



Coille Bharr Mill

Ann Thomas

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Editorial

This issue we have a focus on buildings and other structures in the landscape: a mill, medieval and post-medieval settlements, duns and cairns. We also look at some of our abundant wildlife both on land (pine martens) and at sea (basking sharks).

Thank you to my many contributors for understanding my plea for contributions to be sent by email as an email or in text only format not Word. This saves me a lot of work. Please send non-text items (e.g. photographs and drawings) separately. Ideally phone or email me beforehand so we can discuss your proposed contribution (handwritten contributions still welcome) A big thank you to all our contributors: please keep on writing! Thanks to Ann Thomas for the cover.

Coille Bharr Mill

By Kilmory Oib
Scot AnSgeulaiche

Early this year the society made a walk to the Faery Isles. Along the way we passed the derelict mill of Coille Bharr, half a mile south of Kilmory Oib, Knapdale. The mill generated a few questions for the party, hence this article. Namely, "Where was the original lade or leat?" "What kind of wheel did the mill have? Undershot? Overshot? Horizontally mounted?" "There appears to be two types of stonework, so is the mill in its original form?"

An hour or so in the Archives answered many of these questions, and a few more.

The mill was described as "newly built" by the 5th Earl of Argyll, John, in 1549. It would have served the community of Kilmory Oib and surrounds, but it seems that it did not serve the nearby *Arichonain*, who had their own mill, in a similar location, below the village, called the Mull Gleann a'Gaoibhan (Mill of Glen Galvin). It took me some time to understand that these two mills were not the same in the records, as they are only about one mile apart, as the crow flies. Why have two substantial pieces of industrial investment so close? I think the answer lies in the old land ownership.



Figure 1: general view of mill (author)

Few may know that about 500 years ago, the Irish MacNeills of Barra owned a few parcels of land in Knapdale. The West side of Loch Scotnish (Taigh a'bheallaich, Taynish etc) was MacNeills'; the east side belonged to the Campbells (Faery Isles, Coille Bharr etc). *Arichonan* was almost the march between these two territories.

Coille Bharr mill is described in a kind of Irish triad poem

*Tri Seoid Cnapdail
Carridh Lochd Chrinan,
Frith Gleann a'Bhacain,
Is muilleann dubh coille bharr*

Three treasures of Knapdale:
Fish of Loch Crinan
Bacan's Deer-park
Black meal mill of Coille Bharr

The Mill was such a boon because it has the largest of mill pools - the one mile long loch on tap to power the wheel.

It is not true to say that the mill was built in 1549, because it was involved in an incident in about 1490. Those Kist readers familiar with the History of Clan MacLean of Duart Castle, Mull, will perhaps know the story of how *Liath Sgeir*, the tidal rock off the SW coast of *Lios Mòr* became known as "Lady's Rock". Lachlan Cattanach, the 11th Chief of MacLean didn't have divorce open to him to break his marriage to the Earl of Argyll's sister, Margaret Campbell. He chose the novel idea of marooning her on said rock at low tide and awaiting the judgment of the ocean. Unsurprisingly, come dawn, she was not seen on the rock as it rose into view. She was, as planned, far away, drifting on the ocean, although not, as he would wish, as a body, but rather in a boat piloted by some Campbell fishermen who had happened within earshot of her screams as the tide rose on the rock. They took her ultimately back to her brother's house, the Earl of Argyll. What is little known though is that they stopped for one night, for Inveraray is a long way from Mull. Where? The Mill of Coille Bharr. This mill was later given to the fishermen in gratitude by the Earl.

Much later in the history of this part of Knapdale, the Malcolms owned the Mill. In 1828 the Miller was one Neil MacCalluim. He complained in this year (1828) of the lack of Mulcher, or millers tax, he could accrue from the community, and thus the amount of rent he could pay the owner, Neil Malcolm of Poltalloch. The reason for the lack of mulcher was the loss of former arable land that would produce oats etc. This land had been taken under copse. One presumes this to be hazel and oak for the charcoal burning done in this area (of which the Taynish Charcoal Platforms would be an example). The complaint was presumably a pulled punch at Neil Malcolm, who no doubt ordered the change over to copicing from arable.

Judging from the architecture of the mill today, the mill was in use during the mid 1800s. The main portion of the building still extant has a similar style of stone work to the Shepherd's house at Arichonan that was built about 1870, after the village was cleared. The most notable feature extant today is the cart arch, which dates from the earlier mill. It is the only surviving part of the older mill, the building having originally sat on the grass clearing to the north east (See figure 1).

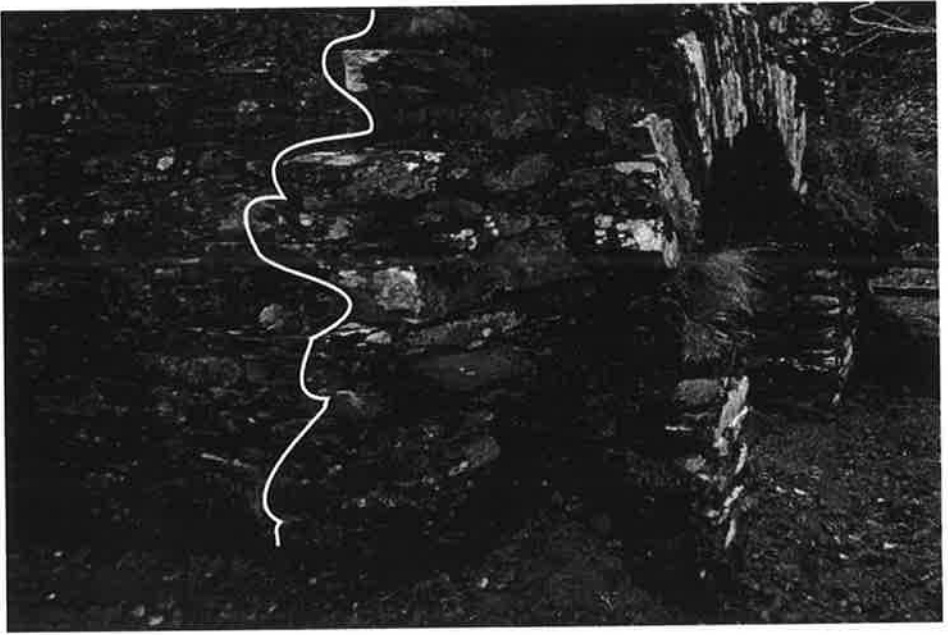


Figure 2: Wall of mill showing join between older and newer masonry (author)

The join in the older and newer masonry is very clear when one is at the mill. Figure 2 has a line added to show the join more clearly. What is less clear is the actual course of the leat over the wheel, around the mill building. Perhaps Forestry Commission records would show the mill site in the early 1900s, but the current investigations didn't extend that far.

I would be interested to know of any of the human history of the mill community that Kist readers might have, perhaps the date when the mill fell from use as the communities of MacCalluims around it moved away from arable. Buildings are so much more valuable to the NHASMA walking party when we know the names of the people who lived there and their Tales.

NORTH KNAPDALE FOREST: AN ARCHAEOLOGICAL SURVEY

Roderick Regan and Sharon Webb
(Kilmartin House Museum)

Acknowledgements: The authors would like to thank the Forestry Commission for initiating this work, as well as the keen-eyed foresters who spotted most of the monuments.

1: Introduction

In the winter and spring of 2005 Kilmartin House Museum undertook a field survey work on behalf of the Forestry Commission in their Forests of North Knapdale and Ormaig. In recent years, Forestry Commission staff have noted, described and in some cases, photographed previously un-recorded potential sites in the course of their forestry operations. Specialist knowledge was required to determine the age and nature of these discoveries, thus Kilmartin House Museum's involvement.

Staff visited sites as well as preparing desk based information. Priority was given to sites which might be prehistoric, or the remains of a recognised type of monument (for example a dun or burial cairn).

The aim of Kilmartin House Museum's recent work was to assess, record and attempt to categorise these recently identified sites in order to gain a better understanding of them. This will enable the Forestry Commission to better manage archaeological sites on their ground, as well as improve public access.

This article describes the work undertaken in North Knapdale by Kilmartin House Museum. Following a very brief description of the archaeological background, the survey results are summarised.

2: Archaeological Background

The archaeology of North Knapdale and Kilmartin have been subject to several publications and surveys. One of the first is Archibald Currie's 1830 '*Description of the Antiquities, etc, of North Knapdale*' (Currie, 1830) in which reference is made to several archaeological sites. Interest in the area continued into the next century with publications by Simpson (1868), Mapleton, (1870), White (1875), Christison, (1904a, 1904b) and

Craw, (1930). These publications concentrated on specific types of sites, or groups of monuments.

The first archaeological overview of the area was not published until 1964, when Marion Campbell and Mary Sandeman produced their 'Mid Argyll: an Archaeological Survey' (Campbell and Sandeman 1964). Their important work formed the foundation of later survey work undertaken by the Royal Commission on Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) which was published in two volumes known as the 'inventories' for Mid Argyll and Cowal (RCAHMS, 1988, 1992). The RCAHMS did not record or list all sites however. For example, later landscape features such as 19th Century abandoned settlements were generally omitted from the volumes. Indeed only sixteen sites under their classification 'Farms, Townships and Shielings' are listed for the entire area of Mid Argyll & Cowal (RCAHMS 1992) yet there are hundreds of such sites in the area. Recent work has attempted to rectify this and the under representation of such sites has been partly addressed by the survey of unroofed rural settlements depicted on the 1st edition OS maps (the First Edition Survey Project). More recently, work on these later settlements ('*Medieval or Later Abandoned Rural Settlements*' - MOLARS as they are archaeologically classified) has been carried out by Heather James of GUARD, who surveyed numerous sites within the Parishes of Kilmartin, Kilmichael and North Knapdale (see ensuing article).

3: Survey Results

It was against this background that KHM's work took place. In total eighty nine sites were visited and briefly recorded. In the majority of cases this was sufficient to make an initial interpretation and categorization of the site. Several sites may belong to the Prehistoric period. In most cases this is a supposition and could only be confirmed by further investigation, either by more detailed survey and excavation, or both. A number of historical sites were identified, most of these belong to the later historical period. Some sites still evade archaeological categorization, again this might be resolved by excavation.

The most significant sites are described below. A full description of all the sites can be found in the survey reports (Regan and Webb 2004 and 2005), copies of which can be found in the Marion Campbell Library at Kilmartin House Museum.

3.1: Potentially Prehistoric and Medieval Sites

The following section details possible Prehistoric and Medieval Sites.

3.1.1: Rock Art Sites

Belonging to the prehistoric period, eight rock-art sites were identified. Seven of these consisted of cup marked rocks. Probably the most significant of these sites is situated along Dounie ridge where at least sixteen cup marks are pecked into the upper surface of a rock outcrop. This site is important in that there is a large number of cups; moreover, there is a heaped pile of stones at the base of this rock, which may be the remains of a cairn. The eighth rock art site is also located on Dounie ridge to the north. This is significant in that it consists of several cups and associated rings, marking an east facing outcrop.

3.1.2: Cairn

Most of the cairns examined during the survey were later clearance cairns (detailed below) with the exception of one which appears to be a denuded Prehistoric burial cairn, possibly with a central cist.



Figure 1: Cairn at Arichonan with possible Kist (authors)

The cairn was placed on a prominent ridge and overlooks the Add basin to the north. The site is described by foresters as being situated at 'Arichonan', but it should perhaps be named after Barr Ban, a ridge to the east, since the former lies some distance to the south west.

3.1.3: Duns

One of the most exciting results of the survey was the identity of four sites as probably small-defended structures or duns. All the sites appear as tumbled walled structures situated on prominent and easily defensible ridges at (and are now named as) Barnagad, Balure, Dunans and Dun Buidhe. The structures at Barnagad and Balure have only recently come to light during forestry operations and are previously unknown archaeological monuments. Marion Campbell visited the structures at Dunans and Dun Buidhe and identified them as archaeological features.



Figure 2 - Dun Buidhe Dun (authors)

Her interpretation was subsequently dismissed and the duns were declared natural features however. It now appears Campbell was in fact correct. At both sites the remnants of walls were partially revealed during the survey.

3.2: Later Historic Sites

The majority of sites visited probably belong to the later historical period and likely relate to agricultural settlement. These are detailed below.

3.2.1: Settlement Sites

Several post medieval settlements were visited during the survey mainly because of their proximity to other sites. These were Arinafad Beg, Oibmore, Oib, Kilmory Mill, Glenyalavon as well as two unlisted/unnamed sites near Oibmore and Achnamara. Most could be identified from the 1st and 2nd Editions Ordnance Surveys. Where no description existed, a brief survey was conducted and the sites described in the full report. The history and archaeology of several of these sites are more fully detailed in Heather James's survey of deserted settlements of North Knapdale and Kilmartin (James 2003 - see later article).

3.2.2: Shielings

Numerous sites were described as possible shielings by foresters. Shielings can be described as temporary upland summer dwellings and generally appear today as low oval-shaped or circular rubble walls. As time was limited few of these sites were visited since identification is generally relatively uncomplicated.

3.2.3: Bridges and Culverts

A feature located near the deserted settlement of Balure appeared to be the remains of a culvert and possible dam embankment. The presence of a large broken millstone suggests this may be part of a mill complex utilising an outflow from Lochan Laraiche. A flagstone bridge situated just east of Dunans farm probably bore the old track/road running between Dunans to Dunardry over the burn.

3.2.4: Clearance Cairns

In the main, the majority of the cairn sites visited appeared to be the result of field clearance. These heaps of stones were usually located along the edges of what had formerly been fields or strips of rig and furrow cultivation. The stones have usually been piled in discrete

mounds sometimes over natural rock outcrops or occurred as more general strips of loose stones located along the edges of the field usually at the foot of rising ground. Groups of cairns were located at Sailean Mor, these possibly associated to the deserted settlement of Tigh-na-t-sluichd. Similarly several clearance cairns were also noted near the deserted settlement of Glenyalavon and at Achnamara.

3.2.5: Dykes and Fields

Throughout the survey, the presence of enclosure dykes, clearance cairns and the general topography suggested former cultivated areas or fields. Probable field areas were noted at Ardnackaig, Sailean Mor, Arinafad, Barnluasgan, Glen Sabhall and Glenyalavon. An unusual form of dyke/enclosure was seen at Lagan where a series of large upright stones lined the old road to the settlement, possibly to prevent livestock from wandering into surrounding fields.

3.2.6: Jetties

The former settlement of Oibmore appears to have been serviced by two jetties on Loch Caol Scotnish. These jetties linked to the settlement by a track, which is depicted on the 1900 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey.

3.2.7: Wells

Two wells were noted during the survey, one near the deserted settlement of Arinafad Beg while a second was located at Oibmore. Both these sites are depicted on the 1900 2nd Edition Ordnance Survey.

3.2.8: Caves and Rock shelters

The survey covered two natural rock formations that have been modified as shelters. At Ardnackaig a fissure cave had been walled to create a pen or small enclosure. At Dounie a wall had been built against an overhanging rock. This appears to be relatively modern in date.

3.2.9: Rock-Cut Basins

Two possible rock cut basins were identified during the survey. One basin is cut into the top of a boulder lying outside the door of one of the structures at the unnamed deserted settlement situated at the north end of Gleann Sabhall. The basin or mortar was no doubt used for grinding or mixing and belongs to the later historical period. The second possible rock-cut basin lies close to Dun Buidhe. The two may be related but the 'basin's' position - at the edge of a large vertically sided rock - is hardly

practical for domestic or daily use however. This feature may in fact be a large cup mark, thus prehistoric.

3.2.10: Other Structures

Several small oval structures were identified at Sailean Mor and Dounie. Two similar features are associated with larger rectangular structures at Glenyalavon. The purpose or function of these structures remains unclear. They may represent small kilns or fire installations. Another small structure located south of the deserted settlement at Glenyalavon was more rectangular in shape and may have been for storage.

Located on the eastern bank of Caol Scotnish is a drystone platform. This may be a charcoal stance, although its relatively inaccessible position mitigates somewhat against this interpretation.

Other structures defy interpretation – such as a previously unrecorded level circular spread of stones near the coast at Ardnackaig. This feature could represent a collapsed circular structure or a denuded cairn, although it is difficult to be sure without the benefit of excavation

4: Conclusion

It is tempting to think that we have identified and recorded all known archaeology in the area. But this survey clearly shows there are many more sites to be discovered in the landscape despite the somewhat damaging nature of forestry to archaeology. The sheer number demonstrates the archaeological importance of the area, yet relatively few sites have been investigated by excavation. In some cases we are unable to answer even questions as basic as age of some types of site, a situation which needs to be rectified in the future.

Despite the relatively recent date of many of the agricultural and or settlement features found during this work, many are fragile and easily lost beneath forest plantation. It is nonetheless important that they are recorded if we are to understand past patterns of land use in Mid Argyll.

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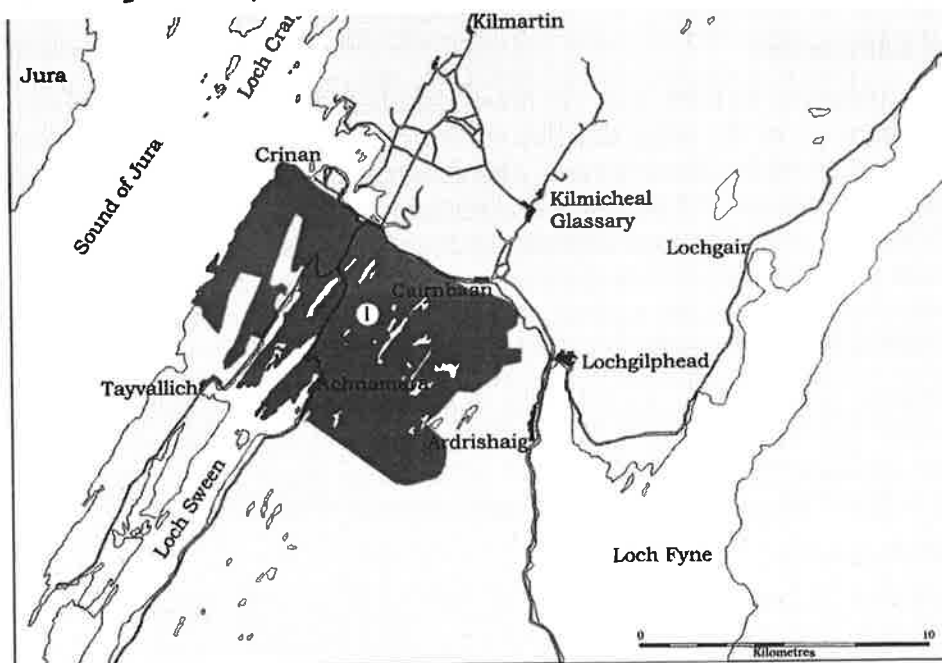


Figure 3 - Map of North Knapdale Forest survey area - shaded (authors)

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EXTRACT FROM A REPORT BY THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH
FOR THE SOUTHERN DIVISION OF THE PARISH OF SOUTH KNAPDALE,
22 NOVEMBER 1886 (supplied by Murdo Macdonald, archivist)

My attention was drawn to the presence of Typhoid Fever in the Shepherds family at Strandour [Srondoire, near Stronachullin] by the Sanitary inspector about ten days ago. I went there and made an investigation and, along with information given by Dr James J. Hunter who attended the family, I beg to furnish the following particulars: the house which is a thatched one is about 35 feet long and divided internally into two parts, the west end being used as a kitchen and the north end as a milkroom and bedroom combined. I found the floor in each apartment to consist of mud varying in depth from 2 to 12 inches on the top of which was laid planks of wood and staves of barrels. The walls were very damp and the air was close and very unhealthy being highly charged with decomposing matter.

On the outside of the house almost all sanitary precautions were neglected there being no attempt to carry away the sewage by means of a drain. The water supply although derived from lower levels than the house, seemed to be good. There were four cases of the disease with one death.

Signed Duncan MacMillan S. allo

MEDIEVAL RURAL SETTLEMENT IN MID-ARGYLL

Heather F James

Little is known about medieval rural settlement in Scotland which has led to such statements as the 'archaeology of the medieval farming communities is one of the greatest mysteries of our past'. One reason for this is that while numerous prehistoric sites are known and many have been excavated, very few sites of the medieval period relating to the rural society have been found. This is true for the whole of Scotland and not just for Argyll, although recent work by other members of Glasgow University Archaeology Department at Ben Lawers, Perthshire, have had some interesting (medieval) results.

The aim of my research is to examine the medieval settlement of Argyll, and the Kilmartin Glen in particular, in order to see what evidence exists, or can be discovered, which will indicate the location and nature of this settlement. I have been examining whether the medieval settlement lies unrecognised beneath later, now deserted clachans or fermtouns or whether the ephemeral remains are in fact dispersed across the countryside. One of the main problems is the ephemeral nature of the evidence. While stone is used as a building material for castles, churches, manor houses and shielings, the majority of structures occupied by the Scottish population in the Medieval and into the Post-medieval period may have been predominantly of organic materials such as timber, turf, soil, branches and peat. The lack of visibility in the landscape, compared to say castles, has resulted in a lack of attention, exacerbated by the seeming invisibility even after excavation.

One example of this is in the recent excavations at Meldalloch Island by members of ACFA. This site on excavation produced evidence for an Iron Age round house (with radiocarbon dates) and two probably 18th century 'long houses' with stone foundations, but the only evidence for medieval settlement is a single sherd of Scottish Redware dated to the 13-15th centuries. These excavations were clearly not complete, but it does show what seems to be a common feature, that the medieval period is not as visible as the Iron Age or Post-medieval period. It may be that some sites were not occupied during the medieval period, but why should this be the case when the sites were seen as suitable for occupation in other periods?

My fieldwork started in the Spring of 2002 and has continued when possible until the present time. Initially, I was interested in visiting as many of the deserted settlements in the vicinity as I could in order to become familiar with the landscape and the surviving architecture of rural settlement. I was very aware that I was following in the footsteps of Marion Campbell, M(?) Sandeman and Allan Begg, whose published reports, as well as notes that are held in the Lochgilphead Archive, have been extremely useful.

There are numerous deserted settlements in the landscape and I have visited and recorded over 100 in an area from Kintraw in the north, Inverlussa in the south, Elean Mhor in the west and Loch Glashan in the east. I was interested in the fact that many of the deserted sites that I visited although appearing to be 18th or 19th century in date were mentioned in documents dating back to the medieval period and some were even marked on Timothy Pont's map of the barony of Ardskeodnish dating to the late 16th century. The farms could therefore date back into the medieval period although the present structures bearing the place name of the farm may only date from the past couple of hundred years.

One of the characteristics of these stone built structures which I thought could indicate some greater antiquity was rounded corners. One site which consisted of a group of at least five low-walled structures with rounded corners lay in forestry near Old Poltalloch, at NM 81523 00662. The name of this settlement had not been passed down and so I refer to it as Bàrr Mór after the nearest hill. Bàrr Mór Excavations 2004 With the assistance of member of the Lorn Archaeological and Historical society and students from Glasgow University, I examined two of these structures (A & B). We found evidence for cruck slots, hearths, dividing walls, clay floors and a byre drain, but very few artefacts. Only three sherds of pottery were found and these all date to the late-medieval period, two being possibly 16th century French, which perhaps suggests a close association with a more high status site nearby. The botanical evidence indicates that oats, hulled barley and flax were cultivated nearby and that heather and scrub woodland was used for fuel. The site was interpreted as a late-medieval farmstead with at least three house/byres (A B & D), an animal enclosure (C) and possible animal pens (F & G). A later sheep-pen (E) added to the south and a lambing pen inserted into structure D. Carbonised botanical samples are being submitted shortly for radiocarbon dating which will hopefully provide an

indication of how far back in the medieval period this site was first occupied.

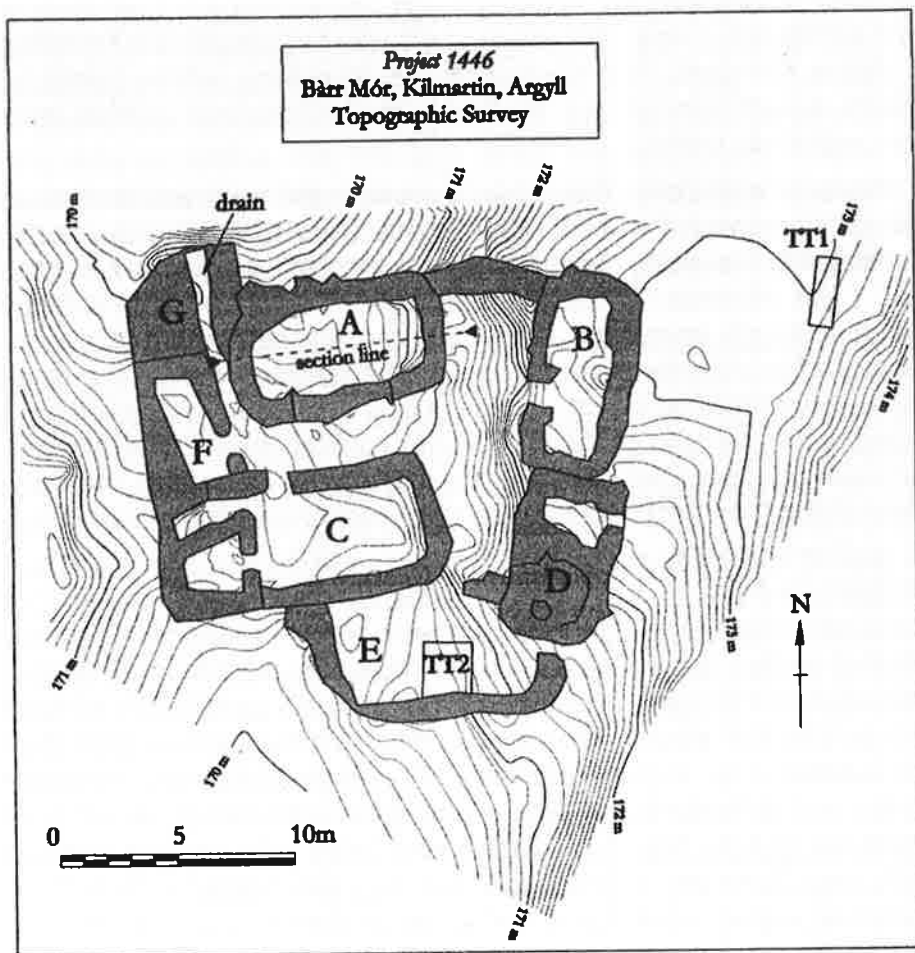


Figure 1 - Barr Mhor, Kilmartin, Argyll (author)

I was also interested in the site of Glennan at NM 85730 01660, which was mentioned in a charter dated 1240, when the property was granted to Gillascop MacGilchrist by Alexander II. Here the gable ends of a small tacksman's house survive to the south of two low, tumbled out buildings. Initially a topographic survey of the area revealed several new

features, including a small kiln. Excavation of the tacksmen's house and one of the two outer structures, took place in 2005 with the assistance of students from Glasgow University Archaeology Department and members of the Lorn Archaeological Society. This excavation showed that all the buildings were occupied in the 19th and 20th centuries and represent the very last stage in the occupation of the farm. Geophysical survey of the vicinity has, however, revealed the presence of the foundations of several further stone-built structures towards the waterfall, that are not visible on the surface.

Fieldwalking in the hills to the south-east of Glennan has also revealed a rectangular platform, several shielings, areas of rig and furrow and earthen banks which show the intensive use of these hills in the past for cultivation as well as for pasture. Without excavation of these features it is impossible to say whether they are medieval or later in date, but this work so far clearly shows that more evidence for rural settlement and cultivation can be found through intensive fieldwork.

Other areas of interest include the grazing land above Carnasserie Castle which I was kindly shown round by Rosemary Campbell. There are many structures here, previously unrecorded by archaeologists, including shielings, banks and enclosures which again indicate a more intensive use of the land in earlier times.

Further topographic surveys were carried out at Blarantibert, Ormaig and Kilmory as a pre-cursor to possible excavation, although it has not been possible to carry this out at present. Some limited geophysical survey was also carried out at the site of Caol Chaoruinn, a possible ruined tower house at Torran (NM 87830 04490) which could date from some time between the 14th and the 16th centuries. This was done to examine whether there was any evidence for outer structures clustered around the remains of the tower house and unfortunately none were found. A secondary research theme, which followed on from the work at Glennan was to look at other pre-19th century, tacksmen's houses which survive in the area.

Surviving ruins at Old Poltalloch, Kilbride House (Rhudle) and Cragenterve mill have been rapidly recorded, in order to highlight the presence of these non Listed structures in the landscape and to record their current state of preservation. Also a ruined structure at Raslie was thought to be possibly a substantial pre-18th century house.

This research so far has highlighted that there are medieval sites in the landscape which have yet to be identified and dated. It is hoped that some of these will prove to be medieval in date and thus add to our knowledge of our rural past in the pre-Improvement period.

Author's note

I would like to thank Historic Scotland, the Forestry Commission, the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland and the Hunter Archaeological Trust for their contributions towards funding the fieldwork. I would also like to thank the Forestry Commission for permission to excavate at Barr Mor and Mr & Mrs McNair at Stroneskar Farm for allowing me to excavate the out buildings at Glennan. The lairds house at Glennan was excavated with the financial and physical assistance of Dr Hugh Willison and family.

PINE MARTENS

A. Keharne

I became aware of Pine Martens (*Martes martes*) in the middle eighties when I was still living in the Poltalloch woods. Charmingly playful, with fur varying most dramatically from fluffy cream to woolly dark brown they could be glimpsed peeking out from behind a gatepost or the edge of bushes. They were curious, yet alarmist as they frisked about, and made off immediately on any noise or movement made by an observer. Entertaining, certainly, but their presence was always the occasion for sounds of alarm and warning from neighbouring birds, blackbirds and thrushes in particular, who could be heard clucking their disapproval of these intruders, or calling out in distress.

Since moving into Lochgilphead two years ago I have seen some red squirrels but no martens. However, I have found what is certainly a pine marten scat or dropping in the back garden. Now I am torn between keenness to see a pine marten again for myself and distress at the implications of the predator in suburban Lochgilphead. But I suppose that won't be new.



Figure 1 - drawing of pine marten (SNH education website)

D. Batty, Society President, adds: "in Argyll they have spread during recent years making use of the conifer plantations. Their droppings are seen much more commonly than the animals themselves. Droppings are often seen along forestry tracks. However evidence of their spread and distribution is often through road casualties. I have heard of one getting into a rubbish skip, presumably for food, and not being able to get out. It was rescued by somebody putting a plank of wood in it for it to run up. They will come for food to people's gardens. I believe they are very fond of jam sandwiches! They are a successful animal because they eat a whole range of food and are quite adaptable."

Pine martens are cat sized members of the weasel family with long bodies (65-75cm) covered with dark brown fur. They have a large creamy white throat patch which is often tinged with orange, big dark eyes and large rounded ears. Pine martens are excellent climbers with sharp, gripping claws and a long bushy tail for balance. They can leap over 3 metres from branch to branch and sometimes look as if they are

flying between the trees. They bound along the ground rather than walk.

The pine marten's ideal home is in native woodland although they live in many other places, including conifer plantations and rocky hill-sides. A pine marten's home range is dependent to a large extent on the quantity of woodland cover. Males occupy larger areas than females, and where woodland cover is scarce, the average size of a male's home range is 1500ha. In areas of extensive forest cover the figure is around 425ha. They patrol their areas and leave droppings on the tops of large stones and in other places where they can easily be seen, to warn off intruders. They use the same well worn paths again and again. They make their breeding nests among rocks, in a hollow tree or in a bird or squirrel's nest. They have up to five young which are born in April. Pine martens also have a few temporary resting places (dens) within the area in which they live which they use from time to time.

Food and feeding

Pine martens are very agile and have good eyesight, excellent hearing, and a keen sense of smell, all of which help them to find their prey. They are usually solitary animals and hunt alone. They sleep in their favourite den for much of the day, preferring to hunt at night. Pine martens catch most of their food on the ground including small mammals such as wood mice, voles, young hares and rabbits. They also eat birds, frogs, insects and carrion. They can chase red squirrels and birds such as tits and wrens through the tree tops. Any birds eaten are taken from nests. If a group of small birds spot a pine marten they become very agitated and make a lot of noise until it disappears. This is called mobbing. Pine martens eat fruit and berries at times, especially if animal food is hard to find. They are normally shy and hard to spot but in areas where there are many pine martens they sometimes appear at bird tables.

Pine martens and humans

Foxes, wild cats and golden eagles occasionally kill pine martens but their main enemy has been humans. At the beginning of this century pine martens were very close to becoming extinct in Scotland. Only a small number survived in the far north-west. The situation for the pine marten was particularly bad during the 19th century. Gamekeepers

trapped and killed hundreds of pine martens because they ate game birds and poultry. Pine martens were also killed for their fur which was at one time an important export from Scotland to the rest of Europe.

Another problem for pine martens was the destruction of most of their woodland habitat. Thousands of years ago a large part of the Highlands of Scotland was covered with pine and birch forests. Gradually this forest disappeared, partly due to exploitation by man and partly, it is believed, due to climatic change. As it became colder wetter and windier it became much harder for natural regeneration to take place. Grazing by sheep and deer then stopped any new trees which did regenerate from growing to replace those that had been removed. By the 1950s much of this natural forest had gone.

Pine martens today

In Scotland the number of pine martens continues to increase and they are now plentiful in some areas. Since 1988 it has been against the law to kill a pine marten deliberately.

Further destruction of the pine marten's natural habitat is being prevented as people work to protect those areas of native woodland that remain, to increase their size and to plant new woods. Pine martens will travel long distances and suddenly appear in areas where they were extinct. They have also been successfully reintroduced to some forests, e.g. Glentworth in Dumfries and Galloway.

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BASKING SHARKS

E.Tyler

Towards the end of August/beginning September the first hints of Autumn are noticeable on land - birch and rowan leaves starting to turn, berries ripening..... and in the sea another harvest being harvested: plankton. Harvested by the second largest fish in the ocean: the basking shark. This season - 2005 - I ask the ferrymen of the Tarbert-Portavadie ferry if the sharks have come back to their usual haunt around Glenan Bay north of the entrance to Portavadie. If you're lucky you can spot their dorsal fin, possibly their tail fin as well as it swishes from side to side. The ferrymen have spotted a young one this year feeding beside an adult (its mother?). Minke whales, as well - though these are after fish rather than plankton.

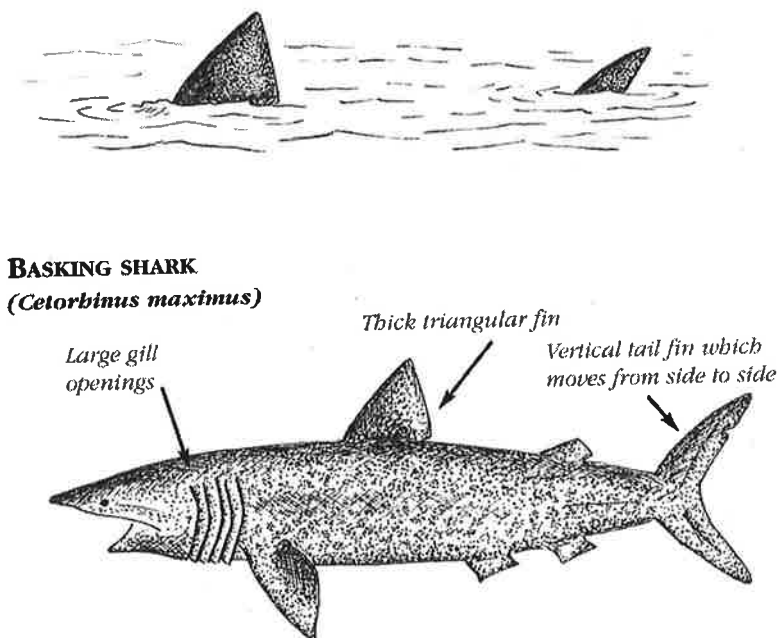


Figure 1 - drawings of basking sharks including what one is likely to see from the surface (Jay Butler and Anna Levin, from their guidebook "Was it a Whale?", Brown and Whittaker Pub. 1999)

I've been talking to folk in Tarbert. Duncan Henderson, who owns the post office and garage, remembers as a child seeing them down at the Pier House on the Skipness Estate, "so many you you could practically walk out across the water on them". Another man I meet remembers seeing dozens of them around the Arran coast - again, when he was a boy. Both men say that some time during the 60's/ 70's they all disappeared, only to make a recent, if tentative, comeback.

Someone else remembers seeing one off Tarbert Pier. Childhood memories again. It is good to see them back. Not just part of village folklore, but a real, living creature swimming just offshore.

Last year I saw over 20 of them off the Coll coast. What interested me more than anything was the thick soup of plankton they were swimming in. A veritable "slick" of material obvious even from a distance - an oily viscous patch distinct from the ripply water around it. It was also interesting to watch these great fish feeding with a slow swishing of their great tail. You can tell its body is swinging from side to side as its dorsal fin keeps changing direction. It concentrates on the soup, and turns to head back into it if it reaches the edge.

It is this prominent fin that gives rise to the fish's local names: Kintyre Scots "sell-fish" (sail fish) and Tarbert Gaelic "seòldair" (sailor). Angus Martin records these names in his excellent book *Fish and Fisherfolk of Kintyre, Lochfyneside, Gigha and Arran* (see review in Kist 66). He describes the shark fisheries established at various times in the Firth of Clyde. During the 18th Century it was harpooned for its oil-rich liver. Thomas Pennant, in "*A Tour in Scotland and Voyage to the Hebrides*" (1772) describes in detail shark fishing from Arran.

This practice was revived in modern times by Anthony Watkins who established an oil-processing factory at Carradale in 1938. By 1946 he was employing local fishermen to crew three harpoon-boats and a steam drifter converted to serve as a floating factory.

As recently as the late 1970's an Ayrshire fisherman was shark fishing as a seasonal alternative to trawling, and he continued to do this until 1993 when his vessel was broken up under the government's decommissioning scheme.

Martin has spoken to many fishermen & former fishermen and their observations of the past are of value to shark researchers today. Fishermen believe that in the winter the Clyde basking sharks - surface sightings of which cease during this time - "lie ticking over" on the seabed in deep water. This is because, during the 70's and 80's, with the advent of high-powered deep water herring and hake fisheries, sharks were frequently lifted from the seabed in the Clyde, particularly in Oct. and Nov. (including "north of Tarbert harbour.")

Longer-term recollections suggest fluctuations in shark populations independent of any fishery. Donald McIntosh of Carradale maintains that "there were very few coming in" when he first went to the fishing in 1907. "It was after the First World War, that's when they became more numerous."

Martin believes the shark population is now in serious decline (p.109, book published 2004). He mentions large shoals which people used to see - notably in 1952 in Loch Fyne and in either 1978 or 1979 at the mouth of Carradale harbour - but which are no longer evident .

Fortunately, each year since 1998, the Marine Conservation Society has been producing an annual report which collates all sightings gathered from the general public - thereby systemising all sightings across the UK.

The report for 2005 states that regionally since 1998, there has been an increasing trend in Scottish reports and a corresponding decrease in the southwest of England. (The southwest used to be the region with the most sightings). This trend is dramatic - in 1998, 85.2% of total sightings were in the S.W. and only 9.2% in Scotland; in 2005 (figures incomplete) it is 77.7% in Scotland and only 13% in the S.W. The Scottish figure represents 539 actual sightings: the highest figure for any region since 1998. The figure is interesting when one compares it to a total of only 3 Scottish sightings in 1999. This turnaround is reflected in the fact that this year more sightings were reported in May for Scotland than in the S.W.- whereas traditionally there was a higher abundance of sharks in the S.W. with a progression north throughout the year.

As regards Scottish sightings, there is a greater spread of sightings this year than in 2004. The north coast of Scotland has seen a notable

increase in sightings which stretch along the mainland coast and north-west of the Shetland Islands. There was also an increase in East Scotland along the North Aberdeenshire coast (however promotion work in these areas may account for these rises).

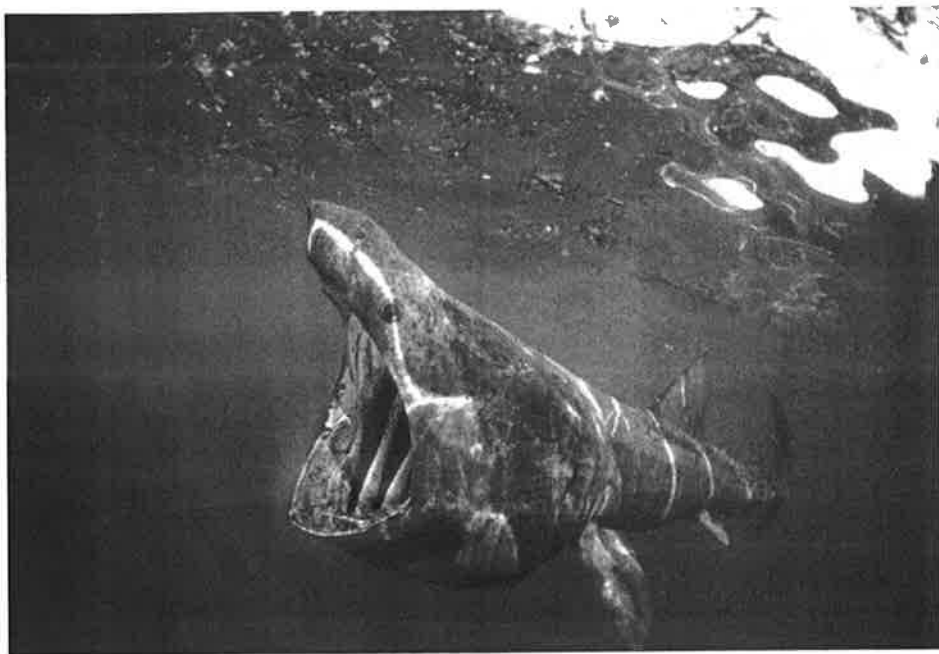


Figure 2 - basking shark (Gavin Parsons)

The report does not provide any answers to this shift of sightings into northern areas of the UK. notably Scotland. I would like to put forward the idea that it may have something to do with Climate Change - which has already been proved to have had a dramatic effect on the breeding success of puffins in the U.K. (warming waters have led to a collapse in sand eel populations, which in turn have led to the breeding failure of puffin colonies- sand eels being their main food). Warming water/change in currents may have had an effect on plankton levels in both SW England and Scotland (i.e. they have become much higher further

north). Have shoals of basking sharks been migrating north to capitalise on the changed conditions? Hopefully possible explanations are currently being researched.

In the meantime this has resulted in quite healthy numbers of basking sharks being reported in the Firth of Clyde. The Marine Conservation Society publish on the web a map collating all basking shark reports sent to them between 1987-2004. The coast is broken up into 10x10 km cells. Most of the cells between the Kintyre and West Arran coasts, to the north of Arran into lower Loch Fyne, and to the east of Arran, record between 10-50 sightings (the west Kintyre coast and Sound of Jura have sightings, but only between 1-5).

There are similar 10-50 records for parts of the Ayrshire coast. The only "hotter" spot in the whole of Scotland are the waters N.W. of Mull including Coll, Rhum and Eigg. So the Firth of Clyde is a good place for shark spotting.

So what of the future for our "gentle giants" of the west coast? As a postscript to my conversations with local Tarbert folk, I went across to Portavadie on the ferry in the hope of seeing the sharks- but no luck! I did however see plenty of stranded jellyfish on the Glennan beach- presumably they were after similar plankton to the sharks. However, I am heartened to hear from Mr. Henderson that the school bus (which he operates) has stopped just outside Skipness to watch a basking shark close inshore. It is heartening to hear that the younger generation have been introduced to this great creature. But what of their children - will they see it?

At least the shark has been protected since 1981 within a UK 12 mile coastal limit (though not yet in Northern Ireland or Eire for some reason). However, one worries that the warming oceans resulting from Climate Change might have some nasty surprises in store that may make conditions worse for a whole host of marine creatures, including the basking shark (the greatest current threat worldwide is the high market price the fins fetch on the Asian market.)

I list some interesting facts: the basking shark (*Cetorhinus maximus*) can reach 11m. in length and weigh up to 7 tonnes. They have tiny teeth and

feed on small copepod zoo plankton. In order to take in enough food they must filter c.2000 cubic metres of water an hour: equivalent to an Olympic size swimming pool of water. It can take 12-20 years for one to reach maturity. Gestation may take from 18 months to 3 years and a litter is thought to consist of 5-6 pups.

An appeal now to report sightings: if you have seen a shark in local waters (or indeed anywhere in UK waters) last summer and have not reported it, log on the MCS website and do so. If you see one next summer, ditto! (www.mcs.uk.org).

Jean-Luc Solandt of MCS adds: "sightings in Scotland have been increasing year on year since about 2000. To see detailed information on the increased importance of Scottish waters for the UK basking shark population, visit:

http://www.mcsuk.org/basking_sharks/basking_shark.php?title=2005%20annual%20report

and click on the 'download report' section. In other pages on our site, there is a hotspot map which shows the density of sightings for the UK, and visitors can 'home in' onto the Argyll area. Mauvis Gore at the University of Glasgow station on the island of Cumbrae, Millport is doing research on Basking sharks in the Clyde."

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Marian Pallister, *Lost Argyll - Argyll's Lost Heritage*, Birlinn, 2005

The subject of this book is heritage as evidenced by visible remains on the ground, people's memories, photographs and other archive material.

Inevitably, Argyll being a rural county (which the author has split into six districts - each the subject of a chapter) and the span of history being 10,000 years, not all periods can be covered in the same detail. What shines out in this book is the period of the Industrial Revolution and its aftermath. The author's journalistic background is apparent as she is always reminding us of the legacy of history - of how it affects us now, in the present (for example, she looks in detail at the influence of the American Polaris Submarine Base on Dunoon). She has a passionate concern for ordinary people and shows how their lives - in whatever part of Argyll they lived - were affected by the comings and goings of industry. In fascinating detail she looks at the growth and demise of gunpowder works, bobbin-making mills, whisky distilleries (plus various aerated waters), quarries and mines - to name but a few.

Transport also comes under the spotlight; particularly, again, during the Industrial Revolution, which brought innovation both on land (the steam railway) and at sea (the steamer). She shows how such innovation made some of the above industries possible (for example, the saltpetre for the Kames and Millhouse gunpowder works on Cowal came on steamships from South America). She also shows how these forms of transport came to Argyll mainly due to the demands of the fledgling Victorian tourist industry.

There is another aspect of Argyll's heritage that is extensively covered: the influence of both the Early Christian and Medieval Church. The book is extensively illustrated by photographs, images from old postcards, maps and drawings which show us what is now gone forever, and what remains.

The District of mid Argyll is well covered in Chapter 5 but the author shows us how our area needs to be seen in the context of the whole of the Argyll region, whose position throughout most of its history has been one of rural isolation. That said, its remarkably long and often sheltered coastline (including the great Clyde Firth) has, as the author constantly reminds us, caused the degree of isolation to fluctuate over time. A Celtic Saint sails across from Ireland in his curragh, centuries later boats ply to and from rocky coves below remote charcoal platforms to feed an iron foundry, emigrants from the islands sail to America, an American Naval base is established in Holy Loch...and so the movements of people, together with their goods and their beliefs and ideas, continues.

The Marion Campbell Library - at Kilmartin House Museum

Society members are reminded that the library facility at Kilmartin House Museum is open to use by the public for reference. The library opened in 2001 and houses an impressive collection of books on archaeology, Scottish History, natural history and the environment. Many of the books were part of a bequest from Marion Campbell, others are owned by the society itself. Some years ago the collection was listed. The Museum is currently undertaking a project to update this list and make an index system so that readers are able to identify material easily. We have also recently taken in a large new collection of books, which has made updating the catalogue a priority. The work is being undertaken by a volunteer, Sheila Clark who is a retired school teacher. The Museum is most grateful to Ms Clark for her efforts in this somewhat daunting task.

Kilmartin House Museum is very happy to receive users during normal office hours, although during the cataloguing work the library may be closed to the public from time to time. The library also houses an impressive table and carved shelves by craftsman Martin Murphy, which are well worth a visit in their own right.

Sharon Webb

Director and Curator of Archaeology

Kilmartin House Museum

January 2006

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