and equipment, and for their interest and co-operation. Our thanks also to the Forestry Commission (Mr G.Davis and Mr G.Francey), Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Miss Sandeman, Mr W.Aldhan, Mr J.M.Brown, Mr A.Carmichael and family, Sir Charles McGrigor, Bart, Mr J. Usher and Mr H.Winkler.

List/

List of Crannogs in Loch Awe

| | | | | |
|-----|------------------------|----|-----|-----|
| 1. | Inverliever | NM | 889 | 048 |
| 2. | Càrn Mhic Chealair | NM | 958 | 098 |
| 3. | Bàrr Phort | NM | 964 | 105 |
| 4. | Càrn Dubh | NN | 001 | 177 |
| 5. | Càrn an Ròin | NN | 065 | 224 |
| 6. | Larach Bàn | NN | 073 | 228 |
| 7. | Hayfield | NN | 091 | 242 |
| 8. | W. of Inishail | NN | 096 | 245 |
| 9. | Ardanaiseig | NN | 091 | 249 |
| 10. | Opp. Lochawe | NN | 121 | 265 |
| 11. | Achlìan | NN | 115 | 247 |
| 12. | Inistrynich | NN | 108 | 235 |
| 13. | Keppochan | NN | 078 | 223 |
| 14. | Rockhill | NN | 072 | 221 |
| 15. | Sonachan Burial Ground | NN | 043 | 207 |
| 16. | Ardchonnell | NM | 978 | 122 |
| 17. | Eredine | NM | 969 | 098 |
| 18. | Fincharn | NM | 903 | 045 |
| 19. | Kilneuair | NM | 889 | 040 |
| 20. | Ederline Boathouse | NM | 883 | 039 |

.....

Bibliography

Abbreviations:

D. & E.: Discovery and Excavation.

P.S.A.S.: Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland.

Blundell, O. 1910 "On further examination of artificial islands in the Beaully Firth, Loch Bruaich, Loch Moy, Loch Garry, Loch Lundy, Loch Oich, Loch Lochy and Loch Treig." P.S.A.S.xliv(1910)12-33.
 1912-13 "Further notes on the artificial islands in the Highland area.
P.S.A.S.xlvi1(1912-13)257-302.

Campbell and Sandeman/

- Campbell, M &
Sandeman, M.L.S. 1961-2 "Mid Argyll: A Field
Survey of the Historic and Prehistoric
Monuments." P.S.A.S.xcv(1961-2)1-125.
- Munro, R. 1882 Ancient Scottish Lake
Dwellings or Crannogs. (1882)
- 1893 "Notes of Crannogs or
Lake Dwellings recently discovered in
Argyllshire". P.S.A.S.xxvii(1893)205-
222.
- Piggott, C.M. 1952 "Milton Loch Crannog I.
A Native House of the 2nd Century A.D.
in Kirkcudbrightshire." P.S.A.S.lxxxvii
(1952-3)134-152.
- Ritchie, J. 1942 "The Lake-dwelling or
Crannog in Eadarloch, Loch Treig: its
traditions and its construction."
P.S.A.S.lxxvii(1942)8-78.
- Scott, J.G. 1960 "Loch Glashan". D. & E.
1960. 8-9.
- Stuart, J. 1864-6 "Notices of a group
of artificial islands in the Loch of
Dowalton, Wigtownshire, and of other
artificial islands or "crannogs" throu-
ghout Scotland." P.S.A.S.vi(1864-6)
114-178.
- Valdar, S. 1961 "Islay. Loch Gruinart."
D. & E. 1961.p.15.
-ooo.....

BIRD WATCHING IN MID-ARGYLL

.....
Gordon Young
(Oct.1972)

A glance through my diary tells me that since coming, just over a year ago, to live in Knapdale I have seen III of the 177 species entered in the Society's Check List of the Birds of Mid-Argyll.

In some ornithological circles this statement would cut little ice; it would no doubt be pointed out that in some areas of the British Isles, with a little luck, a hundred species can be seen in a day; that the British List has in it more than 500 species; and it might be added that one could have seen more birds at some London sewage works!

But of course there is more to bird watching than making ticks on a list and for me the special pleasure in Mid-Argyll lies not in the number of species one may see but in the harmony of bird and environment. A Hen Harrier quartering Keills and Danna, or a Black-throated Diver on Loch Arail are 'right' in every respect; birds and surroundings complement each other in a magical way. Thus an Eagle seen high above the Knapdale uplands is infinitely more satisfying than say a Cream-coloured Courser in East Anglia; and of course the ratio of bird watchers to birds is important; in the case of the last Cream-coloured Courser it rose as high as 500:1 at one time!

But bird watching has its disappointments in Argyll; to get a glimpse of our forest birds takes time, patience and a good deal of coöperation from them. Woodpeckers are far too difficult to find; so are Dippers...not a single pair along the whole length of the Inverneil Burn, so far as I can see. And my wife and I yet find it hard to accept that a Nuthatch, most charming of birds, will not join Tits and Chaffinches on our bird table. But who can complain when occasionally Wheatears and Grey Wagtails play round the house, and Stonechats and Whinchats perch on the roof; when from our windows we have seen Buzzards and Sparrow Hawks, Kestrels and Merlins, Hen Harriers, Cuckoos and Curlews; and

when, in our first spring, a Grasshopper Warbler 'sang' endlessly on the bracken outside our bedroom window and small confiding groups of Redpolls visited us regularly to feed on the weeds in front of our house.

All of these, I suppose, were predictable, but there is much which is surprising and unexpected. Those vast winter flocks of Chaffinches along the Kilberry road for example; and down both sides of the peninsula the massive and exciting southerly movement of the Redwings early in October. Does this happen every year, I wonder? And then on one mirror-calm autumn evening the clear, weird, laughing call of three Great Northern Divers near the mouth of Loch Caolisport.

Today on my return from walking through Ask-nish Forest (a walk to be remembered for the rare sight of an owl silently crossing the path ahead) I see that a note has been fastened to the door... "The Great Grey Shrike is back" it says. Not for the first time does the thought cross my mind: how very strange that these friendly people, who have lived their lives in this marvellous area, should greet us so often with the question, "Why did you choose to come and live in Mid-Argyll?"

...oOo...

ROUGH-LEGGED BUZZARD

.....
In November 1972 Miss Sandeman saw a buzzard flying low over a turnip field and was surprised at its very light underwing colouring and white rump. Its call was lower and more resonant than the normal buzzard's. It was apparent on doing some research that it had been a Rough-legged Buzzard, whose 'quartering' flight and dark-tipped white tail are diagnostic. The bird has been seen also on several occasions by Mr John MacArthur, the Forestry Ranger, who finds it is beginning to come to deer-grallochs. In December 1972 one was also seen by Mr Colin Fergusson in Meall Mhor Forest. Earlier Local Recordings: One shot by gamekeeper about 1933, and one found dead in 1945 or 1946.

Thoughts on Her Majesty's Mails in the 1850's

.....
Iain D. Jex Long

Through the kindness of one of the friends I have made since coming to Mid-Argyll I have had the privilege of examining some mid-nineteenth century correspondence. In these days the Post Office was careful to Transit Mark each office through which it passed. This custom yields both stories and problems.

One letter was posted in Greenock on Christmas Day 1852 (need I mention that then and until nearly a century later this was, in Scotland, an ordinary working day). The next mark, without a legible date, is Lochgoilhead, i.e. by boat. What boat? It is impossible to be certain about this but considering the date it was most likely to be p.s. Ardentinny, built in 1851 and obviously for this route, or perhaps if the owners did not wish to imperil their new ship in mid-winter the older p.s. Princess Alice, built in 1847. At anyrate the onwards route must have been by road via Cairndow or more probably to St Catherine's and thence by ferry to Inveraray where it was delivered on 26th December.

Two other interesting letters of this same period were written from Coileissan Farm (just to the south of Ardgarten on Loch Long), one on 21st April and the other on 30th May 1854. The first postal marking on each is Arrochar Village (no date). Transport may have been by road round the head of Loch Long, but knowing my fellow lochside folk it is much more likely they went by sailing skiff. The next marking is Glasgow (where the stamps were cancelled) on 22nd April and 31st May respectively. Again they would travel by steamer, most probably the p.s. Chancellor, built in 1853, and used for many years on the Loch Long trade. Finally we have Inveraray receiving marks of 23rd April and 1st June. This final stage was almost certainly by the p.s. Mary Jane, better known as p.s. Glencoe. A wonderful old iron ship on which

I sailed to Skye in 1928 and which was not scrapped until 1931. Having been built in 1846 she was a real museum piece with her steeple engine and ornate wrought-iron work, even to the starting lever.

What strikes one about these old letters is the speed with which mail was handled 120 years ago. Greenock one day delivery, Inveraray the next. Collessan Farm one day, Inveraray two days later. Postage in every case one penny.

The above is neither Antiquarian nor Natural History, but it does give a vivid glimpse of lochs in the days of the fast colourful paddle steamers, of sleek horses pulling mail carts over glen roads and black sailing skiffs all competently handled, and making times certainly no slower than today's.

...oOo...

HELEN'S WELL

Does anyone know anything about Helen's Well? Between 2½ and 3 miles above Achnagoul Farm and to the north of the Douglas Water, there are some old shieling remains; and just above these ruins there is a well marked by a roughly-hewn stone inscribed in Roman capitals ...HELEN'S WELL 1866... The well is still running, though partly overgrown, and the water is very cold. J.Allingham.

...oOo...

Archaeology in 1837. "About twenty years ago....a cist was discovered, containing a skeleton but no other remains; the skull was complete and it took two or three "gey hard chaps" with a hammer to break it. The parish schoolmaster..... was sent for, and pronounced it incontinently to be the skull of a Dane, because of its hardness, which explanation being quite satisfactory the skull, being of no further apparent use, was shovelled away....."

P.S.A.S. 1857.

B E L L A N O C H (contd.)

.....

Hugh Graham

The older part of Bellanoch village comprised twelve thatched cottages, each with a kitchen and a room either side of the door, and between, a small apartment which varied in size with the house. In some cases it was large enough to take a bed.

Potatoes were grown on plots of ground up in Bellanoch Glen and there was a common on which the cows grazed. They provided milk and butter in season while the calves were sold as one year olds. A night's fishing at the islands in the Sound of Jura resulted in large quantities of saithe, which were split, salted and dried, and of course there was the half-barrel of salt herring. A boll of flour and the same of oatmeal were in the 'girnelt' for girdle scones and farles of oatcake, as well as for porridge. Mr MacCormick, farming Kilmahumaig, drove round in his pony trap selling home-killed mutton.

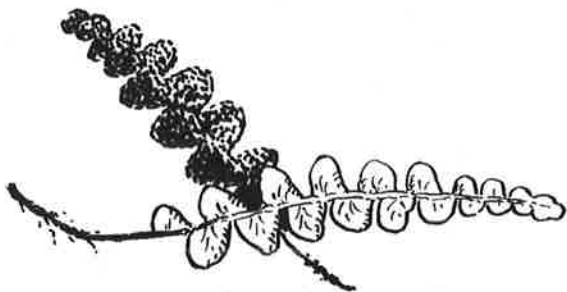
Rabbit trapping was a winter occupation for some of the villagers, often at so much per couple or, as happened later, the trapper would rent the ground for rabbits. I remember rents of £52-72 for ground yielding 1500 couple. The season ended in early April; some trappers then took on a lambing job, then on to draining, bracken cutting etc till it came trapping time again. Other families had fathers and sons at sea, while the daughters entered private service.

The problem of keeping the houses watertight by thatching I shall deal with in a later part of this paper.

..oOo..

"The smaller urns came in handy for flowerpots, the larger sizes were left to be destroyed by the weather." (Hatton Cairn, Forfarshire.)

P.S.A.S. 1880



AN UNCOMMON FERN

....
F.S.Mackenna

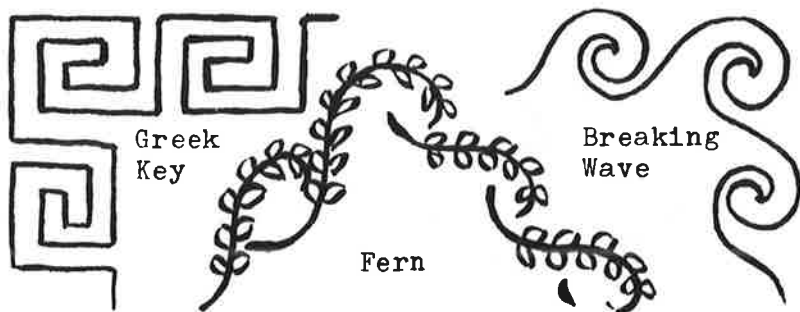
Readers may like to be on the alert for the occurrence of a fern which is rarely found in the Knapdale-Kintyre area. It is Ceterach officinarum (colloquially "leather back") which is essentially a limestone species, occurring exclusively, when in non-limestone areas, on mortar walls. Usually it is accompanied by the ubiquitous Asplenium trichomanes. Lee, in Flora of the Clyde Area, takes the view that it is in danger from collectors.

I have found it in two locations, one about a mile along the Inveraray road from Lochgilphead and again on a garden wall in Tarbert. Mr Kenneth informs me that he knows of it in Ardrishaig, Tay:vallich and on a fank wall at Largie Burn, south of Machrihanish, in which last locality he finds it is spreading and increasing.

In emendation of the accompanying drawing it may be stated that the under-surface of the fronds is covered with heavy brown scales, recalling the indumentum found on certain rhododendron leaves.

There is no doubt it occurs in other sites in our area, and any discoveries of new locations should be communicated to Mr Kenneth so that they may be officially recorded.

Discretion must be exercised in segregating 'tame' specimens from 'wild'. It is to be found, for example, in my own garden, having been brought from Ireland, where in Co. Kildare, it is one of the commonest ferns on old walls.



" C O M E A W A Y I N "

....

Mary Sandeman

Many of you must be familiar, if only from pictures, with the Black Houses of our Highland ancestors, thatched and often windowless, and with very basic interiors; and with their successors, the White Houses, still thatched but with windows and much better-planned interiors. But perhaps there are some of you who have'nt had the luck, indeed the honour, of being asked to "come away in" to those little thatched, whitewashed houses. In Jura in the 1920's I had a child's freedom to run in and out and eat jeely-pieces, carvies and Imperials(*) in many such houses, so I take the liberty to bid you come away in to at least one or two of them.

The door stands open always. Wipe your feet on the neatly-folded sack surrounded by white pipe-clay. Lean over the white hen-gate of perforated metal that lets the sun and air pass while keeping the hens at bay, and tap on the open door, sniffing

(*)Jeely piece: a sandwich (bread or split scone) loaded with home-made butter and (usually) bramble-jelly.

Carvie: Caraway seeds coated in sugar, thought by the old people to be medicinal as well as a delicacy.

Imperial: a small hard-coated oval peppermint sweet.

the southernwood or 'apple-ringy'(*) that grows on either side. Then down a dark passage lit only by the light from the door, but dont hurry, it is a delight in itself. The flags(**) are spotless and pipeclayed with whatever pattern took Mary's fancy today; Greek Key and Breaking Wave we know from our own scullery floor, but there may be Ferns or a great tree with leaves and branches leading us in and curving into the Room(***)on the right, or the kitchen on the left.

The Room has a step down and seems rather dark because the two box-beds end-to-end filling a whole wall are hung with red rep curtains, and is mostly furnished with Bride-chests, one with drawers and brass fittings, the others covered and valanced in the same rep. Mary's niece, a widow, and her two daughters sleep here and are out at work or school, so we dont go right in.

But Mary's kitchen is full of light. The door opens inwards, and behind it, filling the whole of the space to the window is a box-bed curtained and valanced top and bottom with chintz and covered by a blue or pink Alhambra(**)and a patchwork quilt. Along the bedside there is a scrubbed bench; since our elders are present and we know our manners, we will perch quietly on it, leaning back against the bed which is high, just comfortable for our 7-year-old shoulders. The bench is satin-smooth to our bare legs. We note this not just for the comfort; we know the skills of scrubbing and know this for the work of a mistress of the art.

In the centre of the room, between us and the fire, is a table covered with a bright oilcloth. The bench would be drawn up to it at mealtimes but

(*)Apple-ringy: southernwood, an aromatic shrubby plant.

(**)Flags: stone floor slabs.

(***)Room: the Room and Kitchen equate with the Ben and But of a Lowland house.

(**)Alhambra: a thick cotton bedspread, blue/white or pink/white, woven in vaguely "Moorish" patterns.

where it is now it makes a handy step up to the bed. The small window, which didn't open, had a spotless starched cotton screen across the bottom panes, and starched muslin drapes inside the deep whitewashed sill on which stood a geranium or fern; inside there were pink chintz curtains matching the bed.

Between the window and the fire stood a high chest-of-drawers, gleaming with polish, its every brass handle and knob winking at us. On its top were some gay storage tins and any number of photographs, framed in carved wood, silver, brass or gunmetal, or velvet. Some of family but very many recording the weddings etc of the laird's family.

Then the fireplace - a high basket fire of peat. The hearth and inside of the hobs whitewashed, the front and top of the hobs agleam with black-lead and steel, the fender flat-topped to hold anything to be kept hot, but an object to be revered - brass and steel in satisfying twists and curves. Disappearing up the chimney with its sparks are the iron chains of the swee(*) with its several hooks from one of which hangs a huge black-leaded kettle always singing and puffing steam in a most contented way. The mantelpiece, edged with a cut brass strip and a brass bar from which hang black pot and kettle holders embroidered in bright wool, a big iron spoon, a spirtle(**), a bunch of hen's feathers for the girdle(***) and a long brass toasting-fork, and in the centre maybe a dishcloth or a pair of socks drying off. On top rows of tea caddies, all shapes and sizes, Coronation, Jubilee, or just plain pretty. Two brass candlesticks and two china dogs. On either side hang a large emb-

(*)Swee: a chain in the chimney, sometimes a swivelling iron bracket, from either of which iron pot-hooks hang to carry cooking-pots over the fire.

(**)Spirtle: a smooth wooden stirring stick.

(***)Girdle: a flat iron plate with handle above it, used for baking scones and oatcakes.

:roidered pincushion and a spill-holder of folded wallpaper full of paper spills. Above them tinted photographs in lifebuoy frames. Hanging above the mantelpiece a large picture, which I now know to have been Queen Victoria but then thought was the Harvest Goddess, for she was all in blue and there was always a bunch of decorated corn over the top of the frame. In front a big thick rag-rug and on each side wooden armchairs with bright cushions.

Then, from the fire wall to the door, a Dutch dresser, its brass handles winking back at those on the chest; its shelves decorated with newspaper cut in most intricate patterns. (The Oban Times, with its broad margins, has amongst its other benefits contributed much to many a kitchen.) There were plates on the upper shelves and the dresser-top had neat piles of saucers, their cups inverted in threes on top; in front a row of bowls upside-down, ready for use, all decorated with blue bands or with bunches of roses or apples; and a paraffin carrying-lamp with a polished reflector. On the table there would be a high pedestal lamp with a red glass bowl, such as are now fetching the earth in antique shops. The whole little room radiated warmth, welcome and merriment, as did its owner, like sunlight on a freshet burn.

This was not a prosperous house - a manless house. Mary was unmarried, her niece a widow, and what Suburbia would call a Char or, tee-hee, a "Charlady". Lady she certainly was, but to us she was Bella Bell who came to help, a master crafts-woman in all domestic arts. If they had a croft (the house was in a crofting township) it would be worked with the help of neighbours, and there was perhaps a cow, calf and follower(*) at most. The crofters proper were far more prosperous, but Mary certainly would have a drill of potatoes in someone's field, and corn for her hens and milk in exchange for her help at the harvest; and peats of

(*) Follower: this is the yearling, still with its mother, and usually sold in its second autumn.

course, so the fire was never out. Her rent (if indeed she paid any) would certainly not be more than £3 a year.

Mary herself was a great character. She was I should think in her late sixties or early seventies then. She was tall and had a deep voice and a merry cackling laugh. She was witty enough in the English, although sometimes stuck for a word, but judging by the gales of laughter that followed her when she was down to the shop, she was even wittier in her native tongue. She always wore a stiff gathered skirt of the same hard tweed that the men's suits were made of in those days, down to the tops of her shining hobnailed boots which seemed to me to turn up like Dutch clogs. When she walked, slightly leaning forward but never a bend was in Mary's back, it was with short rocking steps that covered the miles at such a rate I would have had to run to keep up.

Above the skirt a short-goun(*)drawn in to the waist with a tape tied in front, so that it frilled over the skirt at the back; it had a short stand-up collar and a placket down the front with pearl buttons in groups of two; collar and placket were trimmed with narrow lace; and a black sateen apron over which she wore, if scrubbing, a sacking apron, or if baking, one made from a well-washed flour sack. (We bought flour in $\frac{1}{2}$ cwts in those days and the sacks were most useful; I still have an under-pillowcase made from one.)

Her grey hair was pulled back into a neat bun, but escaped in wisps about her wire-framed glasses, usually mended with a bootlace and bought from Jock the packman(**). (When Jock called, our kitchen became Pandora's box and Aladdin's cave in one, but that is another story.) I never saw her with her head covered, but in cold weather a black

(*)Short-goun, usually pronounced Shor-gun: was a tailored shirt-blouse, worn outside the skirt.

(**)Packman: travelling pedlar who carried small goods...bootlaces, sewing materials, bright handkerchiefs, spectacles, brooches etc.

crochet shawl was worn.

I can see her now, sitting by her fire, her back like a ramrod, her big (oh so gentle) hands folded in her lap as she talked to my father who sat opposite her in the guest place with his back to the light, warming his toes at her fire and his heart in her company as they discoursed on everything under the sun, from the goings-on of Parliament or the world at large, up and down.

There were other houses on my visiting list. Katie, within easy reach, was bedridden latterly, so a captive audience. The same box-bed behind the door and between it and the window, this time with blue chintz curtains; the bedding coarse perhaps but spotless; the same much-becurtained window, rag-rug and wooden bench along the bedside, the swee and kettle. The only thing I remember different was another table on which there stood enamel basins, and under it blue enamelled pails. The water here had to be carried about 200 yards.

Dear Katie! When I went to say goodbye as I went away to boarding-school for the first time, she was in bed reading her Bible. From under her pillow she drew something wrapped in toffee-paper and pressed it into my hand. I knew enough not to open it (it's a new-fangled idea, this opening of gifts in the presence of the giver). But on the way home I did. It was a silver shilling. It wasn't that I'd never owned a silver shilling that brought perhaps the first unshed tears to my eyes.

Further afield there was another house of interest .. a solitary house then, though there had been others here at Daimhsgeir; it remained because it was here that the trace horse was kept to help with loads up the steep hills from Feolin Ferry to Ardfin, before the Craighouse Pier was built. It was here that I was shown how to cut the papers for the shelves, of which there were some on the walls, not just the dresser. The lovely thing about this house was that it possessed no ceiling-cloth or -board, and one looked right up into the rafters. Between the purlins of hazel thick stalks

of heather had been interwoven and all were white-washed, making the most beautiful roof I have ever seen outside a cathedral.

Then there was Feolin Ferry house...a large croft this, almost like a farm. The kitchen was furnished in much the same way as all the others, box-bed and all, but it was larger and there was a greater number in the family, so the table had to be bigger and there was more space.....a beautiful scrubbed table it was too. There were three brothers and their sister, and the Old Lady who was touching 100. The fireplace, agleam as usual, had a boiler with a fascinating brass tap; it was wider too and had an oven, and there were any number of hooks for the swee, one with a big round pot, one with the big kettle, one with a little kettle, one for the girdle, and they all went up or down at a touch - and gently it had to be done too, lest the bannocks, set on edge against the girdle-handle to finish, might fall over.

A white cloth would be spread on one end of the table, creamy frothy milk in a cut-glass jug, sugar in a matching bowl (not just set out for the gentry, but what they used for themselves - I know, because it was taken down from the dresser with the spoon in it, so there!), dewey butter, bramble jelly and the scones. The daughter, aged about sixty, would pour out and press us to eat, but only the eldest brother present would sit in with us. The woman of the house did not sit down with us, but sat by the fire and joined in the conversation ... but make no mistake, she, acting for her mother, was presiding over her table.

Then we would go into the room to meet the Old Lady. There was a round table up against the same much-becurtained window and covered in a red cloth with bobbles on it and a lace cloth on top of that. I knew that table very well because I was sat down beside it clutching my bag of Imperials - I don't know why, but the Old Lady and I always exchanged Imperials. But when to give them, on meeting or parting, was a problem; so gaze around.

Two box-beds, hung this time with starched muslin drapes inside chintz curtains, with white honeycomb spreads and the usual benches. A lovely peat-fire, a rocking-chair and another wooden arm-chair; china dogs, gleaming brass and steels as usual. The Old Lady was sometimes up by the fire, and sometimes in bed, but always swathed in the finest of fine wool lace shawls. When the final exchange of Imperials took place it was done with great deference on my part and consummate grace on hers. The Queen could'nt do it better. Very possibly, in common with my other hostesses, she had never left the island; but her sons had been round the world many times, as had old Katie's nephew.

Of the crofters proper I have'nt said much, because at this time they were all taking advantage of the crofting grants(*) and were with their own hands rebuilding their houses into the two-storied houses now becoming the "traditional croft house". Bigger windows that open, so the doors dont stand so invitingly open and there is no need of a hen-gate. Their furnishings are Glasgow-made and chosen from catalogues; the work is much less toilsome, but there are fewer hands to do it. Yet thank God they still bid one to come away in with the same dignity, warmth and graciousness.

Whenever you think of these people in their little thatched homes, remember their dignity and dont insult them with your pity; could you do as well? If you have the luck to be descended from them, or the honour to have known them as I have, hold your heads up and be proud. 'We have a lot to live up to.

(*)Crofting grants: a Government scheme for (in this case) house improvements, payable to crofters for work carried out by themselves or by local labour.

(Footnotes by Miss Campbell of Kilberry)

SECRETARY'S NOTES

Although the Editor has been allocated four more pages for this Kist these notes have to be contained in one.

Members able to attend the winter meetings, and attendance was well above average, will know how lucky we are to get such outstanding speakers; often a world authority on their subject. "Members' Night" was such a success that your committee has decided to have a similar programme for the first Winter Meeting of 1973, so will all members please start to consider what they can contribute.

Up to 12 or 15 members have enjoyed monthly walks exploring parts of the district they might not otherwise get around to. They meet on the 4th Sunday of every month; meeting place and leader are decided at the previous meeting and announced at the Society's ordinary monthly meeting. All, and particularly children, are welcome to join the informal ramble with a pic-nic lunch.

Members fortunate enough to attend the programme on "Old Tarbert" produced by our Editor for R.N.L.I. funds will appreciate the wonderful work being done by Mr Fergusson in recording old views of the district on photographic slides. Pictures of any size, documents, postcards and snapshots can all be recorded, and old family albums often provide valuable detailed information which is so frequently otherwise lost. Anyone having such items should contact Mr Colin Fergusson, Afton, Tarbert, or any member of the committee.

Members will notice that Industrial Archaeology is featuring in our programme with "Crofting", "Loch Fyne Steamers", "Gunpowder Works" etc. Is there sufficient interest for a special group to record "Loch Fyne Vessels" or "Deserted Townships"?

We look forward to another wonderful summer session. Membership continues to increase.

...oOo...