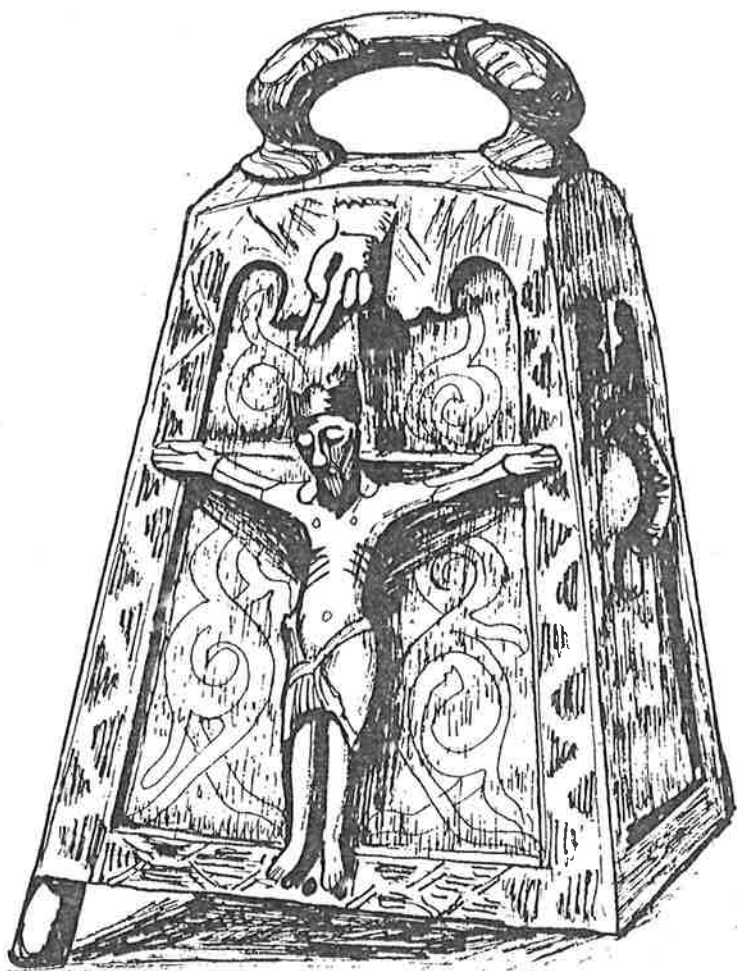


Torbhlaren bell shrine :-



The KIST 7

# T H E K I S T

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

President: Miss Campbell of Kilberry, FSA, FSAScot.

.....

NUMBER SEVEN: Whitsun 1974

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

## CONTENTS

|   |    |
|---|----|
| Editorial .....   | I  |
| <u>The Manx Shearwater Colonies on Rhum</u>             |    |
| Peter Wormell, L.I.Biol.....                            | 2  |
| From <u>Pennant's Tour</u> .....                        | 8  |
| <u>Stronefield Mill</u>                                 |    |
| F.S.Mackenna, MA. FSA. FSAScot. ....                    | 9  |
| <u>Stronefield Mill</u>                                 |    |
| Revd. Henry Rogers of Ellary .....                      | 12 |
| <u>Extracts from 'Old Kilberry's' Diaries</u>           |    |
| By courtesy of Miss Campbell of Kilberry.               | 14 |
| <u>The Story of a Snuff Box.</u>                        |    |
| David C. Cargill, FSG. FSAScot. AIBS. ...               | 18 |
| From <u>Dean Monro's Western Isles of Scotland</u> .... | 19 |
| <u>Some Old Scots Plant Lore.</u>                       |    |
| 'An Lighiche Mor' .....                                 | 20 |
| From <u>Pennant's Tour.</u> .....                       | 23 |
| <u>A Check List of the Birds of Mid-Argyll</u>          |    |
| Air Vice-Marshall Gordon Young. ....                    | 24 |
| <u>Extracts from the Pitcur Sederunt Book</u>           |    |
| The Editor. ....  | 26 |

...oOo...

Hon. Sec.

Air Vice-Marshall Young,  
Middlehill,  
Ardrishaig.

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

## EDITORIAL

The past winter has provided the Society with a number of very interesting and instructive lectures, and all who had the good fortune to hear Mr Wormell's talk on Rhum will be delighted to find a paper from him forming one of the main contributions to this present issue of Kist. It will be noted that the emphasis for this number has been placed on Natural History matters to maintain a proper balance, but we hope that something may be found to appeal to everyone's taste and interest.

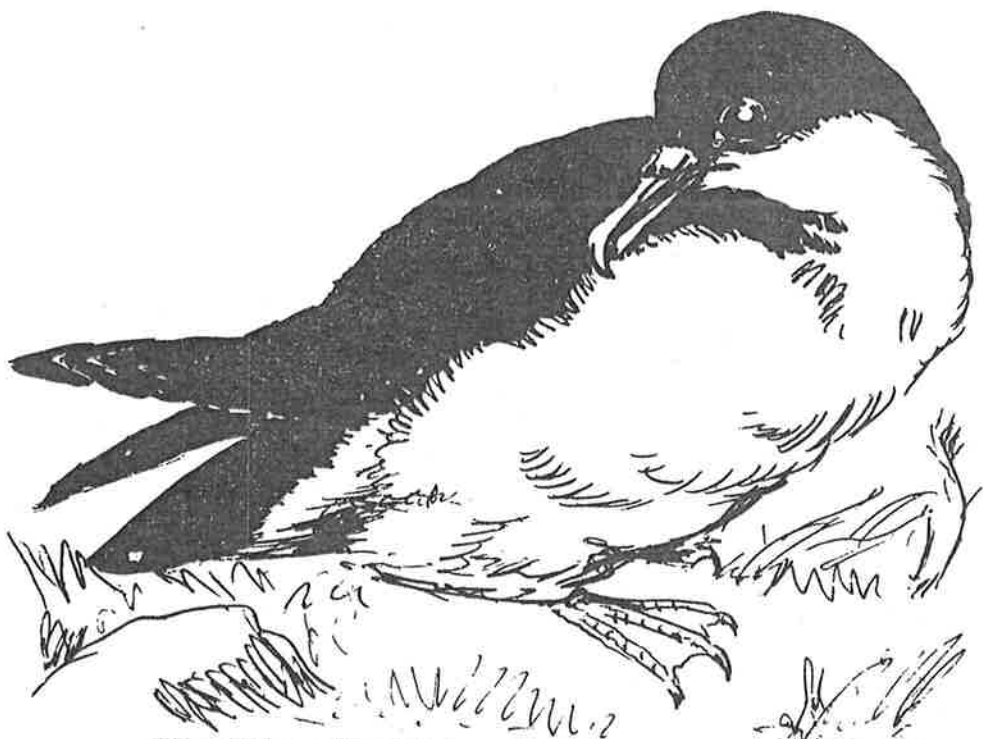
The hoped-for continuance of the St Columba's Cave excavation this Easter has had to be put off until the Autumn, but there will be activities in the meantime within our area when the Temple Wood site is further investigated by visiting experts.

The work at Keills Chapel has gone on throughout the winter despite the weather, and it will shortly be completed; the Chapel has been roofed and the carved stones will be housed in it and saved from further damage. A number of 'lost' and unsuspected stones have been found and when it is finished the site will take its place worthily with Kilmory Knap, Kilberry and Kilmartin.

This winter has also seen similar activity in the territory covered by our sister society in Kintyre, who raised a large sum of money towards helping with the cost of providing a shelter for the stones at Saddell Abbey. Here again the work is nearing completion. Like our own site at Keills this was a much-needed step.

The Bell Shrine on our cover has been drawn for us by Mrs Hunter, and will give much pleasure. It will be recalled that this important object is the one which was discovered many years ago at Kilmichael Glassary; it is now in Edinburgh.

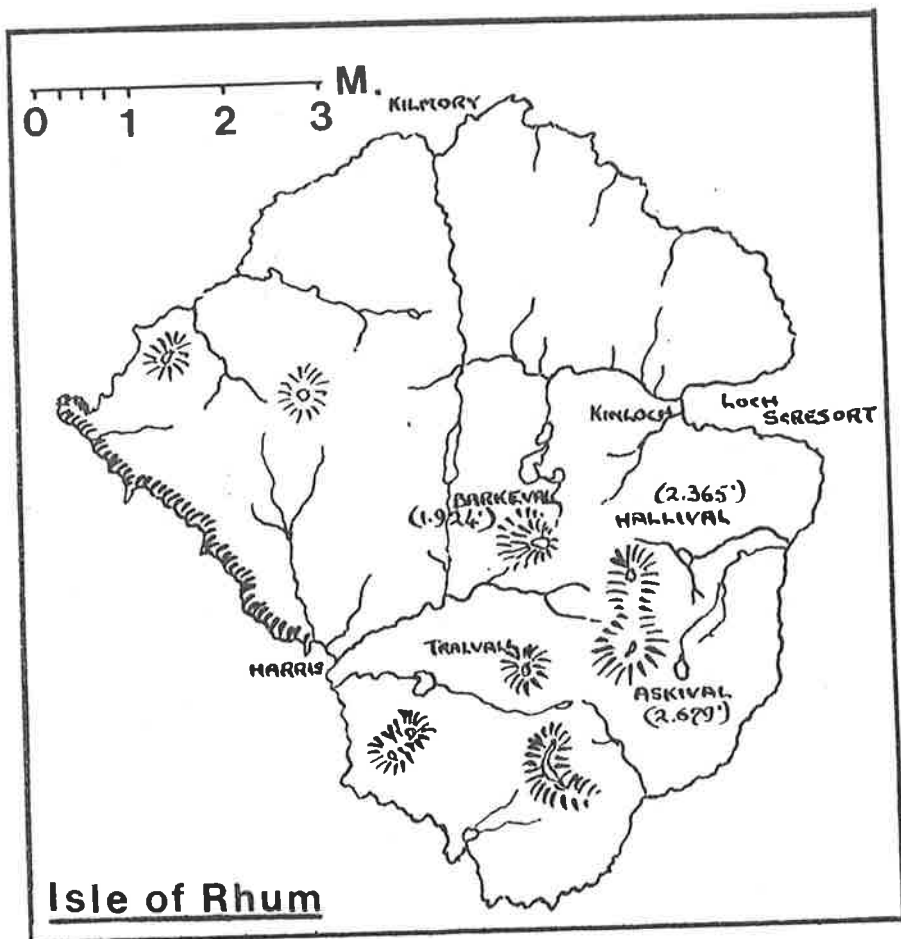
...oOo...



### THE MANX SHEARWATER COLONIES ON RHUM

Peter Wormell

The Inner Hebrides are the chief breeding stronghold of the Manx Shearwater in Scotland and the Island of Rhum undoubtedly contains the largest single breeding population. There must have been Shearwaters on Rhum for centuries. Kenneth Williamson has drawn attention to the root "troll" in place names such as Trollanes and Trollhovdi in the Faroes, and Trollaval (sometimes spelt Trallval) on Rhum. All are places where Shearwaters breed and the Vikings probably experienced and were mystified by the clamour of these birds at night. In 1716 Martin Martin wrote of the Isle of Rhum that "there is plenty of land and sea fowl; some of the latter, especially the Puffin, build in the hills as well as in the rocks on the coast"; he referred almost certainly to the Manx Shearwaters. Since that



time there has been a continuous series of indisputable records of the presence of this bird on Rhum as a breeding species.

The Shearwater breeding grounds on Rhum differ from all others in Britain in that they are concentrated on the upper slopes of the mountains. Very few nest holes occur within a mile of the sea and the main concentrations are between one and two miles inland. On Barkeval-Hallival-Askival-Trallval Ridge at an altitude of between 1,200-2,659 feet (the summit of Askival). The greatest densities are on the eastern and northern slopes

of Hallival and Trallval above 1,600 feet.

The conical peaks of Askival and Hallival, their connecting ridge, and Trallval with its steep summit tower are the home of a great majority of Rhum's Manx Shearwaters. The population on Bark-eval is more scattered. The ground is rugged and steep, comprising extensive rocky outcrops, crags, boulder fields, bare eroded slopes, screes and terraces. The region is subject to extremes of wind, rain, cloudiness and humidity. Storms from the Atlantic reach Rhum unimpeded by intervening land, and the prevailing south-westerlies strike the Hallival-Askival Ridge to cause violent upthrusts and downthrusts of air. The mountains are frequently blanketed in thick cloud for long periods and the average annual rainfall exceeds 100 inches. Drifted snow may be covering the ground when the birds return to the breeding areas in the third week of March, and patches of snow frequently remain throughout April and sometimes even into May. Often the snow is still frozen to a depth of several inches during April. If snow is lying when the birds arrive, they clear it away to gain access to their holes.

The mountains in which the Shearwaters breed are made up of ultra-basic rocks which weather through the action of wind, frost and rain into brown olivine-rich sands; it is in this sandy material that the Shearwaters excavate their holes.

The ultra-basic rocks contain very little calcium and almost no phosphorous. Because of this and the severe bleaching resulting from the heavy rainfall the soil derived from them is far from fertile. Almost bare terraces are dotted with a few heathland plants and arctic-alpine flora including Northern Rockcress, Mossycyphel, Moss Campion and Thrift. On the steeper ground it is only on the bird-manured soils around the burrows of the Shearwaters that there is real stability.

Manx Shearwaters pair for life and return to the same nest holes year after year. They have a long life-span. Some, ringed as adult breeding birds in 1958, are still returning to the same nest

holes. They also have lengthy incubation and fledging periods, 53 days and around 73 days respectively. This means that the birds are active on the breeding grounds from the third week of March until the second week of October. Their droppings manure the ground around the holes continuously from spring to autumn, and this has led to the establishment and maintenance of grasslands of high grazing quality. Manx Shearwaters feed mainly on young herrings during the breeding season, and this transfer of nutrients from the sea to the mountain tops must be unique in Britain.

When the adults return in the spring from their wintering grounds off the coast of Brazil they clean out their holes, removing the previous year's nesting material which consists of a compost derived from moss and grass, the droppings of the previous year's nestling having served as a decaying agent. They shuffle this material along with loose soil, sand and stones to the entrance using their wings and moving backwards. At the entrance they kick the debris away downhill with their strong webbed feet, sending it several yards from the entrance. This adds a further top dressing to the grassland.

Material for the new nest consists mostly of hypnoid mosses which are abundant in the grass sward and these are raked together and dragged into the holes. The bill of a Shearwater is well designed for this operation having a curved tip which serves very well as a lawn rake. This raking action not only removes the moss from the turf but also aerates the ground.

The Shearwater greens constitute a substantial area of summer grazing for red deer which crop them to short turf. Heavy deposits of deer dung further improve the grassland and dung beetles and flies are abundant throughout the summer months. Dead Shearwaters attract burying beetles and blue bottles and the turf itself supports the larvae of click beetles and crane flies which sometimes swarm over the greens. Certain insects, including the pyralid moth (*Catoptria furcatellus*) which is con-

:fined to grassy slopes near the summits of high mountains, occur on Rhum only on the high-level Shearwater greens. Earth worms are abundant in the soils of the Shearwater colonies and Song Thrushes have been observed in migration hopping over the greens and listening for worms at 2,000 feet on Hallival as though they were feeding on a garden lawn. Meadow Pipits often flock over the greens and Ring Ouzel and Wheatear benefit from the increased insect activity brought about by the presence of the Shearwaters. Abundant food supplies also enable Wrens to breed amongst the boulder fields adjoining the Shearwater colonies very close to the top of the highest peak, Askival. A unique habitat has been developed by the deposition of marine material transported by Shearwaters; the resulting vegetation supports animals which could not exist on the unimproved ground at these altitudes.

In plant association the Shearwater greens resemble the grasslands at lower elevations but they contain fewer herbs. The grasses which are most abundant in the sward are Fescues and Bents, and herbs include Wild Thyme, Common Violet, Common Speedwell, Mouse Ear, Heath Bedstraw, Blae-berry and occasionally Alpine Meadow Rue, Meadow Buttercup and Primrose.

Between 1961 and 1964 the Rhum vegetation was surveyed in detail by Dr R.E.C.Ferreira with the help of aerial photographs. A vegetation map incorporating his findings was subsequently published. During the course of the survey particular care was taken over the mapping of Shearwater greens. They were marked distinctly on the field overlays and provided a complete picture of the distribution of the breeding areas of Shearwaters. It became evident that the Shearwater greens could be measured with reasonable accuracy from the findings of the survey and in this way an approximation of the number of Shearwaters frequenting Rhum could be made.

There are no rabbits on Rhum, so the Shearwaters have to rely entirely on their own efforts



at hole making. The tunnels are deep and winding and usually longer than a man's arm. Only one egg is laid in a season. Most pairs occupy independent holes; occasionally there are two entrances but where this is the case only one is regularly used. The burrows of two separate pairs occasionally join, but each pair normally uses its own entrance. Occupied holes could be recognised by the occurrence of droppings and feathers, and by their smell. These were counted in a representative series of plots, and to avoid double counting each counted hole was marked by a matchstick at the entrance. The results were applied to the total area of bird-induced turf, which amounts to about 77 acres. Once the necessary adjustments have been made for slope and altitudinal error an approximation of the breeding population of this huge colony will be forthcoming.

The Brown Rat has often been blamed for the destruction of Petrel colonies, and it has been suggested that it has been responsible too for the great decline in Manx Shearwater populations on several islands including the Isle of Eigg.

Brown Rats occur in very large numbers on Rhum. They have been recorded at all altitudes from sea level to the highest tops. Dead Shearwaters have occasionally been found in the early spring partly eaten by rats, but once nesting activities get under way the rats vacate the Shearwater breeding grounds and there is no evidence of damage by rats during the months that the birds are breeding. Eggs which have failed to hatch frequently remain in the holes unbroken until the Shearwaters depart, but as soon as the colonies are vacated the rats move in in force to feed on these and any Shearwater carcasses which can be found underground. By the second week of October rat droppings are abundant throughout the Shearwater greens and some rats may well remain on the mountain throughout the winter. Their tracks and droppings have been found in February in snow around the summit cairn of Hallival.

Golden Eagles and Peregrines have been proved to prey on Shearwaters. Castings and samples of food collected from the eagles' eyries on Rhum over many years contained Shearwater remains. Gulls have not been seen behaving as potential predators around the Shearwater colonies but Ravens and Hooded Crows often search the hills for dead Shearwaters and any eggs which may have been thrown out of the burrows.

There have been a few reports of Shearwaters being actually killed and partly eaten by red deer. In each case the head and neck were chewed off. These were all probably juvenile birds picked up outside the burrows just before their first flight.

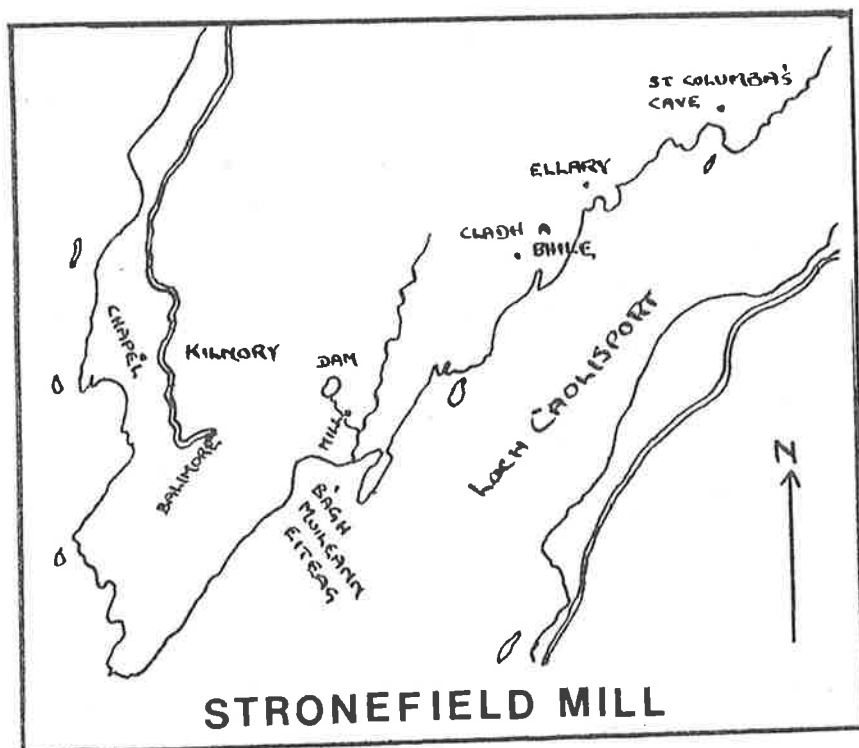
Clearly the Manx Shearwaters of Rhum provide endless scope for continued study. Observations outlined in this article are to be included in greater detail in a paper on the ecology of the Rhum colonies to be published later this year and it is hoped that this will encourage further detailed survey of this fascinating mountain-top habitat created and sustained by the Manx Shearwater.

....oOo....

From Pennant's Tour, vol.2, 1772.

....anchor in the Isle of Rum, in an open bay, about two miles deep, called Loch-Sgriosard. .... No wild quadrupeds are found, excepting stags: these animals once abounded here, but they are now reduced to eighty by the eagles, who not only kill the fawns, but the old deer, seizing them between the horns and terrifying them till they fall down some precipice and become their prey. ....The birds we observed were ring-tail eagles, ravens, white wagtails, wheat-ears, tit-larks, ring-ouzels, grouse, ptarmigans, curlews, green plovers, faceddars or arctic gulls, and the greater terns: the Dean Monro mentions gannets, but none appeared while we were in the island.

....oOo....



#### STRONEFIELD MILL

F.S. Mackenna

Of the many ruined mills in Mid-Argyll the one at Stronefield is probably the most complete, a circumstance perhaps due to its remote location, not only geographically but also in respect of any subsequent local building which would have considered it to be a legitimate quarry of ready-made material. The position of the site is shown on the accompanying sketch-map of the Kilmore Knap-Loch Caolisport area. The public road ends at Balimore, a single isolated cottage exposed to all that south-west weather may bring. Indeed immediately beyond it is Druim Fuar (Cold Ridge). Between Balimore and Loch Caolisport to the east lies Stronefield Glen, which stretches northwards into the Knapdale hills with the Abhainn Mhor

(great Burn) flowing along it. A small tributary provided the one-time filling of the mill dam and its lade; the dam which is now reduced to a boggy area with the disused controlling device described in Mr Rogers' note at the end of these remarks.

The Stronefield area shows many signs of former importance and crofting activity, and there is a feeling of melancholy which is more than justified if the sad history of this remote spot be true, for it is related that the crofters were evicted from their holdings in the 19th century. After an initial routing of the invaders they eventually succumbed to reinforced police and keepers and their houses were burned. Little wonder if the glen now seems desolate.

Something of this sadness lifts when one wins across the intervening boggy strath and gains the old access road to the mill, following it downwards in ever-increasing steepness through light birch woods with glimpses across the mouth of the glen below to the facing Sithean buidhe (Yellow knoll). On a March day when Mr. Rogers took me to see the mill there were many signs of badgers having rooted amongst the dry leaves and short turf in search of food, and a large wood-ants' nest had its top missing, perhaps demolished by the same searchers.

On rounding a turn in the track the burn is seen and heard, and where the road crosses it at an acute bend the bank of the old dam is seen to the left and the channel of the mill-lade is clearly traceable, even to the breach which was made, presumably, to interrupt the flow of water when it was no longer needed for the mill.

By a series of sharp turns and descents the ruined mill comes into view below, the road being so steep that one wonders how any wheeled traffic (apart from a recent tractor) ever managed to negotiate it. Carriage by pack-pony would seem to be more practical.

The mill walls are almost complete, even to the end gables, and it presents an evocative appearance amongst the last of the trees, mostly ash, and facing across the fertile lower part of the

glen and the Bàgh Muileann Eiteag (White-pebble-mill-bay).

Muileann alone signifies a 'mill', but it can be qualified by the addition of a suitable word to denote a particular type of mill. Stronefield would be a 'muileann uisge' (water mill). In connection with muileann-bràdha (a hand quern), there is a quaint enactment of 1248: "no man shall presume to grind quheit, maisloch or rye with hand mylnes, except he be compelled by storm and be in lack of mylnes quhilk should grind the samen; and in this case, if a man grinds at hand-mylnes he shall give the threttin measure as multer; and gif any man contraveins this our prohibition, he shall tyne his hand-mylnes perpetuallie."

The archway in the north-facing gable is 7ft wide and has been blocked up at the time of internal alterations when the grain being dealt with changed from 'bere' or 'quheit' to oats, and the erection of a drying kiln was needed. This newer edifice lies in the north-west corner of the interior and one notes that it is not bonded to the original walls, and that its eastward wall cuts off most of the large blocked-up archway which had originally afforded access to the mill. The very width of this archway seems to prove its former use by carts, although how they negotiated such a steep road seems rather a mystery. The interior of the kiln shows clearly the batter of the walls necessary for the drying process to succeed.

A kiln for drying corn was conical in shape, with the small end downwards; the opening was called 'the eye of the kiln' (suil na h-àtha) and over it was laid a wooden beam (laom-chrann) to help in the supporting of closely-packed sticks (sticcan) over which was laid a covering of thatch (sreathainn), and on this the corn was laid in order to dry in the heat rising from below. In the 1830's the thatch began to be replaced by a covering of woven hair, similar to the hair-cloth floors used in drying hops in the Kent oasthouses in my youth. The mills on the island of Luing seem to have been amongst the earliest in Argyll

to adopt this innovation.

Outside the door, and acting now as a door-step, is a discarded millstone, and inside on the floor lie the nether and upper stones, presumably more or less where they came to rest on the decay of their flooring support. They are 4ft 7ins in diameter. On the south gable are the various sockets for the gear-cupboard timbers, and the square aperture for the wheel shaft with the centre holed bearing stone.

On the outside of this gable the wheel-pit remains intact though all traces of the wheel and the timber channel which led the water to a point above the pitch-back overshot wheel have totally vanished. Alongside the wheel-pit the burn cascades downwards to level out on the strath as it makes its way to join the Abhainn Mhor in crossing the beach and entering the waters of Loch Caolisport.

On the return climb up the steep hill it is difficult not to pause frequently to look back on this dignified relic of busier and very probably happier days.

...oOo...

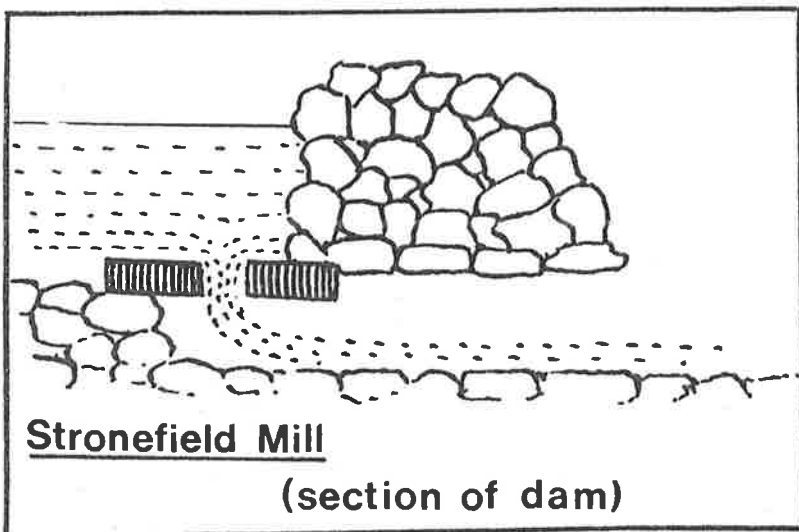
### STRONEFIELD MILL

.....

Henry Rogers

There are many old water-mill sites all over Knapdale, but few of them are as well preserved as the one situated at the bottom of Stronefield Glen near the mouth of Loch Caolisport. One can still see how the flow of water was controlled, and it would be interesting to know how common the system is.

Most of the mills I have examined were supplied directly from a burn, with no special pond for storage. When the wheel was not in use the water could easily be made to by-pass it and run to waste. There was no point in saving it; it could just run on down the burn. But if you depended on a mill pond this would not do.



At Stronefield water was brought in an artificial lade some 2,000 yards from the main burn to a natural hollow on the ridge 100ft above the mill. Here it spread over two or three acres behind a stone and turf dam  $3\frac{1}{2}$ ft high. At the foot of this dam, on the upper side and only a little above the bottom of the pool, is set what looks like an old millstone. It is 4ft across, 6 inches thick, and has a 10 inch round hole in the centre. Below the hole a channel 16 inches deep runs under the dam into another lade, which in turn passes under the road and down to the mill. Any overflow would naturally spill over the top of the dam into the old bed of the burn which drained the hollow in pre-dam days. The lade is clearly traceable all the way, but carries no water as it has a breach just below the dam, possibly made deliberately when the last bung finally rotted away and the water poured down almost on top of the mill house.

...oOo...

EXTRACTS FROM 'OLD KILBERRY'S' DIARIES

.....

John Campbell of Kilberry (1844-1908) kept a diary from the age of 16 to his death, the final entries being written from his dictation. His son added a postscript describing the funeral. The volumes containing these records are at Kilberry.

.....

1860. Jan.1st. My Mother while crossing the Crinan Canal on a plank fell in and was hauled out again by Archie Achnandarroch.

1860. Nov.5th. [at Woolwich, John Taylor's Military Academy] Heard from my Mother that my Father had on the 1st inst. shot a RABBIT about Keppoch. First I ever heard of being shot on the Kilberry Estate.

1860. Dec.21st. ...left Glasgow in the Mary Jane, arrived at Kilberry at 8 p.m. after walking from Tarbert.

1861. Jan.15th. [at Greenock] Went on to Ardrish-aig in the Mountaineer. Fiddlers for Calton Mòr Ball [Poltalloch] on board. Found my Father, Mother and Rosa there. Began dancing at 7 o'clock and worked at it till 5 next morning. Very jolly Ball indeed. [Out shooting next day, then-]

Jan.17th. Started from Calton Mòr in the morning with Neil to walk home. Called at Inver-neil and lunched there, then Duncan, Hewie, Neil and I set off and walked to Kilberry ....30 miles altogether.

On 12th Sept. 1861 his father died and he inherited Kilberry.

1861. Dec.10th. Went to a Road meeting at Tarbert [his first public duty, at the age of 17]



I861. Dec. 31st. Shot at Dunscaig with Rudd and crossed to Ardpatrik whence I walked as far as Lergnahension with Clark. Found a piper there and danced reels. Drove home. [Lergnahension was then an inn]

I862. Feb. 7th. [at Kilmory Knap] Got up early and went off to the Eilan mor with Jimmie, Neil and Dugald MacLean. Saw there 13 wild geese and lots of ducks. Came upon 6 sheep lying dead killed by lightening. Returned to Fearnoch about 12 o'clock and went out to shoot but did not manage to get anything. Midnight found us playing cards in the big house.

Feb. 8th. About 2a.m. we went up to MacLean's where we stayed singing songs etc till half past six when Jimmie, Neil & I set off to walk to Inverneil where we arrived at half past nine deuced cold. While crossing the Plantation I saw 2 Roes and after breakfast I went out with Inverneil to try for them. He shot one, a buck. Walked to Achachoish in the afternoon and drove from there to Kilberry.

I862. April 1st. Walked from Ardpatrik to Lergnahension whence I drove home. John Campbell from Craignish arrived with Neil in the morning at Ardpatrik. I sent Neil on with him as far as Avenagilan. John had walked 56 miles between 7 a.m. yesterday morning and 5 this morning. Stiffish walk for a little fellow like him. A Tarbert boat came to Port-a-hoorie in the afternoon, shot their lines on the Inner Bank and stopped at Kilberry for the night. Got some T<sup>d</sup> H<sup>s</sup> fresh from them. [a marginal note added by the diarist explains that "John Campbell had been my Father's manager at Coulagh-ailltro. Afterwards manager at Glenforsa." The cryptic final passage is expanded by the diarist to "Trawled Herrings, trawling was then illegal."]

In November I862 the diarist was gazetted to the 92nd and immediately began trying

for a transfer to the 93rd; on 3rd Jan. 1863 he was posted to the 93rd, hurried back from Italy where his mother and sisters were then living, and on 19th began ordering uniforms etc. On 30th April 1863 he set out for India, where he landed on 1st August. He left India again on 15th February 1870 and reached England on 21st March.

1870. Oct. 14th. Wrote to Maggie asking her to marry me. [Margaret, only dau. of Thos. Lloyd of Leghorn] Got fever in the evening and passed a very unpleasant night.

Oct. 18th. Got an answer from Maggie to my letter of Friday and she accepts me. God bless her. Went to Edinr. & told my mother and sisters who were all delighted.

1870. Dec. 7th. Sent in my application to be allowed to sell out of the Service.

1871. Feb. 25th. [Leghorn, Italy] Very fine warm day and rather an important day for me as I was married....At 11 a.m. we left the villa & went to the Consulate where Uncle Alexander performed the civil marriage....We then went to the Church which was very prettily decorated (there were 1200 cam-elias used in the decorations) and Mr Huntingdon the Chaplain performed the marriage service in pretty quick time. The breakfast...a few speeches none of which except Tom's were worth much. I of course made rather a hash of mine.....Arrived at Pisa at 5.45. On the whole being married is not such a dreadful ordeal as I thought it would be.

1871. June 29th. Went to Tarbert in the Iona and drove from there to Kilberry in the 4-wheeled dog-cart. On arrival at the top gate we were met by a piper and a crowd of people headed by McCalman, who presented Maggie with a bouquet. They then took the horses out of the trap and dragged it to

the house where there was some drinking of whisky and dancing of reels. In the evening we walked to the shore & gathered wilks which we took home and eat.

1871. Oct.14th. ...returned home by the Caves to try to get some pigeons. We got altogether 4 pheasants, a blackcock, 2 hares, 3 rabbits, 3 pigeons and a hen Peregrine falcon. She sent her claws deep into Neil's hands & I had considerable difficulty in pulling them out.

1871. Oct.27th. At the Caves....saw 4 Cornish choughs but they did not come close enough.

1871. Nov.13th. Coming home by the Caves got a pigeon and a Cornish chough.

1871. Nov.21st. [at Calton Mòr] Tennant started off to Ardrishaig intending to go away by the steamer but returned. At Ardrishaig he heard that the Pioneer which left Ardrishaig yesterday and the Mary Jane which left this morning were both detained in Tarbert by the storm. The Mountaineer came to Ardrishaig but the Capt. told him that he did not expect to get further than Tarbert.

1871. Nov.26th. [at Calton Mòr]...walked down to the bridge over the Add near Bellanoch. Yesterday one of the girders broke and part of the bridge fell into the water. It is quite impassable.

1871. Dec.13th. [shooting with Ormsary]...at one corner six pheasants got up and we killed them all and at another little place 6 woodcocks got up and we killed them all - none missed.

(To be resumed)

## THE STORY OF A SNUFF BOX

\*\*\*\*\*  
David C. Cargill

I have before me as I write a silver-mounted horn snuff box bearing the inscription "David Cargill Auchmithie 1793" and also "D.C.Jr.". David senior, my great-great-grandfather, was a farmer and his second son James followed him in that line but David junior felt the call of the sea and in the year 1796 when he and his father had put their signatures to a rather formidable indenture he became an Apprentice Seaman.

Perhaps a young lad of 16 did not fully realise the import of some of the undertakings which he subscribed to, but there is something delightfully old-world about several of the clauses and particularly I think where the Shipmaster engages to "Teach learn and instruct his Apprentice in so far as he knows himself and his Apprentice is capable to conceive." How many Masters would consider it good policy today to admit limitations in their own knowledge? The wages too would make any present-day Apprentice gasp - £2 for a year's labours and provide your own bedclothes at that!

David took to the sea on the "Lady Mary Ann" of Arbroath and in the course of the years became Master of his own vessel, again a "Mary Ann" of Arbroath, though no "Lady" this time. And so we come to a stormy night in October, 1843, when the ill-fated "Mary Ann" was lost off Islay, and her crew of six, including David the Master and his son Peter, took to the long-boat, shaping course for the north coast of Ireland. The next morning they reached the shore, but only to have the boat overturned and the men all thrown into the sea. The Master, his son Peter, and all but one of the crew lost their lives.

But what of the snuff box with which this tale began? As its inscription shows, David the Second had inherited it and added his initials, and no doubt it slipped from his pocket on that

melancholy October morning. We know no more of it, however, until early the following year when my grandfather, the next David (we call him David the Third) who had also followed the sea and was at that time sailing from Arbroath in the "Agnes", went over to Ireland to see about the erection of a tombstone where his father and brother were buried. Many will know the lovely stretch of sand called Ballyachran Strand between Portstewart and the mouth of the Bann, but it was no doubt a cold and desolate spot when the son went there in 1844 to see the place where his father's boat had been cast up. Judge of his surprise, however, when a little boy came up to him holding something in his hand and saying "Will you buy this, mister?" - it was his own father's snuff box which had been washed about at the mercy of the Atlantic for some three months of winter weather. The small boy had just picked it up and took it to the first man he saw, while David the Third had gone over from Arbroath just for one day. Is truth stranger than fiction after all?

...oOo...

From Dean Monro's WESTERN ISLES OF SCOTLAND. 1549.

Sixteen mile northwart fra the Ile of Coll  
 lyis ane Ile callit Rum, ane Ile of 16 mile lang,  
 6 mile braid, in the neirest ane forrest full of  
 heich montanes and abundante of little deiris in  
 it, quhilk deiris will never be slain downwith but  
 the principall settis man be in the heich of the  
 hills, because the deir will be callit upwart ay  
 be tynchellis, or without tynchellis they will up  
 a forte. In this Ile thair will be gottin about  
 Beltane als mony wild fowl nestis full of eggis  
 about the mure as men pleases to gadder, and that  
 becaus the fowls hes few to start thame except  
 deiris. This Ile stands fra the west to the eist  
 in lenth, and pertains to the Laird of Coll callit  
 McCane abrie. Mony solenne geis are in this Ile.  
 This land obeyis to McGillane of Doward instantlie.

...oOo...

## SOME OLD SCOTS PLANT LORE

### \*\*\*\*\* 'An Lighiche Mór'

A short period of research into the Gaelic names for plants brought to light the profound extent of our forebears' knowledge of the properties of the common plants around them; many of the uses to which they put them were frankly superstitious and empirical, but a large proportion have been amply proved by medical science to possess the properties long attributed to them. It may interest readers to have a few examples of both categories brought to their notice. In each case three names are given, the popular, the Latin and the Gaelic. In connection with the latter much help has been gratefully accepted from Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Miss Sandeman.

ALDER: *Alnus glutinosa*: Feàrna.

Bark or young twigs boiled with copperas gives a very durable black dye. Decoction of leaves for inflammation & fresh leaves laid on swellings dissolved them. Fresh leaves applied to soles of feet after a long journey.

ASH: *Fraxinus excelsior*: Uinnseann.

The juice flowing from the opposite end of a burning green stick was given to new-born children. A decoction of tender tops and leaves is a certain cure for snake-bite.

ASPEN: *Populus tremula*: Critheann.

Not liked. Trembling of leaves is restlessness caused by Cross having been made of aspen wood.

BARBERRY: *Berberis vulgaris*: Geàrr-dhearcag.

An infusion of inner bark used for bile.

BEARBERRY: *Arctostaphylos uva-ursi*: Grainnseag.

Leaves used in treating stone.

BEECH: *Fagus sylvatica*: Faith-bhile.

Leaves used as a cooling poultice for swellings.

- BILBERRY: *Vaccinium uliginosum*: Lus-nan-dearcag.  
Berries used in diarrhoea and dysentery.
- BIRCH: *Betula verrucosa*: Craobh-bheithe.  
Spring sap makes sugar & wholesome diuretic wine. Wood much used for domestic and agricultural purposes.
- BLACK SPLEENWORT: *Asplenium nigrum*: Dubh-chasach.  
Decoction used for phthisis.
- BRAMBLE: *Rubus fruticosus*: Dris smeur.  
Decoction of roots for cough and asthma.
- BROOM: *Sarothamnus scoparius*: Bealaidh.  
Diuretic. Decoction used for dropsy; bark used for tanning; flowers & seeds as emetic.
- COLTS FOOT: *Tussilago farfara*: Cluas-liath.  
Decoction used for coughs and sore breasts. Leaves smoked for asthma: "Colts foot tea for a cold".
- COMMON PLANTAIN: *Plantago major*: Cuach Phàdruig.  
Used for cuts.
- CRAB APPLE: *Pyrus malus*: Ubhall fhiadhain.  
Juice of fruit rubbed on sprains, cramps, etc. Bark gives a light yellow dye.
- ELDER: *Sambucus nigra*: Droman.  
Berries give a brown dye and make wine.
- ELECAMPANE: *Inula helenium*: Ailleann.  
Gives a bright blue dye.
- EUPHORBIA: *Euphorbia peplus*: Leighis.  
Juice used for warts.
- EYEBRIGHT: *Euphorbia officinalis*: Lus-nan-sul.  
A decoction used for inflammation of eyes.
- FIR: *Pinus sylvestris*: Giubhas.  
"Kilchurn Castle roof quite sound after 300 years".
- FOXGLOVE: *Digitalis purpurea*: Lus-nam-ban-sith.  
Used as diuretic. Poultice for erysipelas.
- GARLIC: *Allium ursinum*: Gairgean.  
Used as a diuretic.
- GOLDEN ROD: *Solidago virgaurea*: Fuinseag-coille.  
A diuretic.
- HEATHER: *Erica cinerea*: Fraoch.  
Gives a yellow dye & was used in tanning.
- HUNGER BREAD: *Latherus montanus*: Cairmcal.  
Allays hunger on journeys.

- HOUSE LEEK: *Sempervivum tectorum*: Lus-nan-cluas.  
"The ear plant".
- HOREHOUND: *Marrubium vulgare*: Grabhan-bàn.  
Used as tea for cough and asthma.
- JUNIPER: *Juniperus communis*: Aiteann.  
Used against snake-bite. Burned in cases of plague (the smoke & smell carried off infection & purified the air). Burned in cattle stalls to ward off witches. Also a diuretic.
- LADY'S MANTLE: *Alchemilla vulgaris*: Cota preasach  
Used for 'sores'. nighinn an righ.
- LICHEN: *Parmelia omphalodes*: Crotal.  
Gives red-brown dye. Used inside shoes as a powder it prevented inflammation of feet on a journey.
- LIME: *Tilia vulgaris*: Teile.  
Flowers are the best cure for palpitation.
- MALE FERN: *Dryopteris filix-mas*: Marc-raineach.  
Used as a vermifuge for men & dogs. The rhizomes collected in late autumn & dried.  
An oily extract still used for worms.
- OAK: *Quercus robur* or *Q. petraea*: Darach.  
A decoction of the bark cured vomiting, and of the bark and acorns for all poisoning.
- PENNYROYAL: *Mentha pulegium*: Peighinn-rioghail.  
Decoction of roots for cough and asthma.
- POTATO: *Solanum tuberosum*: Buntàta.  
A slice on a black eye, or in case of nose-bleeding, applied to the back of the neck.
- ROSE HERB: *Chamaenerion angustifolium*: ?Lus-nan-  
A poultice made with fresh laoch.  
butter for erysipelas.
- ROWAN: *Pyrus aucuparia*: Caorunn.  
Magical against witches, either growing or used as a switch when driving cattle. Must not be burned on fire.
- RUE: *Ruta graveolans*: Rù.  
Tea used for worms.
- SAGE: *Artemisia abrotanum*: Slàn-lus.  
"Health plant." "Sage tea & honey for a cold"



SHEPHERD'S PURSE: *Capsella bursa-pastoris*: Lus-na-fola.  
Arrests bleeding from wounds.

ST. JOHN'S WORT: *Hypericum perforatum*: Achlasan  
Chaluim-chille.

Gives a yellow dye. A potent protection  
against witches. Put into a half-full pail  
at milking time ensures increased yield.

STONECROP: *Sedum acre*: Gràbhan-nan-clach.

Tea used for erysipelas.

THYME: *Thymus serpyllum*: Lus-mhic-rìgh-bhreatuinn.  
An infusion protected against nightmares.

TORMENTIL: *Potentilla erecta*: Barr-braonan-nan-con.  
Superior to oak for tanning. Cured dysentery.

WILD GERANIUM: *Geranium sylvaticum*: Lus-gnàth-ghorm.  
Used with fresh butter as a poultice for  
erysipelas.

WILLOW: *Salix*: Seileach.

The bark gives a black dye and was used in  
tanning. (Apparently its modern uses were  
unknown.)

YARROW: *Achillea millefolium*: Lus-chasgadh-na-fola.  
"The plant for stopping bleeding". Best of  
all remedies for this purpose. It was made  
into an ointment. A leaf thrust up the nose  
until blood came cured a headache. A sprig  
kept in the churn prevailed against evil  
influences.

YEW: *Taxus baccata*: Iubhar.

This was a consecrated tree, planted near  
churches. It afforded wood for bows.

...oOo...

From Pennant's Tour, vol.2, 1772

.....  
The inhabitants of Rum are people that scar-  
cely know sickness; if they are attacked by a  
dysentery they make use of a decoction of the  
roots of the *Tormentilla erecta* in milk. The  
small-pox has visited them but once in thirty-  
four years, only two sickened, and both recovered.  
The measles come often.

...oOo...

## A CHECK LIST OF THE BIRDS OF MID-ARGYLL

Some Developments since 1968

.....

Gordon Young

In the Introduction to the Society's Check List, published in 1968, Miss Campbell wrote that the idea behind it was to take a first step towards preparing eventually an authoritative list which could be used for scientific purposes. The initiative was certainly well worth while, for even in its present form the Check List is widely used and it has been warmly welcomed in ornithological circles. In his recent book 'Highland Birds', D.Nethersole-Thompson describes it as "the best bob's worth in Scotland". But of course no ornithological check list can ever be definitive, and even a preliminary examination of reports and records since 1968 reveals that many additions and amendments are appearing for consideration.

Among species excluded from the List which have been reported in the area since 1968, pride of place as a rarity must undoubtedly be given to the Brännich's Guillemot found dead on the shore of Loch Caolisport on 11th Oct. 1969. This is only the sixth accepted recording for the British Isles of a bird which breeds on the north Russian coast and Arctic islands, and which is not at all easy to distinguish from our own Guillemot in the field. A month earlier a Wryneck had been ringed in the same area but this did not come to light until a probable Wryneck had been reported as calling in Inverneill glen during September 1973. In the last century the Wryneck was widely distributed as a breeding species in England and Wales, but for reasons unknown it has been decreasing steadily during the past 150 years; at the present time it nests in very small numbers only in the south-east corner of England. In Scotland there have been occasional reports of Wrynecks over the years; almost certainly until recently these sporadic sightings have been of

birds on passage between breeding grounds to the north of the British Isles and their tropical African wintering areas. But following on a small number of early summer sightings in Scotland in 1951-68, three proved cases of breeding occurred on Speyside in 1969.

A group of three Great Shearwaters seen over Loch Fyne off Tarbert in August 1970 was an exciting and unusual sighting of a bird rarely seen close to land except on its breeding grounds on Triatan da Cunha in the South Atlantic. These marvellous sea birds spend their winter and our summer ranging over the Atlantic as far north as Greenland.

Small groups of Bean Geese have been seen with the Kilberry flocks each winter since 1968-9, and a single Canada Goose was recorded from November 1969 to Spring 1970. During the same winter a Grey Plover, a bird breeding in Arctic Russia which has rarely been reported on the west coast north of the Solway appeared at Kilberry. More recently there have been reports of a Pied Flycatcher at Carse during the summer of 1972 and a Ruff in breeding plumage on the edge of Keills Loch in June 1973. During the last two or three years there have been various reports of Ospreys in the area and in the late summer of last year a Hoopoe spent some days on Loch Awe side.

Amongst reports calling for consideration of status changes in the Check List are breeding records of Jays, Long-tailed Tits and Tree Pipits, and it seems clear that Great Grey Shrikes have been seen often enough to warrant promoting this species from 'passage migrant' to 'winter resident'. There have also been summer reports of Brambling and Goldeneye that raise hopes that breeding by these species may eventually be confirmed in Mid-Argyll; there are extremely rare records of breeding by both species in other parts of Scotland.

Forty-seven of the birds in the Check List are marked with an asterisk indicating that they are 'rare', and of many of these there have been

recent reports. A Rough-legged Buzzard was seen near Kilberry in November 1972, (already reported in No.5 of The Kist), and a further sighting was made at Keills during the following winter. Both Scaup and Bar-tailed Godwit have been seen at Loch Caolisport, and Pochard are reported sufficiently often to suggest that this species should now perhaps lose its asterisk. Three Greenshanks were seen near the Fairy Isles in the autumn of 1971; there are reports of Turtle Doves from the Poltalloch area; a Long-eared Owl was seen at Inverneill in August 1973; there have been occasional reports of Ring Ouzels, and Grasshopper Warblers have been seen and heard 'reeling' during the last two summers. In one of the many periods of rough weather early this year a Purple Sandpiper was seen feeding on seaweed near the swing bridge in Ardrishaig.

Finally, a recently published record of no relevance to the Check List but surely of sufficient interest to be worth repeating here; the new B.T.O. booklet, 'Early and Late Dates for Summer Migrants' reports that on the 10th November 1935 a Cuckoo was seen in Lochgilphead. Who, one wonders, was the sharp-eyed bird watcher who made this remarkable sighting and ornithological history nearly forty years ago?

...oOo...

#### EXTRACTS from the SEDERUNT BOOK of Pitcur Trustees

I736-58

These two extracts shed light on the domestic worries occasioned by the activities of Prince Charles Edward Stuart in the Highlands at that period, a 'commotion' which Mid-Argyll escaped.

Doctor Wedderburn, Cannongate. Aprile 7th I746.

Dr Sir,

Dureing these Commotions which Distract the Country We have thought it proper that our papers be

Lodged in Some place of Security for fear of Accidents, Therefore we have Sent over the Bearer, John Hay Clerk to Mr Farquharson to conduct them hither, and it will be very obligeing if you'll take the Troubel to Step out to Hallyburton with Mr Pitcairn and See them packed up in boxes or Trunks and Carry a workman along with you to pack them that may be trusted, for the less noise the better: Pitcur thinks he Left the key of his Closet where the papers are with you, And if not, you'll please make open all Lockfast places in his Closet or others where you think papers are and put all together and send over; At the Same time it will be proper to pack up the Linnen Pictures or other things of value which we wish were Transported unto your house or Mr Pitcairn's or any other place of Safety in Dundee, We beg you'll pardon this Trouble and believe that we Remain with Sincere Esteem, Dear Sir, your most obliged & obedient humble Servants (signed) James Hallyburton & James Hallyburton (younger).

.....

Edinburgh 19 Decemb. 1752.

Pursuant to Pitcur's letter to Dr Wedderburn the 7 Aprl 1746 Pitcur writes were brought over from Hallyburton and Lodged at Dalmahoy where they have Remained till now put up in two Roch(?) Trunks and a Square Box all Tyed with Ropes and as the occasion of their being brought from Hallyburton is long ceased and that it was thought proper they should be replaced at Hallyburton Mr Houghton wrote the Coll the midle of Novemr to Send a carefull bearer for them and that my Lord Morton was to send them into town to wait there being called for and the Coll haveing sent James Ramsay in Balldinny his Tenent and one of his own Servants to Receive them they are accordingly this day delivered to them, and Mr Houghton wrote to the Coll by James Ramsay & beged him to take care that the papers be Laid by in a well aired place at Hallyburton. H.H. (Extracted by F.S. Mackenna)