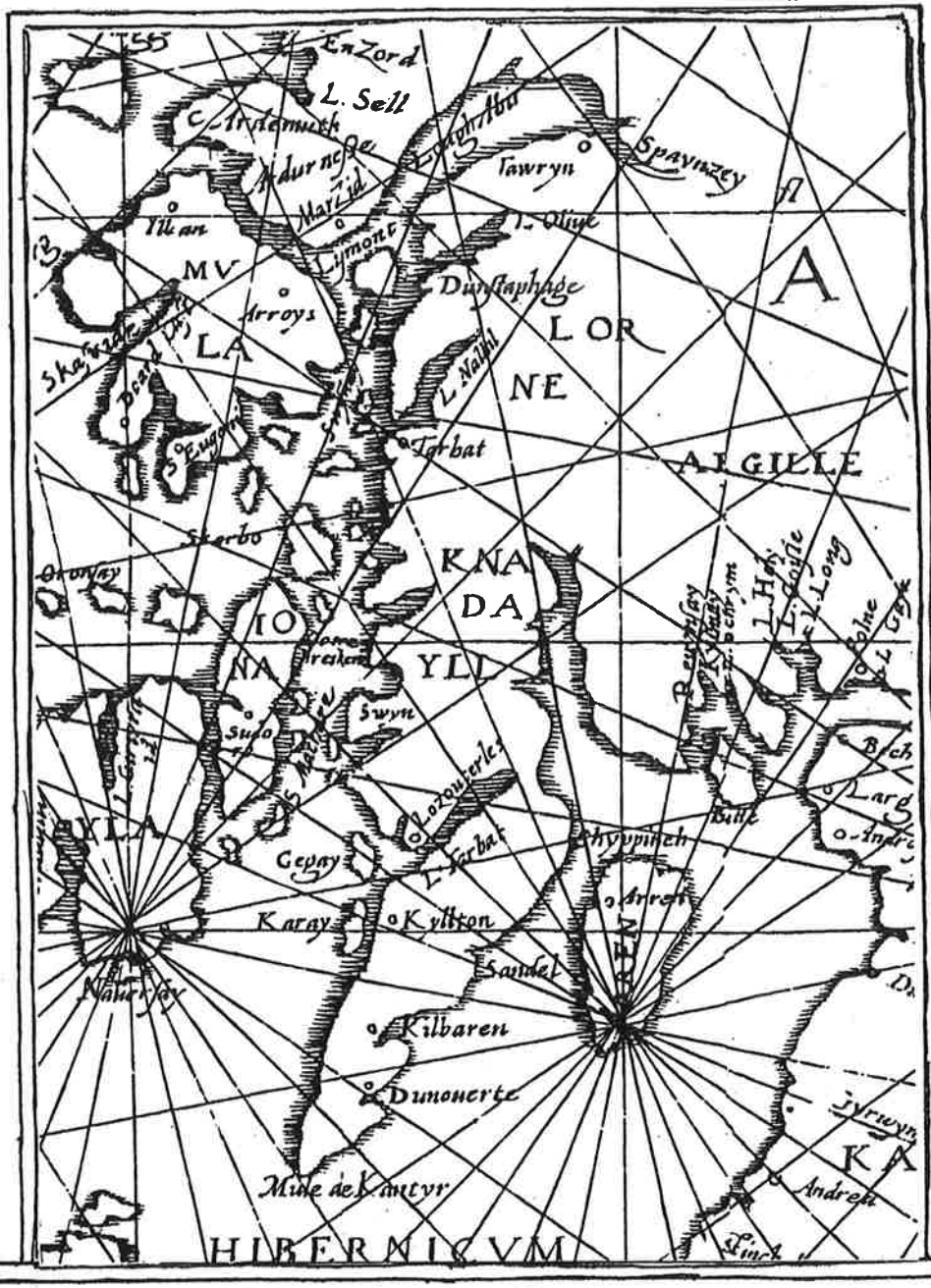
From: "Description d'Ecosse;" de Nicolay, 1583



The KIST

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BEHIND THE MONUMENT

The Story of the charting of the Largs Channel. (Part 1)

William Laing

Standing proud at the north end of the Big Cumbrae is a simple weather-worn monument. It is well known to yachtsmen in the area, marking the departure point for many a sail up the Kyles of Bute, and a welcome sign at the end of a tousy passage across the Firth of Clyde. It is a pleasant stopping place for Cumbrae's cycling tourists, who can rest at the seat near the monument and take in a panoramic view of the Clyde from the Bute shore, through the Cowal peninsula, to the Ayrshire coast and its seaside villages.

This monument is a memorial to some naval personnel, who were drowned near the site in 1844; they were from H.M.S.V. "Shearwater", and the monument was erected by Commander C.G. Robinson and the officers of the vessel. To find out the story behind this tragedy we must dig into the history of the charting and piloting instructions of the Clyde and, in the end, come up with the reasons why Robinson and the "Shearwater" were working north of the Cumbrae, and what that quaint H.M.S.V. abbreviation stood for.

The inner heart of the Clyde estuary has been known as a safe haven for shipping from before the days of recorded history. As far as we know, the Norsemen left no written information about their sailing instructions, but there are indications in the folklore of the day ["Historical Tales and Legends of Ayrshire", W.Robertson, Glasgow, 1889, pp.165-177] that these daring seafarers were well acquainted with the area in general, and the Largs Channel in particular. It is well documented that Haakon in 1263 lost a minor skirmish, now called the Battle of Largs, which involved part of his fleet being hampered by the well known viciousness of the local south west wind, and as a result he could not land more troops to retrieve his stranded boats and men. In the mid-16th century, there is a record of a local land-owning family's right to gather dues from vessels anchored in the Fairlie roads, and it is also reported that the authorities in Irvine, during one

of their many spells of despair arising from the silting up of their harbour, seriously considered opening up a port on the east side of the Little Cumbrae, again because of the shelter provided [Register of the Privy Council of Scotland, 1st. Series, vol.V, p.395].

There are two other unusual sources of nautical information relating to the Clyde, that come from the mid-16th century. About 1563-1566 the English were preparing for yet another military campaign against annoying Scots, who had been creating havoc in the northern marches. The commander of the English troops, stationed in Cumbria, was planning an expedition into south-west Scotland, and, recognising the non-existence of roads to re-supply his troops, he commissioned a survey of the harbours, havens and anchorages of the Carrick,Kyle and Cunningham coasts. This information is contained in a document that mentions Loch Ryan, comments on the "iron coast" of Carrick,warns about the shallow bar at Ayr, refers to the safety of Lamlash, and points out the difficult entry at Irvine. No mention is made of the safe haven at Fairlie, which can only mean that, since the Fairlie roadstead was probably well known at the time, the English commander had no intention of operating so far north, and so close to the Scottish naval base at Dumbarton.

The second source arises from the existence of a well established trade route between the Ayrshire coast and the north west of France. Recent research on this subject shows that, as herring and hides were traded with France, wine was imported in quantity, either for local consumption or redistribution to the Western Isles or to Ireland. It so happens that, by the middle of the 16th century, the north west corner of France was home to an active group of cartographers and writers of tidal almanacs and pilot books. The rutters, or pilot books, of Pierre Garcie have been researched in detail ["The Rutters of the Sea", D.W.Waters, Yale University Press, 1967], and associated with these rutters are a series of charts by G.Brouscon depicting the coasts of north west Europe presented both as conventional charts and a form of tidal almanac. Examination of these shows that Scotland is well covered, with information extending on the west side as far as the Cumbraes, and on the east as far as Aberdeen. These French tidal data were probably available in manuscript form in the late 15th century, and first appeared in printed form in 1502. The printed charts of Brouscon, while not sufficiently

Fig. 1 Abraham Ortelius : SCOTIAE TABULA, 1573.

detailed for local navigation, do place Ayrshire and the Firth of Clyde accurately in the context of north west Europe.

It is clear, therefore, that there was information available at the end of the 16th century about harbours and anchorages on the Ayrshire coast, along with related tidal information; and that the data extended as far north as the Cumbraes; what was missing was written documentation and charts that would have assisted a visiting mariner to enter these havens in safety. As usual, the local mariners would not feel the need for such information; they would always be available to act as pilots; so why publish it and lose a pilotage fee!

Towards the end of the 16th century general land maps of Scotland were becoming available ["the Mapping of Scotland", Edinburgh, 1971, pp.2-5]. The maps of Lesley, Ortelius and Mercator show some detail of the Firth of Clyde, including a representation of the Cumbraes, Bute and Arran, and indicate that the entrance to the upper Firth, from the comparative openness of the lower, or Dumbarton Firth, was not straightforward, and demanded care. However, these were land maps, with plenty of land-based detail; they really were of little use to the navigator. (figs. 1 and 2).

The situation for the mariner started to change, however, as a result of an interesting piece of history. The Lords of the Isles had always been a thorn in the flesh to the Scottish monarchs, and several naval expeditions had been made to the west coast to punish the islanders for their raids on the mainland, and their attempts at coming to a political alliance with England. James Iv had a strong interest in creating a navy, and in using that force to guard his boundaries. He conducted operations against the islanders, but it was his successor, James V, who, in 1540, planned a major expedition to the west to impose control on the Lord of the Isles. The military and political outcomes of this campaign do not concern us here, but what was of significance was the fact that, prior to the operation, a Scottish ship-pilot, Alexander Lindsay, created a rutter, or sailing manual, that describes the harbours, tides, distances and bearings of the Scottish coast from south of Berwick, north-about around Scotland to the Solway, and including the Firth of Clyde.

This rutter has been thoroughly researched ["Alexander Lindsay etc.", Maritime Monographs No.44, National Maritime Museum, London, 1980], and it contains gems of maritime information, including the first recorded description of the

Fig. 2 Gerard Mercator : SCOTIA REGNUM, 1595.

Corryvreckan, a wild passage between Jura and Scarba which Lindsay describes as containing "a depe horlepoole quairin if schippis do enter thair is no refuge but death onlie". Of more direct interest to this story are the maritime data given about the upper reaches of the Firth of Clyde. The rutter tells us that Lamlash is "a good roade for all sorts of schippis", that the Sound of Bute has "manie good havens", and that Lochranza is safe "at all tyme of tyd ". We are also told that high tide occurs in the Irvine area, and therefore in the Fairlie/Largs area, when the full moon is "south to east", and that in the Arran, Bute and Cumbraes area the tide flows "south to est, and north to west". Lindsay also gives quite accurate distances and bearings between major points, e.g. "From Buit to Air est southest, xv myles". It is most unlikely that any one pilot had personal knowledge of the entire coastline of Scotland, and it would seem more plausible to believe that Lindsay constructed his rutter from earlier writings that have not survived. The important point is that, for the first time, there was a written description of the characteristics of the shores of mainland Scotland.

Lindsay's rutter has survived in six different forms, and there was at one time a chart associated with three of these texts. The only surviving chart is that of a Frenchman, Nicholas de Nicolay, who published his French version of the Lindsay rutter in 1583,along with the chart, which is the first known general chart of Scottish waters; it is a copy of a rough chart given to de Nicolay in 1547 when he was in attendance at the English court, and is a good representation of the Scottish coast and islands; the alignment of the Hebrides is an improvement on previous land maps, and it has the appropriate bearing lines. (See cover illustration). In terms of the Firth of Clyde, the relative positions of Arran and Bute within the Firth, and the general outline of the Firth are quite good, and it is interesting to note that John Adair, a meticulous Scottish cartographer of the late 17th, early 18th century used this chart as the introductory item in a sea atlas that was published in 1703, over 150 years after the chart had been known to exist; this says much for its perceived accuracy. Largs, Ardrossan, Irvine and Ayr are clearly marked, but it is interesting to note that the Cumbraes are missing. This could well be the result of the copying involved in arriving at the 1583 version.

From the aspect of the development of the cartography of

the Clyde, the royal expedition of 1540 seems to have been responsible for the first sea chart and pilot book that gave some useful information about the inner reaches of the Firth of Clyde.

There appears to have been little work done on the marine cartography of the Clyde during the 17th century. This is rather surprising, because this is the era of an explosion in Scottish land mapping, with the huge manuscript production of Timothy Pont, and the subsequent production of volume five of Blaeu's famous Atlas. It is also the time of the Dutch marine cartographers, Waghenaer, Colom, Doncker and van Keulan. Some of their charts of the British coast give a glimpse of the Clyde, indeed a chart of van Keulan shows the village of Fairlie, complete with the anchor sign that had become the recognised symbol of a safe anchorage. At this time British original chart makers were very scarce; John Seller was active in London, but virtually none of his work was original, and when Grenville Collins completed his pioneering work in 1693, he failed to produce charts of the west coast of Scotland, which is really not too surprising, considering the complexity of the geography and the lack of land-based maps of adequate accuracy.

However, one ray of hope appeared on the horizon. Towards the end of the century John Adair, an enigmatic Scottish surveyor, who almost uniquely turned his hand to both land maps and sea charts, eventually produced an atlas of quite accurate sea charts; unfortunately for our story these published charts only covered the east coast of Scotland, and, despite Adair's good intentions, he never got round to publishing his other charts, including some of the Firth of Clyde, which have been found in manuscript form. One of these manuscripts gives a remarkably good representation of the southern entrance to the Largs channel: it depicts the relatively narrow entrance to the Channel, displays the awkward rocks off the east coast of the Little Cumbrae, clearly delineates Brigard Spit, which can still be an embarrassment to visiting yachtsmen, and indicates the extensive shoal water south west of Fairlie. However, this chart is devoid of any soundings in our area of interest, despite the fact that the corresponding data for the Ayr Roads are given in considerable detail. Like so much of Adair's un-published work it is, despite a high standard of accuracy, irregular in the density of detail, and gives the impression of being only partly complete. One good thing did,

however, come from Adair's work in the Clyde, in that later in 1731 a local publisher, George Scott, did produce a chart of the Firth based on it. ["Early Maps of Scotland", vol.2, R.S. G.S., Edinburgh, 1983,p.14].

The next chart of significance covering the Firth of Clyde is by John Watt, and is dated 1734, although it was not published until 1759/60 (fig.3) with a related version appearing in 1776. Not too much is known yet about the extent of John Watt's work, but it is beginning to look as if the Watt family including his brother James, and his nephews James (better known for his development of the steam engine) and John, made significant contributions to the development of land and hydrographic surveying in Scotland. Thomas, the father of John the cartographer, was known in the Greenock area as the "mathmatician of Crawfordsdyke"; he was educated at Marischal College, Aberdeen, under the guidance of James Liddell, and taught mathematics and surveying in the Greenock area. His elder son John was responsible for much of the content of the 1759/60 Clyde chart, and his younger son James, with the assistance of his sons, John and James, completed the cartographic work and arranged the printing of the chart. Considering the techniques available to marine surveyors in the early 18th century, the 1760 Watt chart is an improvement on anything that had been published before and is almost of a standard that would allow a present-day yachtsman to proceed safely within the confines of the upper Firth. With respect to the Largs Channel, Watt's chart is the first to delineate clearly the Fairlie Patch rocks, which are one of the very few hazards to the haven-seeking mariner in the area, and to give some decent sounding information.

We have now reached the stage in our story of the charting of the upper Firth of Clyde where things are becoming more recognisably "modern": we almost have charts that are acceptable in modern terms, and which could be used today if nothing else was available. All that is needed is the introduction of some mathematical rigour into the armoury of the surveyor, and the problem is solved. It is the next surveyor, Murdo Mackenzie, who provided that technique, and laid the foundation of the future series of Admiralty charts.

(end of part 1)

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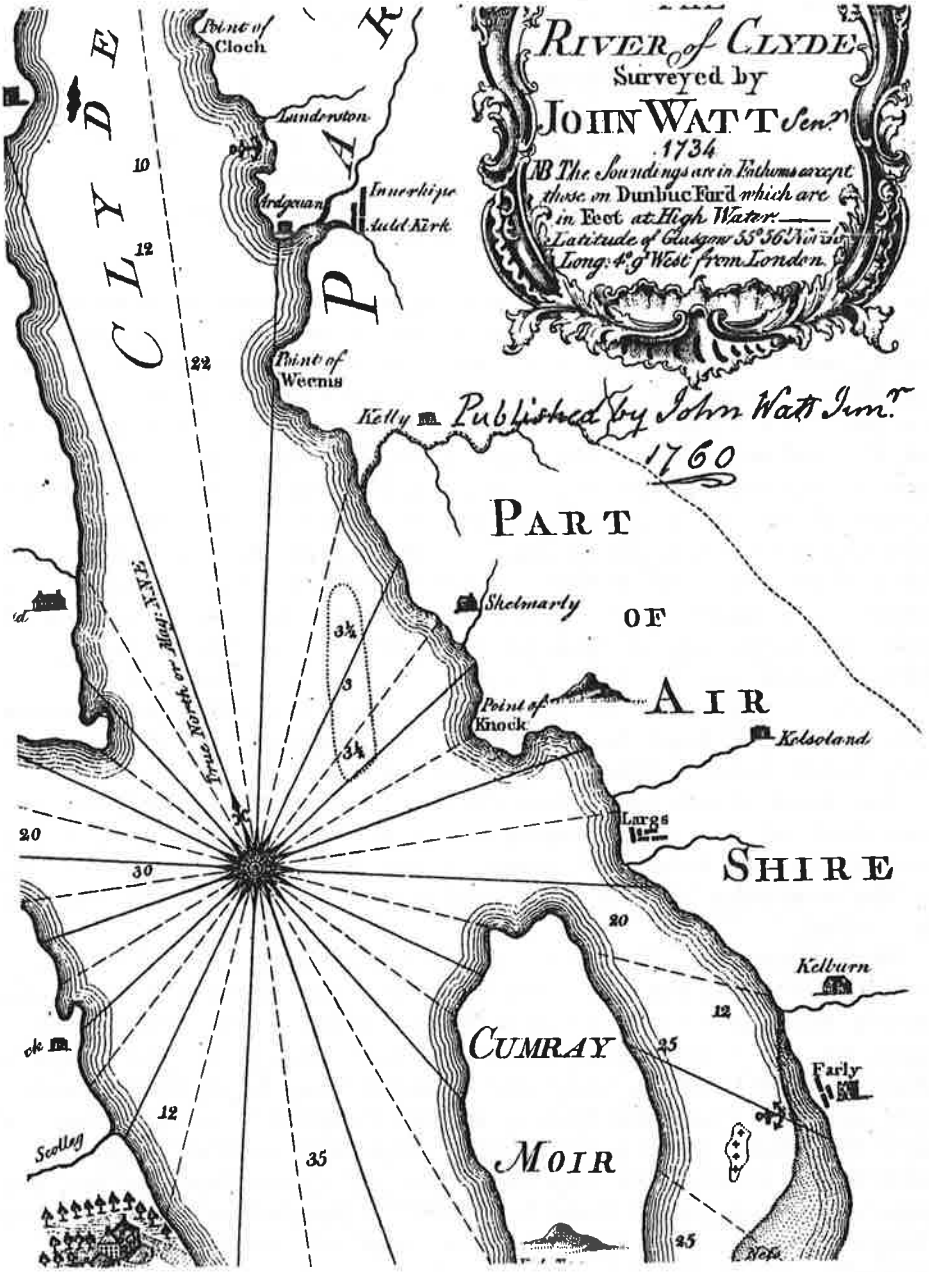

Fig. 3. John Watt : THE RIVER OF CLYDE, 1759/60.

THE MACARTHURS OF TIREVADICH ON LOCH AWE

Mary McGrigor

Cruic 'is uillt 'is Ailpainich
Ach cuin a thainig Artairich?
The hills and streams and MacAlpine
But whence came forth MacArthur?

So runs the old saying and the answer remains hard to define. The historian Frank Adam, whose book on "The Clans, Septs, and Regiments of the Scottish Highlands" was revised by Sir Thomas Innes of Learney, Lord Lyon King of Arms,in 1952, states: "The Clan Arthur is one of the oldest clans of Argyll, and its *duthus* was on the shores of Loch Awe where its chief also held Innestrarynich. This particular clan was known from others of the name of Arthur as the *Clann-Artair-na-Tir-a-Chladich* (= of the shore-land). The title *Mac-ic-Artair* suggests that the Clan Arthur of Tirracladich were originally a branch of a major line (which of course would be the case if their ancestor was a "son of King Arthur" as they claim). Their slogan was "*O eisd, O eisd!*" (Listen! Listen!)

Staunch supporter of the Bruce, Mac-ic-Artair was rewarded with grants of land forfeited by the MacDougalls, but a century later this influential position was lost."

The same historians then explain that "There has been a good deal of confusion between the foregoing Clan Arthur and another of the same patronymic - the MacArthur-Campbells, one of the branches of the Clan Campbell, who are not an independent clan."

Neil Campbell, 10th Duke of Argyll, wrote categorically that "In fact beyond all reach of written records this ancient family springs from a common remote origin like the Campbells, being of the O'Duibhnes, they had been Martys to the Lords of Lochow, from whom as very old vassals they held their lands. They are not the same family as the Campbells of Strachur, who were descended from a Sir Arthur Campbell in the reign of Robert the Bruce, but had branched off centuries earlier and never used any other name but that of MacArthur, and they are always spoken of as "bearing the name and arms of Clan Arthur".

According to legend the MacArthurs, because of their

adherence to Bruce, were persecuted by resentful MacDougalls to the point where they had to accept the superiority of the Campbells to gain protection. Subsequently when the chiefs gathered at Inveraray MacArthur of Tirevadich was forced to resign his accustomed place at the head of the table to Sir Colin Campbell of Loch Awe.

The controversy over the ancestry of the MacArthurs of Loch Awe re-emerges in 1428 when John or Ian Macarthur was one of the three men executed by James I of Scotland at his parliament in Inverness.

Adam and Innes state that "Ian, chief of the Clan Arthur of Tirracladich, was one of the chiefs of Argyll who was put to death by James I."

Donald J.MacDonald of Castleton, however, in his "Clan Donald" (1978) says that "John MacArthur, a member of the house of Campbell, advanced a claim to a portion of the land of Garmoran ... upon a charter by Christina, daughter of Alan MacRuairi, to Arthur, son of Sir Arthur Campbell, Knight, early in the 14th century". This would certainly imply that the unfortunate John MacArthur was descended in some way from Sir Arthur Campbell, whatever his earlier ancestry.

The Macarthur lands on the north shore of Loch Awe were centred round their house of Tirevadich - the name means Hayfield - where the ruined mansion of that name now stands. The island of Inishail formed a link to their property on the south shore which comprised the present Cladich Estate and the farm of Accurach in Upper Glen Aray (see my article on Boccaird in Kist 55 p.24).

During the 16th century the MacArthurs' hereditary position as Captains or Officers of Over Lower Loch Awe seems to have been furiously resented by their neighbours, the Campbells of Inverawe. Conflict of some sort took place, for a charter in the Archives of Inveraray Castle, dated 1567, confirms that a pardon was granted to the Campbells of Inverawe for "the drowning of Clan Arthur".

The location is described as "somewhere on Loch Awe"; the word "drowning" suggests that the MacArthurs, in trying to defend themselves, were driven into the loch. (Some thirty years ago our son Jamie, then a little boy, unearthed an ancient sword on the south shore of Inishail).

Subsequently a charter of 10th January 1569 clarifies the situation. Granted by Archibald, 5th Earl of Argyll to Iain (or John) MacArtur Tirivadich and his heirs male ... it con-

firms their possession of "all and haill the Office of Baillgiarie (sic) of all and sundry the lands and heritages lying in the side of Over Lochow pertaining and belonging to Clan Arthur with their haill pertinents viz All and sundry the lands of Barbraik (Barbreck), Auchnagaun (Achnacarron?), Larachban, Teirwidych (Tiravadich), Mowey (Bovuy), Drumurk, Capehin (Keppochan), Bocardie (Boccaird), Caupurruck (Accurach?) and Ardbrecknish with haill pertinents (This charter proceeds on the resignation of Archibald Campbell of Inneraw (Inverawe) and Dougall Campbell his son.) To be holden of the Earl and giving to him and his heirs two parts of the profit of the said Court and doing and administering justice only".

On March 8 1634 a charter confirming possession of the same lands held by "his fore grandsire" was given to Iain's grandson, also Iain, by Archibald Lord Lorne (later the Marquess of Argyll). Younger sons and other relations of the family, installed in the various properties, were called, as then was common, by the place names.

The terms of the charter illustrate the feudal services involved. The reddendo, including the office of Sergeant or Mair of Loch Awe, carried the obligation to provide yearly payment in kind as well as some money in rent. Significantly "a hall, chamber and kitchen" had to be provided on the then island of Inistrynich for the use of Lord Lorne. More importantly "the grantee and his heirs were also obliged to come and ride with Lord Lorne and his levis (sic) in forensic services, viz. hunting, besieging of enemies both in hosts and with his enemies as the rest of the tenants do when enemies chance to be".

In 1625 the rentals of the Argyll Estates show MacArthur of Tirrewadich as the Captain and Marty of Innistrynich and Officer of Over Lochow. Succeeding generations continued in this hereditary office, and in 1680 we find Johnne MacArthur rendering his accounts to the 9th Earl of Argyll.

Five years later, in 1685, when Argyll, who had risen with Monmouth against the Catholic James VII and II, was captured and executed, the land of the MacArthurs on Lochaweside was cruelly ravaged by the "Athollmen" (as the army of occupation was named.

The loss at Boccaird, where the laird's beasts ran with those of his tacksmen, was claimed to be no less than £2,223.-6s.8d. The "Athollmen" also destroyed the mill at MacArthur's

farm of Bovuy and all else that they could find.

John MacArthur, who apparently lived to a very old age, may have had some compensation, but his grandson Patrick, described as Fiar of Tirivadich in 1709, was also to see his land destroyed. In 1715 the two great Campbell houses were divided when Breadalbane rose for James VIII (The Old Pretender) and Argyll for the reigning Queen Anne. Breadalbane despatched an army, commanded by Colin Campbell of Glendaruel, to attack Inveraray, and inevitably the Highland soldiers looted all they could find.

In 1744, when Patrick himself was dead, his brother Duncan, bed-ridden after a stroke, petitioned Archibald, 3rd Duke of Argyll, for assistance on the grounds that he had "embraced all opportunities of serving His Grace's family, being in command of parties searching for thieves and constantly with the Guards sent to convey recruits for the late Duke's regiment. In 1715 Your Grace appointed me Lieutenant in the Baron McCorquodale's Company of Militia where I remained on my own charges till the Company was dismissed."

Further to this Patrick's son Duncan, also appealing to the Duke, pointed out that in 1685 his father had been forfeited for his adherence to the Argyll family, and that they had run into great arrears of feu duties etc. Also "in 1715, the Highland Clans not only took free quarters for some nights in their march to and from Inveraray but also destroyed houses and corns by which we contracted additional debt." Admitting that the late Duke had accepted payment of 3000 merks in token of the 5000 merks which were due, he still insisted that he had "scarce subsistence for himself and a family of seven small children" and though he has come to this town (Inveraray) to reside for the schooling of his children he is not well able to afford them education. As "ane old vassal and cadet of the family" he prays to be assigned some office and emolument about the Duke's concerns or elsewhere and "if Your Grace would be graciously pleased to take notice of your petitioner's son, a youth of sixteen years, to recommend him to any office of employment that could be bread to him".

Duncan seems to have moved with his children to Inveraray after Christian, daughter of his first marriage, sent there to board with a couple while she went to the grammar school, had scandalised the locality by eloping with a young man to Ireland.

The strain of providing for his family, adding to the bur-

den of his debt, appears to have been the main reason why Duncan now resigned his hereditary lands of Keppochan, Drumuirk, Barrandryan and Bovuy, on Lochaweside, to his superior the Duke of Argyll. Nonetheless he retained his hereditary position as Captain or Marty of Over Loch Awe, and as such he must have raised the fencible men when Prince Charles Edward landed in Scotland in 1745. Probably he marched at their head to the Cross at Inveraray, assembly point of the army raised on the Duke's command.

Following the suppression of the Rising in 1746, the government abolished hereditary jurisdiction in Scotland, and the old order, whereby men held land from the great chiefs largely on a military basis, virtually came to an end. Estates had to be profitable and inevitably rents were raised.

Subsequently Patrick MacArthur, some thirty years later, sold the rest of his land. Told that he had forgotten the island of Inishail, he reputedly said sadly "Let the tail go with the head!". Previous to disposing of the last of his estate on Lochaweside Patrick emigrated to Jamaica, apparently in the hopes of retrieving his fortune; but he died there - it would seem soon after his arrival - in February 1771.

The sale of Tirevadich appears to have taken time to complete, for Arthur MacArthur of Malvern, Pennsylvania, writing to the Lord Lyon in 1981, told him that it remained the principal Clan address until c.1776.

Patrick MacArthur, styled "of Inistrynich" (Duke Neil said this was synonymous with Tirevadich) and said by Neil Munro to be the "last chief of the Sept", married Mary Campbell of Craignish c.1752. They had two children, a daughter Lilly born about 1752 and Charles born in 1755. Charles, who became a midshipman, died unmarried in India between 1786 and 1788. Lilly, who must have stayed in Scotland, married Neil MacArthur in 1775. Neil was a tenant of Campbell of Sonachan at Balliemeanoch and also lived at Kames on Loch Awe, They had eight children of whom the eldest, Patrick (Peter) was born in 1777; his sister Anne was the ancestor of Neil Munro. Mrs Lesley Bratton (Neil's granddaughter) kindly gave this information, which would seem to establish that, in the absence of new evidence, the male line of the MacArthurs of Tirevadich and Inistrynich on Loch Awe has now become extinct.

The writer is immensely indebted to Rae MacGregor of Inveraray for her help in supplying photocopies from the Argyll charters.

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GOLD IS WHERE YOU FIND IT

Gloria Siggins

When travelling by air in the Caribbean I liked to put "Archaeologist" against "Occupation" on my landing card. The word was scarcely known, and I fancied it gave me an aura of mystery. On two occasions I think it did, as my identity was questioned by men wearing those one-way dark glasses, and once, at Puerto Rico, an immigration official refused to believe that I had just arrived from the Cayman Islands - which indeed I had. I'm sure if I'd put"Housewife" there'd have been no problem.

Suspicion was rife among the mainly North American guests at the hotel where I stayed when excavating in Tobago in 1961. "What does that blonde really do all day?" someone is reported to have said having seen me driven off each morning in a Works Department truck with all the paraphernalia of digging and a packed lunch. But it was all innocent and above board - it was just that I didn't fit their stereotype of an academic; and archaeology was a man's preserve.

After an hour's uncomfortable journey the lorry would deliver me to a headland of breathtaking beauty called Lovers Retreat, close to the village of Plymouth. Years before, some Amerindian skeletons had been unearthed there by the then Warden of Tobago using a bayonet from his collection of militaria No notes were taken and the bones were discarded, but it was said that the skulls bore signs of artificial deformation, an Arawakan practice, and the accompanying grave goods consisted of some fine, complete pottery vessels of known Arawakan manufacture. Oddly - and I don't know if it was ever explained - the group included some heavy grey stone "ceremonial" axes of a type found in the Carib islands of the Lesser Antilles.

With payment for drawing these things for Yale University I decided to investigate the site to discover its extent and state of preservation and, hopefully, to add something to our scant knowledge of the original inhabitants of Tobago. It turned out to be a worthwhile project made particularly enjoyable for me by the company - the villagers who came day after day to watch in case I'd find gold.

Patrick had helped the Warden dig up the burials and therefore appointed himself my adviser and spokesman. On Day 1 word got round that something unusual was happening on the headland and people gathered to speculate on the purpose of the hole I was digging. Patrick enlightened them; "SHE ENT DIG LATRINE" he shouted "SHE ENT PLANT COCONUT...SHE LOOK FOR CARIB REMAINS". This was interpreted,of course, as 'Carib gold', a third good reason why anyone would dig a hole, and I was guaranteed an audience for the duration of my stay.

The site became a daily meeting place. Talk went on above my head as I dug. My personal appearance and 'beautiful' painstaking work were freely discussed in clearly audible asides. Sometimes I was drawn into exchanges and it was a pleasure to put down my trowel, straighten up and enjoy these friendly people. There was fun and laughter too: I was asked what would happen when the hole became too deep for me to get in and out on the upturned bucket I used as a step; "I'll just have to stay there" I replied, and everyone fell about.. So much was the joke enjoyed that the same question was asked next day to receive the same answer.. and the next..till worn out and tedious!

I became a baby minder. On the first occasion I looked up to see a woman lowering a large baby to the ground "Ah leave Fitzroy wid you while Ah go by de doctor" she announced, strolling off with her friend, and for more than hour Fitzroy sat exactly where he had been dumped until his mother returned to scoop him up and tote him back to the village. A couple of days later he was back; this time his friend Bertram was also deposited, and the two of them sat like dolls communicating neither with each other nor me.

Around noon onlookers tended to disperse for a bite to eat and a well-earned rest and I would take a break too. Sometimes Patrick joined me bringing fruit to share and a popular tipple called Gilbeys Wine which I had to refuse - archaeology and alcohol under a grilling sun do not mix. We would dangle our legs over the edge of the low cliff, put the world

to rights, or debate esoteric subjects such as whether or not the world really was round. During a discussion on climate Patrick suddenly said "I wouldn't like to live in Japan!"; "Why not?" I enquired; "Too hot" he replied "that's where the sun rises".

Clouds often welled up at this time of day heralding a short sharp downpour which set me hurrying to open a large umbrella over the pit to keep out the worst of the rain while I sheltered among trees.

In the quiet of the afternoon, when everyone else was asleep, came Mr York, my favourite visitor. Old, bent, thin as a lath, he moved painfully with the aid of two sticks. Through the bushes I'd glimpse his spidery, rather sideways progress along the track from the village and know that I had a good ten minutes in which to prepare for his daily inspection. At the approaching shuffle of his bare feet I'd look up with feigned surprise - and genuine pleasure - and see his face crease into a toothless grin of greeting.

Declining assistance, Mr York would lower himself to the ground at the edge of the pit, his gnarled toes ending up rather close to my face, and I'd brief him on any new developments before he settled down to monitor every movement of my trowel. His great delight was to witness the unearthing of any artefact, however uninteresting, but at the sight of a decorated sherd or something recognisable such as a pot handle his reaction was alarming. He'd tip himself backwards, his old legs shooting up in the air, and cry "Oh <u>that</u>'s a <u>happy</u> piece!" When he righted himself again the vigil would continue punctuated by soft chuckling as if he was amused as well as bemused by my labour. Or was it that in all his days he would never have expected to see a white woman digging a hole? Just before three o'clock when my transport was due, Mr York made his farewells and set off the way he had come - slowly, slowly over the rough grass and along the track to the village.

The excavation was more successful than I had dared to hope and I returned the following year to extend the pit, and again on two further occasions to test other parts of the site. But things had changed: my 'beautiful' work had produced nothing more than a few broken old 'wares' so local interest had vanished; and Mr York was dead.

But from my point of view there was gold. On assessment the archaeology supported historical evidence that Lovers Retreat had been the seasonal base for the hostile Indians

from Grenada who time and again frustrated attempts by Europeans to establish settlements in the early 17th century - when the island was 'officially' uninhabited. The pottery, named Plymouth Scratched Ware, was accepted as being, at last, something tangible that could be attributed to the shadowy, elusive Carib. Charcoal from the lowest level of the lower layer which contained Arawakan midden material yielded a C14 date of AD640 +/- 120.

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NECESSARY STUDY

Murdo MacDonald

Author's Note: As the notes which follow deal with a subject of much indelicacy, I would ask our lady readers, and persons of refinement to avert their eyes and press on to the next article in this magazine.

Public conveniences - the Victorians called them Public Privies or Public Necessaries - had an important part in people's lives in the days before every house had its own water supply, toilet and bath/shower room. Take for instance the following extracts from a report on Sanitary Defects in the village of Ardrishaig in 1877:

> **P.McArthur's Property. Ashpits neither floored nor drained, walls leak. There are here six families with no privy.**
> **R.Thomson's Property. Sixteen families have two privies of which one is nailed up and the other has no door.**

What were the "ashpits" referred in the first extract? They were more than simply innocent receptacles of ashes and clearly received the contents of the crude privies which served the houses, both liquid and solid matter. The report mentioned above refers to the ashpits at D.McArthur's Property as being "very foul and offensive, and contains much liquid sewage".

The problem in the landward parts of the country was one which confronted the Parochial Boards which were the Local Authorities for Sanitary Purposes under successive Public Health Acts. In the Mid Argyll area the largest village was Ardrishaig, for which the local authority was South Knapdale

Parochial Board. Tarbert village on the other hand was bisected by the march between two parochial boards, South Knapdale and Kilcalmonell & Kilberry, which acted independently.

On 26th December 1866 the Parochial Board of Kilcalmonell & Kilberry "considered an Application from the Feuars and other inhabitants of the village of Tarbert, setting forth that there are at present no public necessaries within the village in consequence of which deposits of filth injurious to the Sanitary state of the place are thereby created, and craving that four public necessaries be erected in various localities within the village.
The meeting are fully aware of the necessity of such erections more especially as the seaport of Tarbert during the fishing season is frequented by a large fleet of fishing boats from distant parts in consequence of which the erection of public necessaries for strangers as well as the inhabitants become more indispensable, but after due deliberation [the Board] deemed it advisable to obtain the opinion of the Board of Supervision...."

A month later the minutes record that three privies had been erected in different localities in the village at a cost of £62.8s.1½d.

Within the two burghal areas of Mid Argyll, Inveraray and Lochgilphead, the local authority was not the local parochial Board but the town council. In Inveraray the medical officer of health, Dr F.R.MacDonald, wrote to the Town Council on 11th April 1864 expressing his concern at "the deplorable condition of the poorer classes of inhabitants from the absence of public necessaries". He pointed out the threat to public health by the absence of privies in the Burgh. He concluded "I believe that the introduction of one or two of these machines introduced into Glasgow is essential for the health of the Community". Such a "machine" must have been erected soon afterwards for three months later the Town Council minutes reported that the Public Necessary had been burned down by an act of wilful fire-raising. It was immediately replaced by another wooden privy "at a cost of £23.14s." The structure stood on wooden piles projecting into the loch.

In Lochgilphead the initiative to provide a public convenience came not from the Local Authority but from a non-statutory body called the Lochgilphead Feuars Committee. This committee had been formed in the early years of the village to raise a local rate which was expended on improvements to the

water supply and other amenities. Even after the creation of the Lochgilphead Police Commissioners in 1859 the Feuars Committee continued to carry on with matters which were normally within the remit of the Police Commissioners. In 1863 the Feuars Committee discovered that it had a small sum of money in hand and so decided "to erect what has long been awaiting in the village a public necessary". After discussions with the Local Authority, i.e. the Police Commissioners, a"No.3 MacFarlane's iron water closet for three persons" was selected and purchased for £16 and erected in 1864.

The reference to MacFarlane's iron water closet is interesting. The firm of Walter MacFarlane & Co., Architectural and sanitary ironfounders, the Saracen Foundry, Glasgow, had a vast output of cast iron fountains, bandstands, verandas,and so on, often of great beauty. The Lochgilphead water closet was de-mountable and seems to have been moved to different locations on two occasions. Initially it was erected "near the entrance to the public gardens",apparently off what is now Lorne Street. Following the building of the new, improved, public privies and store in 1872 in what is now Smiddy Land (where they remain in use as a store) the cast iron privy appears to have been re-erected in Cossack Street. By 1889 it was in a deplorable state. Alexander Campbell of the Auchindarroch, the General Superintendent under the Board of Supervision, condemned it as a "serious annoyance" to the neighbourhood. "The privy portion consists of two divisions, one for men and another for women and children. There is, however, a good-sized opening between the two which is hardly consistent with decency".

Foul and offensive these early conveniences may have been, but they do illustrate the attempts by our Victorian forefathers to grapple with the problems of public health and sanitation.

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A TRAFFIC HAZARD OF THE 30s

An extract from a letter sent in 1943 to Miss Lorna McEchern from Mr James Davidson, printed here with her permission.

I once went from Greenock to Tarbert, a lovely sail. I was going to Cour, where a sister of my wife was married to the keeper. They met me with their car at Tarbert, and we had a

lovely run to Cour, but I did not think much of their roads, very switchback, up and down all the time. Talk about roads! They took me to Campbeltown one day, and there is a hill on the way called the "Brae of Saddell"; I have never seen any kind of wheel traffic on such a hill; they taking it almost every other day thought nothing of it. Coming back, to make matters worse, there is a turn in the middle of the hill, and when we came to the corner, what did we meet but a horse in cart with a load of gravel, pulling death and life, and nobody with it. I said to Bobbie, who was driving, "We are in for it now, Bobbie, I am going to jump!" "No, no!" he said "Sit for God's sake, if you jump you will tumble over that brae and kill yourself! If you sit quiet we have a chance!" When we reached the horse the poor brute went to the side of the road itself -a narrow road it was too. We met the man quite a hundred yards down the hill. We were in luck that the horse had more sense than his driver.

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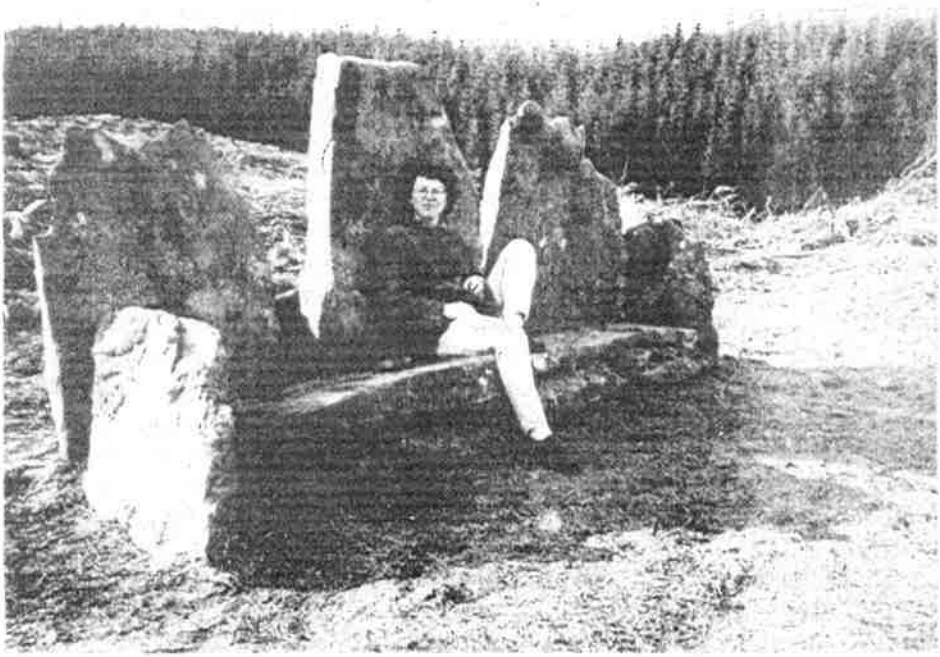
"THE LADY'S SEAT" REVISITED

Sheena Carmichael

During my childhood at Slockavullin the "Lady's Seat" was a special place where we sat en route to an annual picnic to Old Poltalloch. Consisting of huge slabs of stone and set on the hillside overlooking Kilmartin, it was an ideal place for us to get our second wind for the rest of the journey, cumbered as we were with loaded baskets, kettle and even kindlings for the fire.

For many years now the hillside has been covered with mature timber (planted in 1945), and though it was possible to reach the seat from the main Old Poltalloch road it was then a claustrophobic place surrounded by trees, and always seemed dark and sunless.

Now the timber has been harvested, and on a Spring day last year, with arctic showers shrouding Kilmartin from time to time, we made our way back, this time by car past the ruined house of Glen Moine where a layer of peat can be clearly seen at the side of the new road (Gaels always gave meanings to place names).



"The Lady's Seat"

We parked at the Fank, also a rather special place, and so well built, and made our way up the old road through the brashings and branches of a newly cleared forest. On reaching the new road it took us a few minutes to find the old track, but at last there was the Seat, just as I remembered it, with the view over to Kilmartin excellent, and Kilmartin Castle standing out beautifully; in my youth it was a sad ruin, and we were warned not to go near it. I did not ever expect to see it in its original state, but now, re-roofed and so well restored, it is a fine sight. The owners have done a marvellous job. [See an account of the work in Kist 56 pp 10-14].

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THE EARLY FISHING INDUSTRY IN THE W. HIGHLANDS

Some Notes

Denis Rixson

Development in the area of the West Highlands has been hindered by the stark and uncompromising nature of its terrain and climate. There are no mineral resources to speak of, the land is rocky and infertile, the tree cover was largely removed by centuries of exploitation, and it is too far from the centres of population to develop a competitive industrial base The only natural source of wealth is the sea, and many turned to it on a full or part-time basis.

The fish in times past was of course the herring. Much is still unknown about the behaviour of the huge shoals of pelagic fish such as herring and mackerel which frequent the west coast. However from the Middle Ages fleets of Dutch "busses" were exploiting the herring stocks in the area. The Scottish kings periodically attempted to encourage a native fishing industry, but it was not until the 18th century that the Government took a serious interest. James Anderson reported to the Treasury on the subject in 1785, and John Knox wrote a report in 1786 for the British Fisheries Society. From their accounts it is clear that Nature's bounty was not being fully exploited by the Highlanders.

Certainly there were Clydeside men up with their herring busses; but relations between visitors and locals were often strained and sometimes violent. The Clydeside men seriously damaged the local woodland as they cut and took whatever they wanted. In return the locals cut nets and stole or cut buoys. There were difficulties over salt supply, there was a dearth of piers and harbours, but it was lack of capital for proper boats and gear that prevented Highlanders from taking full advantage of a livelihood that might have enriched them. They were simply too poor.

Strangely, too, they seem to have thought little of certain types of fish. John Knox commented "Flat fish, as turbot, halybut, skate, soles and flounders are in little request, among the common people, who consequently seldom or never attempt to fish for them....Mackaral come periodically, in mighty shoals, but they are also despised, though capable of being cured for exportation". It was the annual migration of the herring which was the great event in the fishing calendar

and the stupendous nature of the shoals involved can be estimated from the following account by James Anderson:

"At Loch-Urn [Loch Hourn], in 1767 or 1768 they came in such quantity, that from the narrows to the very head it was quite full. Such a quantity ran on shore, that the beach, for four miles round the head, was covered with them from 6 - 18 inches deep....I am also of opinion that the strongest fish being without, in forcing their into the inner bay, drove the lightest and weakest on shore. So thick were these last, that they carried before them every other kind of fish they met - even ground fish, skate, flounders etc. and perished together. They continued at that time several weeks but not so thick after they had run on shore".

James Anderson may have his date wrong, because in 1768 Archibald Menzies, General Inspector of the Forfeited Estates, visited Knoydart, and afterwards wrote "In the year 1753 a shoal of herring was left by the tide in the inner Loch Urin (Hourn) above the Skiarries. They were computed at half a mile square from three to five feet deep. All the way down to the Sound of Sky the herring were so thick that, a boat going on the loch, the oars made the herring fly out of the water like flying fish".

[Two events? Or confused accounts of one event? Ed.]

Whichever year it was the folk memory of the event lasted well into the twentieth century; local people still spoke of it and told how those living in the area came with boats and carts to collect the herring for pickling. The herring were stranded in the bay known as Loch Beag which is at the very head of Loch Hourn. Here the water is considerably shallower and the ebbing tide would have been responsible for stranding this monumental shoal.

Pelagic shoals are subject to variation over the years for reasons not yet fully known but probably to do with water temperature, feeding and population cycles. These fluctuations could make life very difficult for local fishermen with small boats who were dependent on a regular annual migration and who could not travel great distances in search of elusive shoals of fish. There is a story connected with this.

It concerns a certain Father Francis White who ministered to the Catholics in Knoydart on the south side of Loch Hourn in the latter half of the 17th century. The local people complained bitterly of the dearth of herring and begged Father White to bless the waters of the loch and bring back the fish.

Reluctantly Father White did so, and left the district shortly afterwards, perhaps doubtful of the efficacy of his prayers. Happily for him and the people of Knoydart the herring did return, and in great quantity. A miracle or just a happy coincidence?

Fortunately for the herring 17th and 18th century fishermen did not have the boats or gear to damage the stock seriously. The situation is very different today. In 1786 John Knox found that "clams....bring no price". Even a few years ago local fishermen could talk of them as if they were stacked up like soup-plates on the ocean floor. Now the combined efforts of divers and clam dredging boats have ended that particular abundance. A few years ago king prawns (nephrops norvegicus) were being thrown back by fishermen as worthless - now they bring the highest prices. As each species finds favour in some market so man's incessant and insatiable desire to exploit the ocean is sure to impoverish it. The scene described of Loch Hourn in the 18th century is inconceivable today.

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REVIEWS

OATMEAL AND THE CATECHISM: Scottish Gaelic Settlers in Quebec. Margaret Bennet. John Donald Publishers & McGill-Queen's University Press 1998. £25. ISBN 0 85976 461 3

Pinpointing the end of a cultural phase is like marking the day the swallows leave. Try as one may, too often the event slips past unseen. Dr Bennet's achievement lies in having gathered her material in the nick of time, by tape-recording the last native Gaelic-speakers in the Eastern Townships of Quebec (and even one centenarian survivor of an emigrant Lewis family). Moreover she analyses the women's part in establishing the settlers, the domestic skills and crafts which enabled survival. With her own background in Skye and Lewis, with fluent Gaelic and earlier experience of collecting traditions in Newfoundland, her qualifications are impeccable.

It cannot be easy to compile such a wealth of oral testimony and include explanations to satisfy both a Scottish and a Canadian readership. My only reservations are whether she has glossed over some aspects - of underlying history, of diverse

traditions - which may be clear to half her audience and perplexing to others. A wide-ranging bibliography will guide many to find answers, but one gaping trap must be mentioned, namely Dr Bennet's apparent ignorance of the Free Church of Scotland which she labels 'Presbyterian' (with all other non-Catholic sects called 'Protestant') and which she accuses of repression and (inevitably) 'gloomy Calvinism', with no appreciation of the strength the emigrants derived from their faith. These were first-generation Free Church members; the peak of the 19th century Canadian settlements came within fifteen years of the Disruption itself; the fundamental elements had not been imposed upon them by bigoted oppressors but had been embraced and upheld by whole congregations. (The political aspect of 1843, which has been called the only successful Scottish revolution, is not discussed).

I find it sad that neither publisher caught the slip of mis-labelling the 121st Psalm as the 100th.

That apart, there are gems. Without this record we might not know of 'Singing the Survey', when, having applied for already measured lands (50 or 100 acres) the new arrivals first drew lots for places on the march and then went along the rough track singimg the 23rd Psalm in the Gaelic metrical version. I have been unable to work out the frontage of each lot (the maps lack a fine enough scale) so we cannot tell how often the Psalm was repeated, at 14 beats to the couplet, before the column reached the end of the first plot and the leader dropped out to see what he had obtained. Behind him came his family, on foot or in a cart with their few possessions, while the column moved on, singing.

This can hardly have been a new invention. Had it been used when the old group farms were 'cleared' to lotted crofts on less favoured land? Did it indeed go back to far earlier times? The subject deserves enquiry.

I long to know more of the economics, and the cost of tools and of foodstuffs for the first terrible winter. Given that the May term was the likeliest departure date from Lewis and that the journey might take eight weeks or more, there was no prospect of planting anything on the new lands even if they were cleared of first growth timber (and most were not, apart from the few trees taken to form the 'good house' the incomers were promised - at best four walls and a roof, with unglazed windows, in which temperatures of -30'F would soon have to be endured).

The book ends with a glowing account of a festival celebrating the establishment of the community and its partnerships with French settlers and Native peoples. It is a happy portent which suggests that francophone Quebec may yet cherish the memory of their 'Scotch' neighbours of yesteryear.

PS. Has the School of Scottish Studies relocated to the University of Glasgow? Or is this someone's blunder?

M.C.

Scotland's Roman Remains. 2nd edition. Lawrence Keppie, Curator of Archaeology, Hunterian Museum, University of Glasgow. John Donald 1998. £9.95. ISBN 0 85976 495 8

It is 12 years since the 1st edition of this most useful - and most readable - handbook was published; there was a revised reprint in 1990, but a 2nd edition was urgently required. New motorways, bypasses, maturing forestry, new buildings and rebuildings necessitated alterations to parts of the guide to sites, further research had taken place and new discoveries had been made.

The first part of the book deals with background - a short history, the Roman army and its installations, the sources of our knowledge of Roman activity in Scotland. The maps showing the Flavian and Antonine forts are much improved by having the fort names printed alongside their symbols. In the interest of 'political correctness', 'indigenous tribes' is substituted for 'natives' and 'interested observation' for 'amazement' in describing their reaction to seeing the Roman fleet sailing by. The tradition of the temporary abandonment of the Antonine Wall in 155-157 is now discarded for the view that the trouble was merely localised.

Acres, feet and miles have yielded to hectares, metres and kilometres, but still appear in brackets for the benefit of the old-fashioned; 'county' names are updated, and the names of relevant organisations. A strange feature is the consistent mis-spelling of 'reconnaissance' and the total (I think) absence of misprints. In Part 2 the reverse is the case: it gets 'reconnaissance' right, but misprints proliferate: 'vellum for 'vallum','renching' for 'trenching', 'revested' for 'revetted' 'cowards' for 'towards' and so on; an irritating one is the frequent substitution of 'L' or 'l' for the numeral '1'; this produces things like'L9 century' and 'Lkm'. Spellcheck

must have been on the blink; a good proofreader would have been a help. By the way, the 'goddess Silvanae'makes a surprise appearance.

The excellence of the guide, however is not in dispute. Directions for reaching sites are clear and detailed, and appropriate parking places recommended. Warnings such as "Allow 30 minutes for stiff climb across mostly heather-covered ground" are given. The book is heartily recommended,both for general reading and 'on site'.

A.O.M.C.

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SUMMER EXPEDITIONS 1998

April 18th. Dun Rostan, Doide, Daltote

A bright day after rain. Pre-expedition reconnaissance had shown that visiting Dun Rostan was now impractical. A short talk was given and the dun inspected from afar. We then crossed fields to the extensive chlorite-schist quarries by the shore at Doide, whence came the 8th century St John's Cross on Iona, many mediaeval crosses and graveslabs, as well as building stone (e.g. for Castle Sween). The quarries were used into the 19th century. A boat inlet shows how the stone was transported. The last visit of the afternoon was to the slab of chlorite-schist at Daltote on which is carved a 'handled cross' of early Christian type.

May 30th. The MacCormaig Isles - Eilean Mor

An expedition enjoyed on a day of cloud and sunshine by over 40 members and friends, who were conveyed by motor launch in parties of 12 to and from the island. The 13th century chapel, whose later alterations are pleasingly clear to trace, was visited in small groups and the well preserved effigy examined. The elaborately carved mediaeval stones in the enclosure round the chapel were of particular interest, as was the replica, set in the original base and socket, of the shaft of a tall free-standing cross on the high point of the island. (Original and the disc head in the National Museum of Scotland). The cave with early Christian (7th century) crosses incised on its walls we did not enter, as it was occupied by a very dead sheep. Our journeys by boat were made very enjoyable by the comments on islands and wild life from Michael Murray, the skipper of the motor launch.

June 17th. Barnluasgan Forest Walk

A pleasant evening walk through woodland along loch shore and across grassland. Our leader, Pat Batty, and one or two others waded in the shallow loch water with fine nets and caught tiny creatures for us to examine through a magnifying glass. Several dragonflies were also captured, but on the whole they were rather shy that evening, and only distant fleeting views of the larger species were seen.

July 11th. Crinan Canal bank from Dunardry

Again a sunny day. As well as being an enjoyable walk and an opportunity for sighting birds in hedgerow, on the water, and on the Moine Mhor, this outing was an excellent chance to learn from John Halliday about the management of the Moine Mhor, that huge expanse of raised bog that is such an important reserve for wild life. Viewing water-birds through his telescope was a fascinating experience - one almost felt as if one was intruding on the birds' private life!

August 15th. Kilmichael Glassary

It was raining when we met at Kilmichael Glassary Church, but we were able to inspect the many 14th-15th century carved stones in the church yard, and also those of post-Reformation date; but not as well as we should have liked to, because of a very heavy coating of moss. The rain cleared away, and we then visited the sheet of cupmarks (and other shapes) in the village, and an exceptionally large cup-and-ring on the hillside. Standing stones, one cupmarked, further along the valley were visited, and then an old sand quarry where a whole cityful of sand-martins had lived in the spring and summer.

September 12th. The Scottish Crannog Centre

The outing to the Crannog Centre was a journey back in time. The reconstruction crannog is based on the 2,500 year old Oakbank Crannog which lies off Fearnan on Loch Tay; not only the structure but also tools, utensils, clothing and food items were recovered, and research continues. We marvelled at the expertise of the Crannog people in their engineering and building techniques. The stormy day gave us a little idea of the rigours of living on the water.

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