The Lady's Seat

The KIST 62

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HUGH MACFARLANE: A SELECTION OF STORIES

Angus Martin

The following stories are selected from transcripts of tape recordings made with Hugh MacFarlane of Tarbert between 1974 and 1977, while researching The Ring-Net Fishermen, which was published in 1981 and reissued, in paperback, in 1996. Hugh, who was born in 1884 and died in 1979, was the most remarkable of all my informants of that period and the one, I think, whom I most miss. Hugh was always welcoming and exceptionally patient when explaining difficult (to me) technical matters, for example fishing techniques and sail-work. He had an exceptional knowledge of Tarbert in general and of its fishing industry in particular. His fishing experience predated by some twelve years the general adoption of motor power, which has totally transformed the industry. The first four stories, pertaining to the Minches, have been extracted from a recent publication of the author's, The North Herring Fishing: Ring-Net Fishing in the Minches. The second batch has been extracted from a work-in-progress, provisionally titled The Herring Fishermen of Kintyre and Ayrshire.

With drift-nets

Hugh MacFarlane's earliest experiences of the Minch were as a drift-net fisherman in an old skiff, the Mary of Tarbert. The crew of four would set sail for Loch Broom in October, after the 'traalin', or ring-netting, was finished on Loch Fyne, and would always try to be home for New Year. The boat was 33ft long and 9ft of beam with a tiny forecastle in which the men could 'have a doss an cook a meal ... that's aboot all'. She took twenty-six-and-a-half hours once from Crinan to Loch Broom, but that was with a steady fair wind. There were few lights on the coast at that time, and he remembered the lighthouse at Rudha Reidh,south of Loch Broom,being built. (It was completed in 1912). He also fished with drift-nets in Loch Hourn and Loch Nevis and in Loch Eishort, where, he recalled, 'ye winna get a shillin a basket'.

At the back of Horse Island

One 'dark as dye' October night in Loch Broom with the Mary, herring were heard 'playin dry in along the rocks' at the back of Horse Island. The crew shot eight drift-nets along

the shore, but not content with that, they later went off in the skiff's tiny dinghy and secured each end of the train to the very shore so that the herring couldn't 'get away oot by the en'. Still not satisfied, the crew then set four spare nets inside the first train. Periodically, they'd lift one of the net-buoys and check if the fish were beginning to 'make', and the indications were good, prompting Hugh to predict: 'If that'll cerry along the train, ye'll fill the skift in the moarnin'. Then the herring began jumping in such numbers that Hugh's brother John was able to catch them in his hands. With daylight,the herring began leaving the shore - as herring must - and swam straight into the walls of netting. As the Mary, fully loaded, headed for market under oars, she passed a native boat by the name of the Brothers Pride, whose crew was hauling barren nets out in the tide-stream. 'Where did you get the herring?'one of the native crew called. 'We got them right inside o where ye are,' a Tarbertman replied. The doleful answer to that was:'Well, well, what a pity and us so near.'

'Magic' whisky

The effects of strong liquor aren't always harmful, as this story from Hugh MacFarlane will demonstrate. He described the whisky as 'magic'; it must have been of the illicit variety and very potent. He was drift-netting in Loch Broom in November of c.1905. The crew had filled the skiff with herring in the quiet waters of the sound between Tanera More and Tanera Beg, but when they came out into the loch they caught the full force of a gale and the boat almost turned 'upside-doon'. Fortunately, the sail was set for fair wind and was only 'hingin fae the boat', so the belly of it, which had struck below the boat's bend, kept the sea from filling and capsizing the vessel. Once she'd righted herself, the sail was lowered at once and the boat 'run straight before it'. They got into the lee of Tanera Beg - not without first almost striking the rocks as they tried to turn into the sound - and lay the night there. The crew wasn't able to light a fire - 'everything wis soakin below' - but contrived to prepare a meal. Daylight came and the gale was still blowing, but about 8a.m. it was decided to run for Ullapool. All the reefs were taken in on the sail, they managed round the point, and the wind - which was northwest and fair - took them into Ullapool.

They'd had nothing to eat since 4p.m. the previous day. The herring had been sold, at 14 shillings a cran, and while

the crew was waiting to begin discharging them, one of them said: 'Come on an get yer mornin afore we start.' They all went up to the Royal Hotel, so exhausted they could 'hardly walk up the brae'. 'Now,' said the crewman whose idea it was, addressing a man by the name of Macleod who was tending the bar, 'we're waantin four o yer best glesses o whisky.' 'Well, Macleod replied, 'I'll give you that, but you'll not drink any more.' He put a glass in front of each of them. The whisky having been consumed, one of the Tarbertmen asked if they could have the same again. 'Oh,no,' said Macleod, 'I couldn't do that. A fill of that could only spoil you. I'll tell what I'll do with you. I'll give you one half apiece.' First however, each man had to make a promise, but the nature of that promise was unclear - perhaps they were sworn to secrecy as to the source of the stuff. Anyway, the whisky put new life into them and they emptied the boat and sorted their nets before they cooked a meal. 'Wi a gless an a half o whisky. It must've been good. He never said yit'.

The deer-hunter

Hugh MacFarlane was storm-stayed in Loch Broom one winter, at the turn of the century, waiting to get home. To pass time, he and another Tarbert fisherman, by the name of Bain,accepted an invitation to accompany a retired police sergeant, Willie Mackenzie, on a deer-poaching expedition in the locality. Mackenzie had a rifle with him, which Hugh lifted to examine. 'My God,' Hugh recalled, 'a presentation tae wan o them big lairds in Skye!' The laird's name was on the rifle, which had been given to him by his tenants. Hugh said to Mackenzie, 'A winna ask ye how ye got the rifle', and Mackenzie didn't tell him. Where Mackenzie took them, the two Tarbertmen 'never seen a deer yet, an Willie's there like a bush-ranger, doon'. Mackenzie was a dead-shot, but every time he would fire, it was a goat he killed. Eventually, Hugh said to him: 'How are ye gonny get them doon?' - 'Down?' Mackenzie replied. 'You'll carry them, haul them, you and that other fellow, Bain'.'Well' Hugh said, 'good enough - that's plenty'.

A 'touch' in Bight Lucky

When Hugh MacFarlane was a boy in the school at Tarbert,he went out to the fishing for a night one Friday. The year was 1896, and the month October, when the herring shoals leave Loch Fyne. The boats - the Britannia and Gondolier - were in

Bight Lucky, a bay south of the Battle Isle. Hugh remarked to the boy on the boat: 'There a herrin efter jumpin.' - 'Did ye hear it?' the boy asked. 'A heard it,' Hugh replied. 'A wis hearin it bizzin oot there.' - 'Where?' - 'There,' Hugh said, indicating the spot.

The boy walked aft and told his father that a herring had jumped. The two crews went inshore, almost to the rocks, and threw out the end-buoy. They shot - 'a wee ring' - and they couldn't haul the net against the weight of herring that was in it. There was a man with a 23-foot oar 'at the cork on each side', one saying to the other in Gaelic: 'Dean do lamh leibh i'. The crews, having 'no bottom net at all', filled both boats 'oot the water'; and after the boats had been loaded, the corks were let go and the remaining herring - 'thousans an thousans o baskets, the whole circle o the net' -were rolled over the rope. One of the herring-steamers was leaving Loch Fyne empty and going for the Clyde, and the catch was purchased by Dunky Carmichael, the buyer aboard her. 'Thon's what he gied the men, eether half-a-croon or three shillins a basket, an every herrin wis lik that - lik a machrel', Hugh recalled, still annoyed, nearly 80 years later, at how little the fishermen received. Hugh himself 'got a pound oot the touch'.

A 'bad' at the Isle of Ross

On a quiet night, with nothing doing, fishermen would 'try the end o the net'. They'd take a 'weather gauge o the tide' - judge where the tide was going - drift with it and then lift the 'bad', which was the Tarbertmen's Gaelic for a 'piece' of the net. 'Aw, as sure as the eye in the needle', Hugh MacFarlane remarked.

As a stated instance of that practice, he told of one night he was down off the Isle of Ross with 'the whole fleet', Campbeltown and Carradale boats too. They were lying listening and Hugh suggested, 'Come, we'll throw oot a bad'. They 'put on the two oars an put oot the half o the net', giving it 10 or 15 minutes to drift. When they hauled back, there was a 'strag' (thick meshing) of herring in the end. They didn't shake the fish out at all, but just hauled them on board, put on the oars again and shot.

'Then there wir torches; then they wir throwin away bi chance, ye know, when they got close. But if they wid put oot a bad, they wid mark it the same as us. We wir lyin there all evenin, aye, tae we wir tired, ye know. Not a breath o win an

a bit o moon. The sea wis lik gless. The whole fleet wis there Aye, we got a fine fishin.'

A shot in Sgolaig

It was the night before Tarbert fair, about 1906, and the half of the Tarbert fleet was in Sgolaig. Hugh MacFarlane was forward (probably on the Mary) and saw a phosphorescent flash very near the bottom in 12 fathoms of water. The fellow who was beside him said,'What dae ye see?' - 'Are ye naw seein it?' Hugh replied. They were over bad ground and Hugh said to his brother Sandy, who was steering the boat, 'Jeest turn her in the wey ye're goin'. The end buoy was dropped and the skiff drawn 'right up tae the rock'. When the neighbour-boat came in, the operation was immediately questioned: 'What are ye doin?' - 'Come on in wi the en,' the doubtful crew was instructed. 'Gie her a wee chug an come on in wi the en.' When the net was lifted there were 130 baskets of herring in it.

There had been no other herring caught that night and the market was starved. Nine or ten herring-steamers came in to bid on the herring, which went to Murray in Saltcoats for 23 shillings a basket, a remarkable price at the time. That weekend, Hugh - who wasn't a drinker at the time - was walking through the fair and encountered an elderly Tarbert fisherman, Dougie Smith, who had 'a bucket in him'. 'Come on', said Dougie. Hugh, baffled, asked him: 'Where are ye goin to?' - 'A'm gonny gie ye a drink,' Dougie replied. 'A'm no takin it,' Hugh said, adding 'What for?' - 'The whole fishin fleet was in Sgolaig an there wirna a man seen a herrin but yersel', Dougie said. 'A seen wan stroke,' Hugh explained. 'Well,' Dougie repeated, 'there weren't a man...', and, breaking off, announced to the embarrassed young man: 'Ye're the best fisherman in Tarbert!'

The Stone-Knapper's lucky wife

When Hugh MacFarlane was in a skiff named the Senga with Johnny Black and Hughie Smith. they were sitting on the gate at Dickie's Boatyard, 'in the swithers' as to whether to go out, because there was a breeze of wind. The wife of a roadman of Irish descent, who lived at the Barracks, came along and spoke to them. 'Are ye's no gan oot?' she asked. 'Ach, it's no...' one of the fishermen began; he was no doubt going to tell her that it wasn't much of an evening for going out. 'Away ye go oot,' she said. 'Ye'll get a big touch.' They

went out and did get a big touch: the fill of the boats at £1 or more a basket. Hugh put it down to coincidence, but the others - 'full o the supersteetion' - believed that she knew they would get the herring. 'That happened, but I wasna believin in it at all,' he said. It wasn't a good night for fishing, and at the time 'a fair kinna calm night' was needed in the summertime. The woman was a MacKinnon from Clachan and her husband - 'Willie the Stone-Knapper' - was employed breaking stones for the roads.

Sabbath observance

Hugh MacFarlane recollected returning to Tarbert from Girvan one Saturday. The weather was poor and darkness coming on, so the crew decided to pass the night in Ardrossan. 'We got wir tea an got waashed up; we went to the pictures an had a dram.' The following day - a Sunday - the wind 'wid hardly blow oot the sail'. One of the crew was eager to be away. 'Come on, let go them ropes. Up wi the sell.' Angus Livingstone, who was 'good' - i.e. religious - queried the suggestion. 'Where are ye's goin?' - 'Where, but we're gonny take the good day when it's in't,' was the answer. 'The Man that made this one will make another one,'Angus countered.'Well, we'll take this one anyway,' was the answer to that, and away they went.

With the whole sail up and the big jib set to catch the'wee air' on a calm sea, they arrived in Tarbert at one o'clock in the afternoon. The church bells were ringing and Hugh, carrying his kit-bag, walked home to his 'wee hoose' beside the church, passing the congregation on the way.

'Some o the good ones, they came tae doon the Bagh mu Chomraig there (the bay at the Battle Isle), put oot the anchor tae night that the church folk winna see them. That's what they did. Och, och! Aye, many a siege wis in't at thon time.'

'Tap's' hard tack

Ship-biscuits consisted basically of flour and water and were made to last, but a baker in Tarbert, Willie 'Tap' Smith, had lard in his recipe. A native of Irvine, he had a bakehouse and butcher's shop on the harbour-front at Tarbert, and whenever fishermen would go to him to order biscuits, they would specify: 'Now, we're naw waantin them that we canna eat them. Ye'll put some lard in them.' Hugh MacFarlane remembered their being 'lik shortbread. Ye know, they wir hard an still

ye could munch them up. Butter - oh, it would be a quarter o an inch thick, the butter. I winna look at breid as long as them biscuits wis there,'

The MacFarlanes were lying in Girvan,preparing to go ashore one day. A man by the name of Ingram, who was a baker in Girvan, came aboard. He was given a bowl of tea and 'Tap's' biscuits with butter and cheese. Ingram was eating thoughtfully, then turned to one of Hugh's brothers and said: 'Where are ye gettin the biscuits?' - 'Them biscuits wis made in Tarbert,' the brother replied. 'Tarbert?' - 'A man the name o Smith.'- 'Well,' said Ingram, 'A've never ett hard biscuits lik that. Will ye gie me wan tae tak it tae the bakehoose?' - 'There lard in them,' Hugh volunteered. 'We told the baker tae put lard in them afore we went away.' Ingram went away with three or four biscuits as samples.

Ref: The North Herring Fishing: Ring-Net Fishermen in the Minches. House of Lochar, 2001, £13.99. ISBN 1 899863 30 X

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KNOW YOUR CARROTS

Lynne Farrell

At 6 p.m. on 22 April 2001 I was phoned at home by Lochgilphead Police Station. They asked if someone could call up to see me! They quickly explained that I was being asked to identify a plant - the botanical equivalent of an identification parade, I guess.

Apparently some visiting lads camping out near Achnamara had gathered a plant, which they thought resembled wild parsnip, from a local burn, and put it in a Saturday night curry - both leaves and roots. On Sunday morning they were not feeling well at all, and had gone to Lochgilphead hospital. One person had been hallucinating. It was not until later in the day that the possible cause of the problem was thought to be something they had eaten.

Up came the policeman, out came the books, and Rosemary Campbell went to look up her veterinary text book. I confirmed that it was Hemlock Water Dropwort (Oenanthe crocata),which is poisonous to animals and humans. I phoned Gordon Rothero, official Argyll plant recorder, to ask if he had 'Poisonous

plants' book to hand. He did not, but suggested the BSBI Handbook on Umbellifers (carrot family). This gives the following information - "The tubers are sweetish-tasting, but very poisonous, due to a series of polyacetylenes. The active principle is oenanthetoxin, a convulsant poison, which can cause rapid death with few symptoms. Fatal cases of human poisoning have occurred when the leaves were mistaken for those of celery, or the tubers for parsnip; cattle poisoning is not uncommon."

The police contacted the doctor, who tapped into the poisons computer database to check up on the chemicals involved and the treatment. I advised that the offensive plant remains needed to be got out of the human system as soon as possible. Emetics had already been ordered.

Rosemary phoned back with the veterinary information - "Cattle become very depressed in general appearance and their respiration is fast and laboured. The mucous membranes become congested, the eye rolls, the pulse is weak and fast and there is a certain amount of foaming at the mouth. Later there is colic and spasmodic contractions of the limbs and jaws. The animal may bellow, fall to the ground where it still moves its limbs and soon becomes unconscious and expires in violent convulsions. In some cases that are not fatal one or more of the limbs remains paralysed. In the horse the appearance of the symptoms and the course of the illness are much more rapid and the nervous symptoms are exaggerated. In the pig the poison is quickly eliminated by vomiting if the quantity swallowed has been small, but where large amounts have been eaten, death occurs very rapidly."

The treatment for animals is to secure them and endeavour to remove the portions eaten by use of the stomach-tube or by immediate rumenotomy. Where time allows, they should be given a dose of gruel containing strong coffee and opium or laudanum but medicinal drenches are often out of the question. I'd like to see a pig drinking extra strong coffee! Perhaps if it were given opium, it really might fly!

I am happy to report that the lads all recovered after a few days and are now safely back home.

Also, Dr Downes at Lochgilphead Surgery and I are working at developing a CD-Rom for Poisonous plants and fungi, which will include pictures for identification purposes, and list the poisonous substances that each species contains together with notes on antidotes and treatments. They also have my phone number for future occasions!

References:
1. Miller W C and West G P, 1972; Black's Veterinary Dictionary; A & C Black, London
2. Tutin T G , 1980; Umbellifers of the British Isles; BSBI Handbook No.2 BSBI, London.

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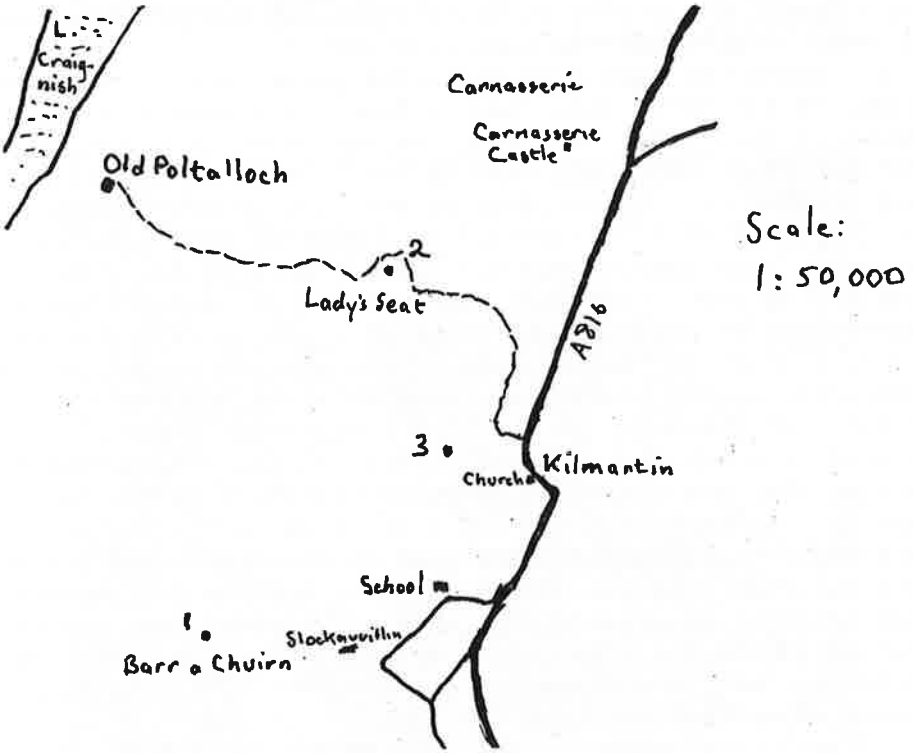
THE 'LADY'S SEATS' IN THE KILMARTIN AREA

Anne M. Kahane

The word "Lady" seems always to be in the singular when mentioning these attractive but rather rough structures, but who she was I do not know; and it was several years before I realised that people in the neighbourhood of Kilmartin - in speech and in writing - when using the term "The Lady's Seat" were often referring to different places.



Sketch map of "Lady's Seat" sites.

As will be seen from the sketch map on the previous page, I have now identified three structures called by this name, numbered from west to east 1,2 and 3.

1: On Barr a' Chuirn, NR 812 978. This site is a prominent knoll west of Ballygowan, now almost inaccessible in Forestry land, but recognisable from the main road through Kilmartin glen (A816) by the survivors of estate-planted trees sticking up on the ridge, The seat is built towards the southeast side of the remains of a cairn (probably Bronze Age), whose central cist and a stretch of perimeter wall foundations can still be seen. The seat part is composed of five roughly square slabs laid on a drystone base, with upright end slabs (the westerly one has slumped) and a more modern-looking back of drystone walling. The source of the material was no doubt the cairn and its cists (at least two).

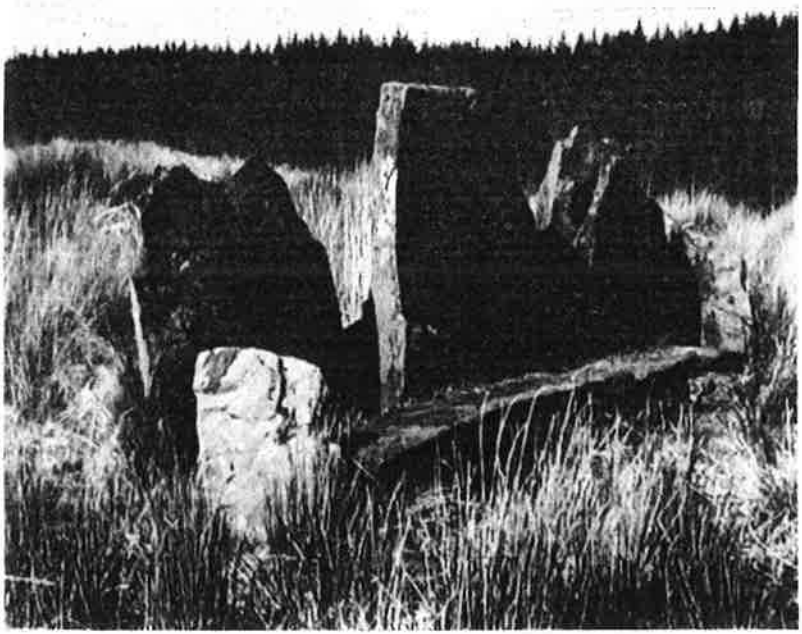
References: RCAHMS Inventory of Argyll vol.6 no.33. The postcard in the National Monuments Record of Scotland referred to is in fact of our site 2; the attribution has now been amended in NMRS. PSAS 1961-62 page 12 no.68

2: Above the road from Kilmartin Quarry over to Old Poltalloch, NM 825 002. This "Lady's Seat" is probably the best known of the three. It is on the southeast-facing slope of a hillock round which the road to Old Poltalloch loops on its way northwards. It is shown on the 1898 6-inch OS map,but not on the first edition surveyed in 1865/74. This does not necessarily mean that it was not in existence at the time of the earlier survey - there may simply have been a different policy about what to print. It consists of a long slab of smooth grey rock, similar to that of most of the prehistoric monuments in the area, as the seat; three similar standing-stone-like uprights for the back; and similar upright end slabs. It is placed with a fine view down over Kilmartin village and glen, across what was once open moorland, as shown by the older maps and the postcard from the 1920S or 1930s now in the NMRS; but the whole hillside was afforested in the 1950s, and not merely did the view from the Seat disappear, but the Seat became very difficult to find among the trees. The trees have now been harvested and the view has re-appeared, but the ground is extremely rough, and dangerous to walk over. The drawing on our cover shows the Seat from the back.

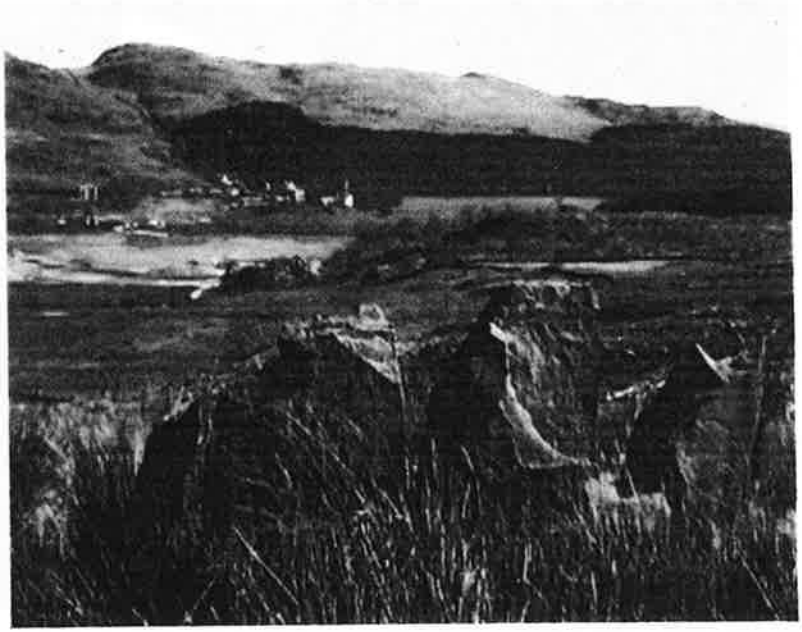
A long-time member of our Society who was brought up in the district and has known this "Lady's Seat" all her life, has this story about it. One of her nieces went for a walk up the

"Lady's Seat" no.1, at Barr a'Chuirn

Central cist, Barr a'Chuirn



"Lady's Seat" no.2 at NM 825 002



"Lady's Seat" no.2, and its view

road from the quarry with her best young man to see if they could find the Seat among the trees. He was carrying a rucksack with him. When they reached the seat they sat down on it. After a while he said to her to wait for him there, and that he would be back shortly. He disappeared among the trees and she waited for a while, then got a bit anxious that he hadn't come back, and wondered if he were all right, or had taken ill, or something. However, he returned, changed into, and resplendent in, his best kilt, tweed jacket, knee length stockings, brogues - the lot - and formally made her a proposal of marriage; which seems a thoroughly suitable and romantic use for the amenity.

Reference: Kist 57 pp.21-22.

3. On a northeast-facing spur of the steep wooded ridge west of the Kilmartin Burn south of the Quarry, NR 829 991. This Seat is formed from three squarish, roughly cut blocks, backed by three upright, rather irregularly shaped slabs, of which the highest, flat-topped one is in the centre, that to the east is much the same height, but pointed, and the shortest, also pointed, is to the west. In this case there is lettering - 'DINNA' on the east one, '1846' on the middle one and'FORGET' on the west one. It is impossible to say whether the characters were cut at the time of construction, or added later. This Seat is hard to find through undergrowth and over growth, its view is much more limited, but it appears to have as much claim to the title as the other two.

"Lady's Seat" no.3 at NR 829 992

THE TOWN OFFICER OF INVERARAY

In response to the article in Kist 61 entitled "A Job Description", which listed the duties expected of the Inveraray Town Officer when the post was advertised in 1908, the Editor received a letter from one of our Society members, Mrs Lesley Bratton, a grand-daughter of Neil Munro, suggesting that his description of the actual incumbent in the early years of the 20th century [perhaps the very one who answered the advertisement!] would entertain Kist readers. Enquiry made of Mr Brian Osborne, Secretary of the Neil Munro Society which owned the copyright, secured permission to reprint the passage in full. It comes from The Brave Days, a collection of the "Random Reminiscences" contributed by Munro to the Daily Record and Mail of Glasgow during the last three years of his life (he died in 1930). A selection of these was made by George Blake, and first published in September 1931. It is long out of print. After several "Reminiscences" of Inveraray, most of the articles deal with the Glasgow scene of the late 1800s and early 1900s, and would fascinate those who, like the Editor, belong to Glasgow, and were brought up on tales of these "brave days" by some very elderly uncles and aunts.

"BALDY MOR" as described by Neil Munro

Less than twenty years ago [from c.1930] an Englishman landed from one of the Clyde turbine steamers at a West Coast pier and asked the nearest way to the Parish Church.

'Turn to your right at the heid o' the quay,' said the person he addressed;'then take the first street to your left till you reach a square wi' an inn, two banks, and a temperance hotel at the corner. The church is right in the middle o' the square, wi' a great big steeple on it and the only clock in sight.' Short of taking the visitor by the hand and leading him for a hundred yards or so to the edifice wanted, the guide could not have been more explicit. He had the poorest estimate of an Englishman's intelligence.

The only Pooh-Bah I have known in real life was the man who so conscientiously helped the Englishman to find a colossal church which he might otherwise have barked his nose against in the middle of the main street before he was aware of its identity. At the moment he was consulted by the stranger, he was the 'burgh Harbour Master, as anyone but an Englishman

would have discerned from his navy-blue pea-jacket and deep-sea cap.

'Baldy Mor', who is dead now, had been successively a ferry man, a fisherman. a yachtsman and captain of a steamer before his native burgh discovered he was fit for higher things and made him, when still in the prime of life, the Burgh Officer. Before he was done with it the post involved a host of duties and responsibilities not customarily associated with this municipal title.

Had he lived long enough I feel certain he would now be acting Deputy-Provost and Town Clerk, Medical Officer, Dean of Guild, Superintendent of Weights and Measures, and manager of the gas-works. He would take them all on cheerfully without any increase in his emoluments, and soon be indispensable in any one of them.

Compared with Baldy, Pooh-Bah was an incompetent and lazy trifler.

His first appointment as Burgh Officer made little demand on his time. He had only to attend the Council meetings; wear a three-cornered cocked hat, a long-skirted coat, a pair of knee-breeches and buckled shoes for ceremonial occasions when he carried a halbert, and distribute by hand the Treasurer's urgent demands for the Burgh rates and taxes.

This, of course, left him with far too much leisure on his hands, and was so violent a change from his previous maritime career that at his own solicitation he was soon made Harbour Master, put in charge of the quay, slips and harbour beacons, the burgh's flags and bunting, and the premises where the Corporation's stores were kept. All steamer traffic to and from the quay was under his personal observation and required at certain times each day that he should don, however briefly, the official pea-jacket.

The Corporation store was his headquarters and office, where he could invariably be found in his leisure hours. In this office were kept the halbert, spare buoys and moorings for the bay, and the stuff to paint them seasonally; ropes neatly flemished down, ship-shape and Bristol fashion; long codlines furnished with triple hooks for use as graplines in searching for the drowned, and a whole arsenal of other municipal properties which accumulated in variety as Baldy's civic recreations multiplied.

The only private property of his own here accommodated was a flute on which he played 'O Come to the Bower' and 'Peggy

Baxter's Quickstep' like a virtuoso; some oars and rowlocks and a bit of an extra-wide mesh cod-net which he used for nocturnal fishing.

I once got up at six in the morning to walk down the quay and witness the departure of the s.s.Minard Castle, feeling very righteous in such an unusual early rising.

'Fine day!' I remarked to the Harbour Master. 'It was even finer in the morning,' he replied; his day began about 4 a.m. when he hailed his trammel net, and then proceeded to extinguish the quay-lamps,and ring the town's bell for the wakening of the citizens. By this time he had been appointed acting Sanitary Inspector, head of the Cleansing and Street-Lighting Department, Lamplighter, Gravedigger, and public Bellman.

While the populace slumbered on for an hour or two longer, regardless of his imperative clanging of the six o'clock bell, he put off his pea-jacket, got out a wheelbarrow and proceeded to cleanse the streets.

After an approximate hour for breakast about eight o'clock, he had beacon buoys to tar, street lamps to paint and furnish with new mantles, bills to post up on the hoardings, possibly a grave to dig in the churchyard, and a baillie's hair to cut in the smiddy.

The afternoon and the arrival of the Glasgow steamer brought him his most important engagement as Harbour Master with time only to snatch at dinner. The town quietened down again by the departure of the steamer, he had time to go round it with his hand-bell announcing bargains in fresh herring, the arrival on the Green of Archer's Lilliputian Circus includ ing 'No-Boned Billy or the Boy Serpent'; hot pies at Grant the baker's, or a silver Geneva watch lost between the Ferry-House and the Free Church.

The ferry itself, being municipal, had always a reasonable claim on his leisure time as Harbour Master and Burgh Officer, if only to take an oar across the loch occasionally in the absence of the regular ferryman.

At seven o'clock in the evening Baldy Mor rang the town bell again to shut the shops and release the world from its day of toil. But this meant no cessation in his own protean labours for the day.

It was lucky for him if it was summer-time or the moon was out, for this saved him the necessity of skipping round the burgh with a torch to light the street lamps. Yet the bell might have to be rung again for a Town Council meeting and

there, as Burgh Officer, his presence was imperative. He alone could keep the Magistrates and Council authoritatively informed as to how the town's affairs were going on. So many of their civic responsibilities depended on the intelligence, fidelity and tireless industry of their one official Poo-Bah, that they were a little afraid of him.

He not infrequently broke in with his personal advice on their gravest deliberations - generally to make suggestions which would multiply further the variety of his duties and gratify his insatiable appetite for something more to do.

'If we had only a lifeboat!' he once said wistfully to me. 'every decent port should have a lifeboat. I could easily scrape up a crew and find plenty o' time to train them.' It might have meant a shilling a week extra on his wages,but that was not a consideration to which he attached much importance.

The street lamps, if lit at nightfall, were to be extinguished again when everyone had gone to bed at 11p.m.; a final look must be given to the coloured harbour lights to make sure they were brightly burning, and all was well. Then, whistling 'O Come to the Bower!' and 'Peggy Baxter's Quickstep', Baldy Mor went home to his bachelor dwelling. The remainder of the day was his own.

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A NOTE FROM THE ARCHIVIST FOR ARGYLL & BUTE

Family History researchers will be interested in a new accession in Argyll & Bute Council Archives. It is a copy of the Register of Births and Baptisms in the Free Church of Scotland, Lochgilphead, 1843-1855, and copied by permission of the Minister and Kirk Session. An index of the names has been prepared by Marina Campbell, Archives Assistant.

It covers an interesting period in the rapid growth of the village of Lochgilphead, when its population was swelling to a peak of 1703 persons in 1851. The Register, however, records births in a wider area than simply the village. Entries occur from the adjoining village of Kilmory (soon afterwards to be absorbed into the Police Burgh of Lochgilphead), from Ardrishaig, the Aird/Castleton district, and settlements in Kilmartin and South Knapdale.

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THE ROCK CARVINGS OF VALCAMONICA

Andreas Trottmann

In Kist 49 in my article on "Megaliths and Prehistoric Rock Carvings in Switzerland" I mentioned that especially the southern part of my country is rich in rock carvings. This also applies to the Italian regions of Valtellina and Valcamonica immediately adjacent to southern Graubunden. The rock carvings of both valleys represent mainly the following subjects: human figures; deities, magicians, priests; animals (especially deer and horses); hunting and ploughing scenes; houses; footprints; various symbols (daggers, suns, spades, cups, circles, meanders etc.) The meaning of some scenes is quite obvious. Other depictions, especially when combined with symbols, are open to various interpretations. The carvings were produced at dates stretching from the Neolithic to the Iron Age.

Intriguingly enough, the rock carvings of the nearby southern Swiss valleys consist mainly of cup, ring, circle and various symbol markings and only rarely are human or animal depictions to be found.

Worldwide reputation is accorded among experts to the astonishing rock carvings of Valcamonica, which were also elected by UNESCO to the rank of world cultural heritage.

Let's now, in an imaginary trip, visit the most fascinating sites of the two valleys. Valtellina is the first large valley when crossing from the Swiss border. It is famous for its delicious red wines and the lively town of Tirano. Just north of Tirano outside the village of Grosio there lies on a hillside the largest known rock with carvings in the Alps. The "Rupe Magna", as it is named, boasts 5454 registered carvings. Unfortunately most of them are difficult to see individually in bad conditions, due to their exposure to climatic elements. Nevertheless it is highly intriguing to explore this huge rock barefoot (wearing shoes on the rocks is not allowed).

The second important site of the Valtellina can be found south of Tirano in the village of Teglio.

On the opposite side of the valley a sometimes hazardous mountain road winds over the Passo dell'Aprica to the small town of Edolo. From there Valcamonica reaches south to the Lago d'Iseo near Brescia. Nearly every community of this valley owns rocks of various sizes with prehistoric rock carvings, which are locally known as "Pitoti". Therefore the

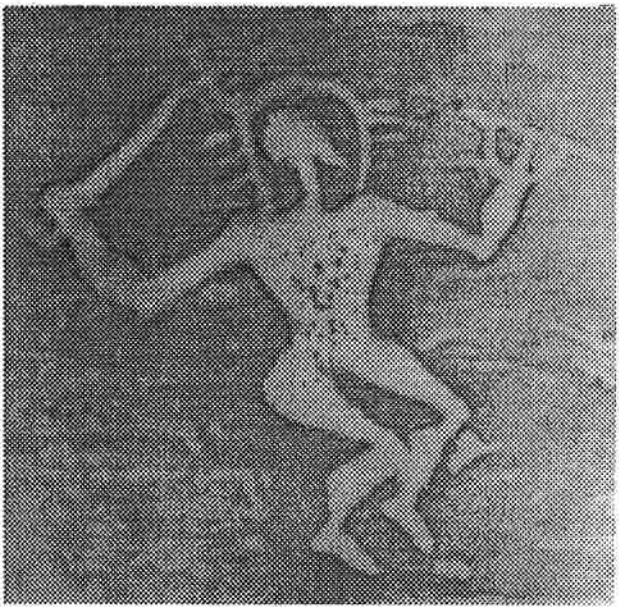
first-time visitor to this area (especially if he hasn't days to spend) must concentrate on the most famous sites. There are around 300,000 rock carvings in Valcamonica alone!

An absolute "must" is the Naquane National Park of Engraved Rocks above the village of Capo di Ponte; in this protected park there are 104 rocks with well-preserved carvings. Understandably it isn't permitted to walk on them, but wooden walkways allow one to examine the carvings quite easily. At nearby Paspardo and Foppe di Nadro there is a prominent rock with more than 100 pairs of footprints, dated to the Middle Iron Age. I highly recommend a visit to the Museo Didattico d'Arte e Vita Prehistorica as well as the Centro Camuno di Studi Preistorici in the village of Cemmo. On the hillside above are two of the most famous rocks (Pian delle Greppe) with many carved daggers. Also very useful is the book Prehistoria in Valle Camonica by the international expert Ausilio Priuli. It includes a helpful detailed map of the Capo di Ponte sites, and has been published in different languages.

Further sites which should definitely be visited are at: Sonica (circles and meander carvings); Luine (about 50 carved rocks, mainly Bronze Age); Seradina (rock no. 12 is one of the largest of the valley, with interesting ploughing scenes); Zurla (the famous "Astronauti", human figures with a kind of helmet on;see illustration,from a rubbing taken by the author)

[Editor's note: Mr Trottmann supplied four other photographs of the carvings, but due to the nature of subject they would not reproduce sufficiently clearly. They are in the Kist file and will go into the Society's records.

I enquired of Mr Trottman what were the criteria for dating the carvings. He replied they were stylistic and enclosed a table of typical motifs of each age].



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AN 1830 OPINION ON CUP AND RING CARVINGS

[In contrast to the enormous variety and scope of the Swiss rock carvings described by Mr Trottmann, Mid Argyll has a very limited repertoire. Nevertheless for some 200 years (or more) they have aroused interest and spawned theories. The following note was among papers passed to the Editor by the late Dr Mackenna, with the comment "our readers will probably be diverted to know of an 1830 opinion on the problem, though few will agree with the explanation offered at that time". The source is Currie's Description of the Antiquities and Scenery of the Parish of North Knapdale, Argyleshire. The extract has been extended to include mention of a "mineral spring" adjacent to the canal near Cairnbaan. Is anything now known of this spring?]

"In the hill, about a quarter of a mile above the Doctor's house [Dr McCallum, Cairnbaan] on a rock whose surface is level with the plain, there are cut groupes of concentric circles, three in a line, and fifteen in number. These circles are similar to those used in astronomical plates, for elucidating the revolution of the planets round the sun. Of these circles,there are five in each of the concentric ones,probably to correspond with the number of the planets then known. The Doctor is of opinion, that this is one of those methods which were in use previous to the introduction of letters into this country, for commemorating extraordinary events; and in the case in question, he thinks these circles represent the right of the proprietor to the estate where the rock lies, on which they are engraved; and that they signify, that his descendants were to enjoy it as long as the celestial luminaries which the circles represent should perform their unceasing revolutions around the sun. This opinion is not at all improbable, for of old, rights of inheritance were in many instances conveyed by hieroglyphic symbols similar to those now described.

Not far distant from the Doctor's house, on the south side of the canal, there is a mineral spring, whose waters many persons in the neighbourhood have drank, and were much benefited by their salubrity. The first of these objects, namely the sculptured rock, is worthy of the attention of the scientific antiquarian, and the latter of every medical gentleman".

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A "BLOOMER" OUT OF BLOOMERY RESEARCH!!

William Laing

Recently, in Volumes 60 and 61 of The Kist, there has been information about early iron manufacture in the Mid Argyll area. In the latter Volume, I suggested that there were two iron furnaces on the west side of Loch Fyne, near the modern village of Furnace, and that these works were located at Furnace and Goatfield. Following a suggestion from the Editor I have searched the records more carefully, and it is now clear that, in fact, there was only one iron works located at Furnace, namely on the east side of the Leacann Water, quite close to the shore of Loch Fyne.

Why did I make this "bloomer"? The reason seems to be twofold; firstly, the iron works was recorded in different articles by many different names, such as "the Argyll Furnace" "the Iron Work", "Craleckin", "Goatfield", "Goatfield or Craleckan, Argyll", "Goatfield Furnace", and even the all-encompassing title used by Ivison McAdam in his general paper on early iron making in Scotland, "the Craleckan (Goatfield) Furnace, Loch Fyne"! Furthermore,the village of Furnace was the locus of two early major industries, namely iron making, and blackpowder (or gunpowder) manufacture. Although the former activity closed down in 1812, and the latter started in 1841, these two processes can get confused, in terms of location, because the iron works was on the east side of the Leacann Water, on the site of a farm called Craleckin; the black powder factory was located on the west side of the Leacann Water, but some distance from the loch side; and the house of the manager of the iron works was the substantial farmhouse of the farm of Goatfield, which was rented by the owners of the iron works, and was located on the west side of the Leacann Water. The final twist is that the early name of the village of Furnace was Inverleckan i.e. "at the mouth of the Leacann", and in some documents, the house of the iron works manager was referred to as "Inverleckan"!.

The owners of the iron works, namely the Duddon Company of Cumbria,probably inadvertently started the confusion by apparently not having a fixed name for the iron works to be used in correspondence, both between the parent company in Cumbria and the operation on Lochfyneside, and with the local landowners. Correspondence with the 3rd Duke of Argyll refers to"a Furnace

on His Grace's Farm at Craleckin", a construction memorandum from the parent company refers to "three sows [cast iron lintels] for Goatfield", and the shipment of "a tree for the Furnace shaft at Craleckin".

It is also interesting to note that James Watt of Greenock, father of the famous engineer, mentions the location of the iron works in two of his many manuscripts describing features of Mid Argyll in the middle of the 18th century. An excerpt from a MS entitled "Distance of places in the Firth of Clyde" gives the following series of distance measurements relating to the west side of Loch Fyne:

from Skipness to Loch Tarbert	8 miles
to Barmore [north of Tarbert]	11½ miles
to Lochgilp and Solen (?Silver) Craigs	16½ miles
to Otter	18½ miles
to Loch Gair	20½ miles
to Inver Lithen [Inverleacann/Furnace]	no distance given
to Iron Work	28 miles

Clearly, Watt, working about 1755 to 1760 (the MS is not dated) was aware of the "Iron Work", and its plume of smoke, which would be a valuable reference point to the visiting mariner,particularly as the smelting operation was very recently started; and the significance of the omission of a mileage value at Inver Lithen must suggest that Watt was well aware that the "Iron Work" was located at a point then known as Inver Lithen, and now as Furnace. In another (un-named) MS, Watt records that Innerlethen (Inverleacann, or Furnace) is 7 miles from Loch Gair; and that the "Iron Works is opposite to ?Letirew, and is 7½ miles from Inverary". I have not yet been able to identify the location of ?Letirew, partly because the original text is badly corrupted.

There is really no excuse for my original error in declaring two furnaces where there was clearly only one, but the situation was a bit confused! However, attempting to sort it all out helped to pass a winter's evening!!

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Mrs Sheena Carmichael sends the following natural history note from Ford:

Normally by the end of April I stop refilling pea-nut holders; but this year I have kept one "all-wire" one going. In Ford the red squirrel population seems to be increasing

and since the middle of May one has been coming to the nut container and seems to be able to extract sufficient to keep returning, now with a smaller and paler one. Each one wraps itself round the container like a fur muff.

Since May also a Greater Spotted woodpecker has been coming to the nuts; having seen two together in flight recently I am sure they must approve of the cuisine on offer. Woodpeckers and red squirrels also visit other houses at the other end of the village.

Finally, on May 14th I heard strange "bird noises" coming from the edge of the forest - this turned out to be from a beautiful fawn which I looked at and quickly left. Some hours later it had gone. I can understand how people think a fawn has been abandoned, as the calling went on for some time.

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N.H.A.S.M.A. ON EIGG

Following on the success of the Society's 4-day visits to Coll in 1997 and Tiree in 1999 it was decided to continue the "tradition" and arrange a similar trip to the Island of Eigg, from June 5 to 9, 2001. This proved just as successful and enjoyable as its predecessors. Again some excellent reports and notes were sent to the Editor; what follows is as before a conflation and compilation of these.

As we sailed into Galmisdale Bay on the Shearwater, a 66 year old wooden motor torpedo boat and veteran of the D day landings, we immediately realised how appropriate was the Isle of Eigg for a visit by our Society. Ahead was the air of mystery that pervades the whole island, magnified by swirling mists round the largest volcanic pitchstone ridge in Scotland, with the magnificent "Nose" of An Sgurr thrusting aggressively from a height of 1000 feet a further 290 feet into low clouds above high moors bordered by superb cliffs falling to restless seas. On our port side was Eilean Chathastail with its mediaeval castle walls, on our starboard a promontory crowned by a burial cairn and an Iron Age fort.

We disembarked, put our luggage on the waiting trailer (which also provided a welcome lift for one or two) and walked to our home for the next few days, the Glebe Barn - where the warmth of the welcome from the family, the general comfort and the excellent meals made our stay so enjoyable, quite apart from the visits and expeditions we had planned.

After settling in, and a light lunch,we set off in separate ways to find our way about - seeing among other things the Parish of Arisaig and the Small Islands 'Church on Eigg', cared for but damp-suffering, bearing tributes to past ministers and their families, and to a Second Lieutenant of the Royal Scots killed at Arras in 1917; the disused old Post Office, the well looked after School, and a delightful play structure in the shape of a trawler complete with wheelhouse. The Lodge gardens the woodland paths, the Pier with its new Store and Craft Shop and Tea Rooms, and many other 'diversions' gave us plenty to see as we explored our new surroundings.

Each day after a good breakfast we made up our own packed lunches from a selection of food supplied by the Glebe Barn (we contrived to secure 'unofficial' packed lunches on the day of our departure by trading a spell of tidying up, changing beds and vacuuming!). We then set off in informal groups, of varying composition, according to where we wanted to explore. There were of course activities we all shared. On Wednesday morning we gathered in the lounge to hear a talk by Stephen Boyle of the Royal Commission's archaeological survey team who were working on the island at the time - a splendid talk with maps and photographs, (and notes to copy for those of us with short memories), describing archaeological and historic sites from prehistoric times to the early 20th century. He also told us about the most recent discovery on the island, of a Bronze Age metal-working site. This had been discovered by accident when a resident,looking for a suitable place to bury a deceased favourite cat, dug a hole beside a large boulder, and recognised the shards of a clay mould for an axe-head. He sent his finds to the National Museums of Scotland in Edinburgh, who promptly sent Dr Trevor Cowie and colleagues to investigate the site. We went to see the work in progress and were lucky enough to find Dr Cowie there; he kindly gave us an impromptu account of the dating of the site (1000-800 BC) and its significance: very few such metallurgy workshops have been discovered in the whole country, and this appears to be the least disturbed. A replica of the original mould has been made and has produced an excellent copy of a Bronze Age axe-head, complete with its thong loop hole. The main working area has not yet been found, but Dr Cowie hopes to complete the work next year, and has said, unofficially, that he will be happy to come and speak to the Society about it once the full story can be told.

For the rest of the day about half of us stayed on Eigg to explore as we wished,but others took a boat trip to the island of Muck - several members much relieved that they did not have to wade ashore as threatened but were treated by the helpful boatman as a 'Saga' trip and were taken ashore by rowing boat. In the evening our hostess Karen Helliwell gave us a most informative talk on the history of the ownership of the island after the benevolent times of the Runcimans, in particular the islanders' views of the problems with recent landlords which led to the eventual buy-out by the Isle of Eigg Heritage Trust, a 50/50 partnership between the residents and the combined interests of the Highland Council and the Scottish Wildlife Trust.

On Thursday we had a 10 kilometre (or so!) guided walk led by John Chester of the Scottish Wildlife Trust, concentrating firstly on the birds [a list of birds seen, not necessarily all on this walk, is appended to this article] and the botany. Unfortunately we had no botanist, amateur or professional, in our number on this trip, so there is no botanical report. A highlight of the walk should have been a sighting of the golden eagles nesting on the Sgurr, but they refused to appear. However some of us,looking for the Cathedral and the Massacre Cave, caught sight of them next day soaring beside the Sgurr. The latter part of the walk took us to the deserted townships of Upper and Lower Grulin; the houses of Lower Grulin are often merely drystone walls thrown up between natural boulders and are of any shape, but in Upper Grulin there are still the ruins of very substantial stone dwellings with walls, some of dressed stones, as much as four feet thick; the largest house has massive standing portal stones, and plainly some houses had stone-lined windows. The sources of the stone were prehistoric cairns and fortifications, hut circles, mediaeval ruins and the cliffs and beaches. The houses were built in the 1700s and the inhabitants cleared for sheep in 1853.

On Friday morning a minibus was laid on to take those who wanted to go to the Singing Sands and other places in the northwest of the island. (Some hardy souls however elected to walk). The Sands, particularly at times of changes of temperature such as sunset, produce sounds under a walker's feet "like the strains of an Aeolian harp" according to the New Shell Guide of 1987; the sound is caused as the round grains of sand roll over each other as they are walked on. The rock formations at the ends of the Sands are remarkable -natural

arches, oval windows, giant 'cannon balls' protruding from the cliffs or rolled down the shore, fossil trees and many curious but completely natural markings, the result of wind and sea carving over thousands of years.

The magnificent and constantly changing views of sea and islands, mountains and shores, clouds and sunlight, are the memories that all the group will never forget. There were of course other high points - one literally for Creena whose great joy was to climb the Sgurr and see the views from the summit; the visit to the ruined mediaeval church above Kildonan Bay where lie the remains of St Donan,a follower of St Columba, and the probable site of his monastery; the visit to Uamh Fhraing, the huge 'Massacre Cave' where about 300 of the MacDonald population of Eigg, who had taken refuge there, were suffocated by the MacLeods of Skye who blocked the entrance by huge smoking fires. This terrible place however brought some happy memories to Catherine Thornton, who recalled that in 1929 Gordon Bottomley wrote a play "The Singing Sands" about this event; her father produced it, and as a child of eight she listened to rehearsals and became interested in the island. In her own words "At last after 70 years thanks to the Antiquarians I achieved my dream of spending time on the island, but alas I did not see either the singing sands or the cave because, like the old lady who survived the massacre, I could not walk the distance, but thanks to Brenda and Douglas I have a stone and sand as a memento".

An archaeological find was made by Sona, who picked up a small piece of flint on the path near the old pier at Galmisdale. Understanding that there had not been much flint found on Eigg she sent it to Trevor Cowie. In his reply he says it is a small core, possibly but not necessarily Mesolithic, and is an addition to a discovery by the Royal Commission's survey of a flint scatter on a newly ploughed field, and a small cache of over forty flint flakes and blades, some retouched, at the foot of the boulder at the excavation site.

On Saturday after packing up and leaving our luggage to be taken down to the Pier several of us joined the Shearwater on a round trip to Rum where we were able to spend an hour and a half ashore before returning to Eigg and picking up the rest of our party for the return trip to Arisaig.

We all wish to express our thanks to our former secretary Ginny Crawford who was mainly responsible for arranging this happy and memorable experience for the Society.

Alphabetical list of birds seen on Eigg, 5 to 9 June 2001

Arctic tern
blackbird
blackcap
black guillemot
buzzard
chaffinch
common tern
common gull
cormorant
cuckoo
eider duck
gannet
golden eagle
greater blackbacked gull
grey heron
greylag goose
grey wagtail
guillemot
herring gull
hoodie crow
house sparrow
jackdaw
kestrel
kittiwake
lapwing
Manx shearwater
meadow pipit
mistle thrush
oystercatcher
pheasant
pied wagtail
puffin
raven
red grouse
ringed plover
robin
rock dove
sand martin
sedge warbler
shag
skylark
snipe
song thrush
starling
stonechat
swallow
twite
wheatear
willow warbler
wood pigeon
wood warbler
wren

With acknowledgments to Douglas Barker, Valerie Barker, Sona Campbell, Sheena Carmichael, Lorne MacEchern, Creena MacKenzie, Brenda Parry Jones, Jenny Peden, Rebecca Pine, Catherine Thornton.

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BRUACH AN DRUIMEIN, KILMARTIN GLEN

Duncan Abernethy

During 1960-2 a rescue excavation was undertaken at Bruach an Druimein by the late Eric Cregeen, after gravel extraction revealed a multi-period settlement. This was carried out on behalf of Glasgow University and the Natural History and Antiquarian Society of Mid Argyll. Most of this work is unpublished, and I have managed to obtain funding from Historic Scotland for its 'writing up'. It would be of great help if any readers involved in any of this work, or who have any photographs, stories, or any information on the site, could get in touch with me. The report will be dedicated to Eric's memory, and I would also like to acknowledge the contribution made by everybody who was associated with work on the site.

Contact me either through the Editor or at:
Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division
Gregory Building
Lilybank Gardens
Glasgow G12 8QQ

[This is very welcome news for N.H.A.S.M.A. Ed.]

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ARGYLL, THE ENDURING HEARTLAND

Marion Campbell

We are very pleased to announce the publication of a third edition of Argyll, The Enduring Heartland by Marion Campbell. The second edition has been out of print for a while now, and Kilmartin House along with the House of Lochar Press are launching the new third edition at the end of August 2001.

With a new cover, this latest edition incorporates changes made by Marion before her death last year, and a foreword by Neal Ascherson, journalist and lecturer at the Institute of Archaeology, University College, London. In it he charts the course of Marion's eventful life and her many careers in an astonishingly wide range of occupations. He places The Enduring Heartland in its contemporary context while commenting on its power and importance, from the first publication

in 1977, in our own times, and into the future.

The book is available from Kilmartin House museum and other local bookshops. Price : £9.99 ISBN. 5-899863-82-6

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