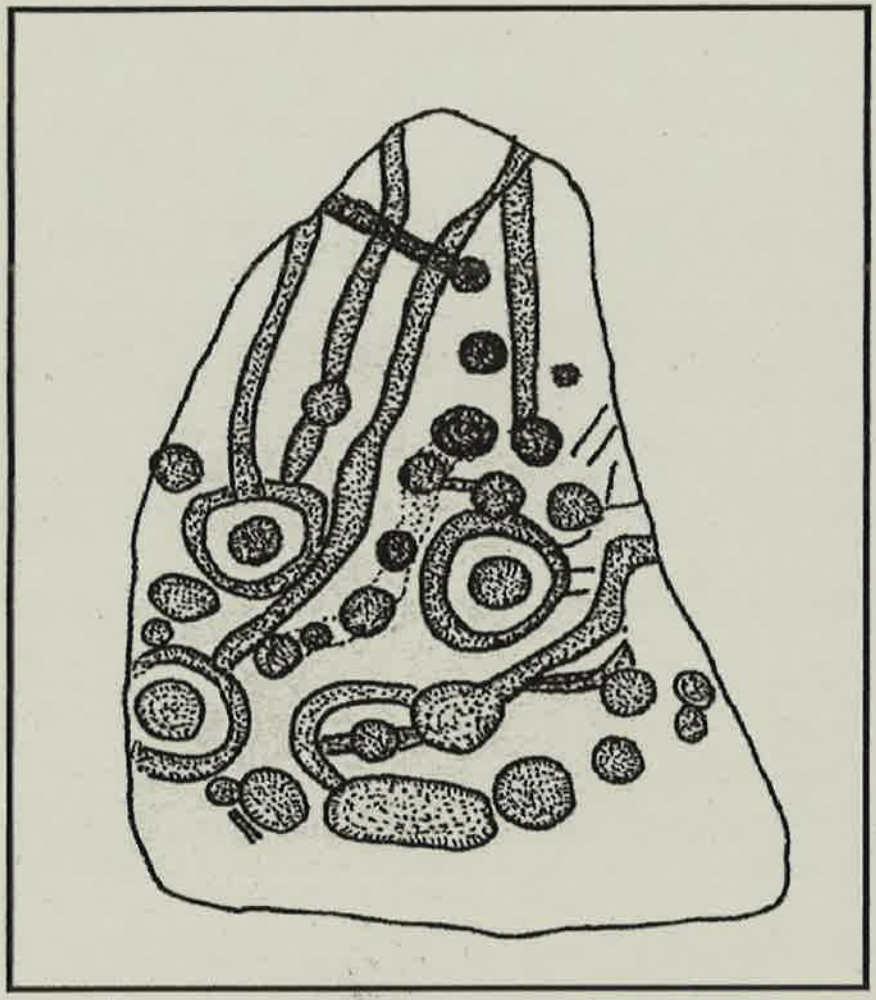

Glasvaar decorated boulder

S. Beckensall

KIST · 73

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Editorial

In this issue we highlight work in progress by a group in Tarbert who are seeking to conserve the former royal castle which has featured in many previous issues. Readers are welcome to contact the group and get involved - just get in touch with the editor who lives in Tarbert.

On the natural history side, we include the transcript of a fascinating talk given at our AGM on the snow leopard by a resident of Tayvallich; also an updated report on the bottlenose dolphin which frequents our shores and is currently the focus of a Scottish-wide project. Any sightings of these beautiful creatures should be reported (various means of contacting are to be found on p. 25).

Contributions, as always, are welcome from regular and irregular contributors alike. We are particularly looking for contributions on the following subjects: ecology, natural history, geology and history. So, if you lecture or have an interest in one or more of these subjects please put pen to paper or, rather, your fingers on the keyboard. Computer-generated articles save me a lot of time and effort. Text is best sent as attachments in Word but without any embedded commands (no footnotes or page numbers) using the Tahoma font, justified and with indented paragraphs, and with references simply listed at the end. Please send pictures, drawings and photographs in jpeg format as attachments.

Thanks to P. Fox Denham on his first stint as picture editor; also to R. Pine and S.Webb for their usual hard work.

Note on cover

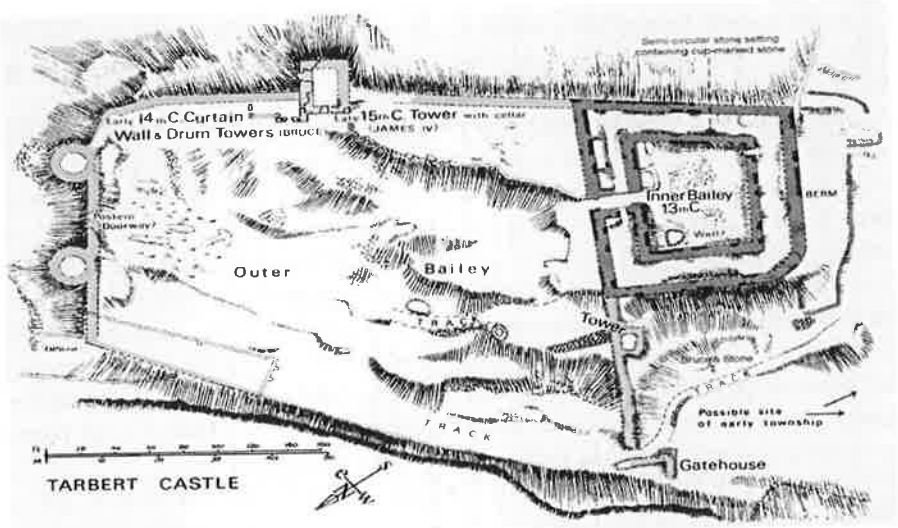
The cover illustration is a drawing of a decorated boulder which has been built into the wall of a farmhouse at Glasvaar, S.E. of Loch Ederline.
It appears in a book by Stan Beckensall which is reviewed later in the magazine (readers are also referred to his article on page 9).

Correction to Kist 72, p. 15

An excavation report has, in fact, been published for Dunadd: by Alan Lane and Ewan Campbell, Oxbow, 2000. The full title is : **Dunadd, an Early Dalriadic Capital.** The site has, in fact, been excavated three times; there are references to the older ones in the Inventory.
A spindle whorl was recovered from the site (illustrated in the report on p.194 and described on p.195).

TARBERT CASTLE CONSERVATION

C. Bowd.



Introduction

As most readers of the Kist will be aware, action to conserve and open up 'Bruce's Castle' to the public has resumed. This latest activity has come about with the formation of Tarbert Conservation Initiative, a sub-group of the Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust (TSCT), who now own the site.

The former Tarbert Castle Trust was instrumental in starting the programme back in 1990, opening up footpaths, installing access steps and providing interpretation.

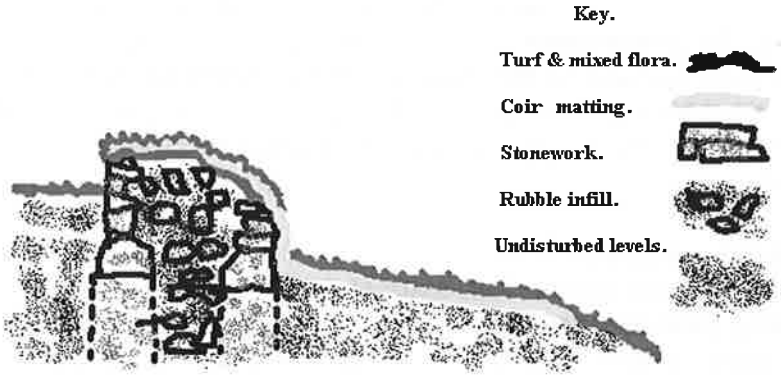
For various reasons this initiative tapered off, leaving the site to become once again taken over by undergrowth, bracken and trees.

Present works and care of the site

This latest venture is happening at a time when resources are a little easier to tap into. Over thirty years has elapsed since the castle was virtually free of invasive vegetation, this being mainly due to animal grazing management at the time. The most prominent part of the castle, the tower house, which most people refer to as Bruce's Castle but in reality belongs to the time of James IV, is covered in ivy and appears to

have been since at least the late Victorian period. It is the consolidation, and conservation, of this structure that poses the major challenge.

Regarding the rest of the site, it is common to undertake a feasibility study and draw up a forward plan. However, with the density of vegetation cover, clearance of the site was seen as a priority before any in depth surveys could be undertaken. After much consultation with Historic Scotland (the site is a Scheduled Ancient Monument), attention was given to what is believed to be the earliest phase visible on the site, the courtyard-plan stone footings forming the offset square of the inner bailey. Clearance during several volunteer work sessions throughout 2006, amounting to over 400 person hours, revealed the walls as shown in the original survey undertaken by the Royal Commission in August 1966, (see the plan, a simplified updated version from the 1990 information booklet The Royal Castle of Tarbert). With removal of the vegetation cover came the risk of erosion and damage from rain, frost and human activity. With this in mind, the steeper slopes and wall heads were re-seeded with grass and biodegradable coir netting pinned in place so as to consolidate all, (see section drawing).



Cross section of consolidated wall. C.Bowd. Aug. 2006.

Where damage from fallen trees and the passage of human feet had taken place, the voids were filled with combinations of sandbags and turf. This action has also been followed on sections of the later curtain wall. Tree roots and invasive shrubs have been cut off at ground level and poisoned so as to allow them to rot in situ, thereby reducing further stress on the walling. As the re-seeded grass and fresh growth appears the coir netting meantime will slowly degrade, to reveal the wall faces,

at the same time allowing the slopes to be managed initially by strimming.

In the future it is hoped that animal grazing will be reintroduced, a far better, environmentally sound and labour saving system. Where bracken is persistent, spraying the young shoots in early summer may be deemed a necessary expedient, but one we understand will not effect other plants and animals. By the time you read this article it is to be hoped that further clearance will have been carried out in the fenced-off area round and about the tower house, along with removal of a huge sycamore fronting the two drum towers. This work is particularly necessary in order to give access for maintenance to the masonry.

The outer bailey and the area below the castle to the southwest has already been cut, thanks to funding from Scottish Natural Heritage and the Forestry Commission, the latter undertaking the work. However, due to concerns about the underlying archaeology no vehicles are allowed on the site, or any fires, therefore the timber and brash is to be chipped where possible. To that end, a compromise has been sought with Historic Scotland to allow us to use the former entrance track into the castle to gain access to these areas. This track is in all probability Victorian, although an earlier date cannot be ruled out at this stage.

To avoid damage to the track, a mesh covering will probably be laid and a quad bike and trailer used in order to disperse the weight. It is hoped that this track will eventually be reinstated as the primary route into the castle.

The Tower House.

Concern over the perilous state of the remains of the tower house was what prompted this fresh intervention at the castle. Visual inspections, coupled with eyewitness accounts and the scrutiny of historic photographs, showed that the masonry was becoming ever more unstable and that parts had indeed collapsed within recent years. Both Historic Scotland and ourselves concluded that immediate action was necessary if we were not to loose the structure in a catastrophic collapse. Engineering and architectural surveys are to be acted upon. Initially, along with the undergrowth clearance, the ivy cladding the tower will be cut away at ground level and the remainder allowed to die off. This will be followed by propping up of the lower part of the tower along with some propping of door and window apertures as a prelude to scaffolding being erected.

Tarbert Castle, Tower House, courtesy of P. Fox-Denham 2007

The aim here is to make the ruin safe and enable access for a detailed survey prior to consolidation work proceeding.

The objective is to stabilise the ruin and enable better access for the public. As to what form such access will take at this stage remains uncertain, but possibly a viewing platform along with entry to the cellar is envisaged.

Whilst Historic Scotland has put up the lion's share for this interim work, the funding for the actual consolidation and future presentation of the tower house remains to be sought. In the meantime, the above steps are going in the right direction and can only be viewed as positive, but when looked at with past history in mind, this will really only get us back to where we were some fifteen years ago or so when similar action was taken. We will in effect be repeating previous actions. The big difference this time around is that much has already been achieved, and carried through on the site as a whole, with Historic Scotland's advice and assistance in the form of financial aid. Additional to this is the feeling of optimism as a direct result of this fresh interest. For the foreseeable future the security fencing will remain round the tower house whilst work progresses.

Future research plans

The now-cleared site offers opportunities for research. Many questions arisen due to the fortuitous survival of the accounts relating to the castle in the Exchequer Rolls from the time of Robert 1st and ably translated by the late Miss Marion Campbell of Kilberry, (Kist 34). Where, for instance, was the lade and millpond alluded to? (Kist 65). Where and what was the 'fosse'? And where was the medieval 'burgh' sited? Locating and plotting these features on the ground has proved difficult in the past due not only to vegetation cover, but the unavailability of non-invasive techniques and of specialists to interpret the results. Consultations with Dr. David Caldwell of the National Museums of Scotland and Dr John Raven of Historic Scotland, among others, have shown an interest in the research possibilities.

There are obvious benefits that archaeological excavations would bring to our understanding of the site, but these have to be tempered with the potential harm they could cause, not to mention procuring the necessary funding! Now, though, the way is open for non-intrusive geophysical survey. Results from such a survey could well illuminate features buried beneath the earth. Does the medieval burgh lie in the shadow of the castle, downhill of the entrance track? Is the hollow over which the entrance track is carried by a stone causeway the western end of the fosse which possibly fronted the berm, and has later been in-filled? If so, then it might explain why the cutting of the fosse cost virtually twice that of the millpond and lade, the former presumably having been cut through the living rock, the latter most likely involving excavation and deepening of the marshy valley bottom to the southeast of the castle. This is only speculation at this stage, but it would be in keeping with medieval defence practices and technology elsewhere. Results from any form of geophysical survey would, ideally, require confirmation by excavation with damage limitation being the name of the game. Meanwhile, consultation is continuing.

Ecological considerations

Tarbert Castle is not just a historic site and modern-day leisure area. Within the boundary of the Scheduled Ancient Monument and around its periphery are varied and rich habitats for wildlife and flora. There exists in close proximity marsh, moor, scrub, domestic gardens and woodland along with pleasant open green swards. Added to this is the monument itself, the crevices between the stones providing shelter

for lizards, voles, mice and the like; while the wall-tops, with their lime rich mortar and well drained soil, offer the perfect location for a myriad of wild flowers. All these habitats taken together have given rise to a healthy population of adders, which eat the frogs living in the marshes.

The tower house, we know, provides a roost for barn owls, and there is almost certainly a nest site, possibly in the inaccessible slope below or to the north of the tower house. Some would say that in clearing the site of vegetation that we have reduced its habitat value. But we have to keep in mind Tarbert Castle's foremost status as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. That is not to say we can't have our cake, and eat it! With the removal of the damaging invasive vegetation, much of which was not native to the area, we have in effect prepared a blank canvas.

Consequences of clearance

A bonus of vegetation clearance has been the rediscovery of lost features, such as the entrance track and the large stone known in local oral tradition as the burial place of Robert the Bruce's horse! The latter can be taken with a pinch of salt. But it is interesting to note how the entrance track is routed to pass close by the stone, possibly in order to answer Victorian antiquarian curiosity. Other features have come to our notice, previously unrecorded. Within the confines of the inner and outer walls of the southeast side of the inner bailey is a semi circular setting of stones, one stone of which exhibits a large oval cup-mark. Further investigation is needed to ascertain the nature of the stone setting, the cup-mark possibly being the result of use of the stone for some mundane domestic chore during the occupancy of the castle.

A further result of clearance is how obvious the British Telecom (B.T.) supply line has become that crosses the lower part of the site. Historic Scotland noted this some time ago along with a number of television aerials and satellite dishes, some of which are within the land now owned by TSCT. Negotiations are ongoing to have the B.T. line rerouted and the other paraphernalia re-sited in an endeavour to enhance the view from the site and reduce danger to the public.

Finally damage caused by rabbit burrowing on the site was formerly difficult to monitor. Now, with the undergrowth removed, monitoring will be made much easier. At the same time it is hoped that the rabbit population will be kept in check naturally, as the young are more exposed to birds of prey. Times ahead look good for the raptors!

Conclusion and thanks

To date, the TCI has worked hard to achieve its aims to protect the site and at the same time provide accessibility to the public. As an asset to the village, to tourism, and as an aid to understanding our local heritage there is no doubt. As a site of national importance in the history of Scotland, again there can be no doubt.

Many thanks must go to the various funding bodies and agencies who have provided not only financial aid and sound advice, but in the case of the Forestry commission, labour too. Additionally, we are indebted to E. S. Clark, former Honorary Secretary of the Tarbert Castle Trust (and of the Kist for that matter), for his gift of land adjoining the cliff face. Obviously there are many more groups and individuals playing their part both in a professional and voluntary capacity. Anyone wishing to know more about the project, or to become part of it, should in the first instance contact:
Robert McPhail, Director TSCT. Email: robert@sonamargfsnet.co.uk or telephone him on 01880-820643.

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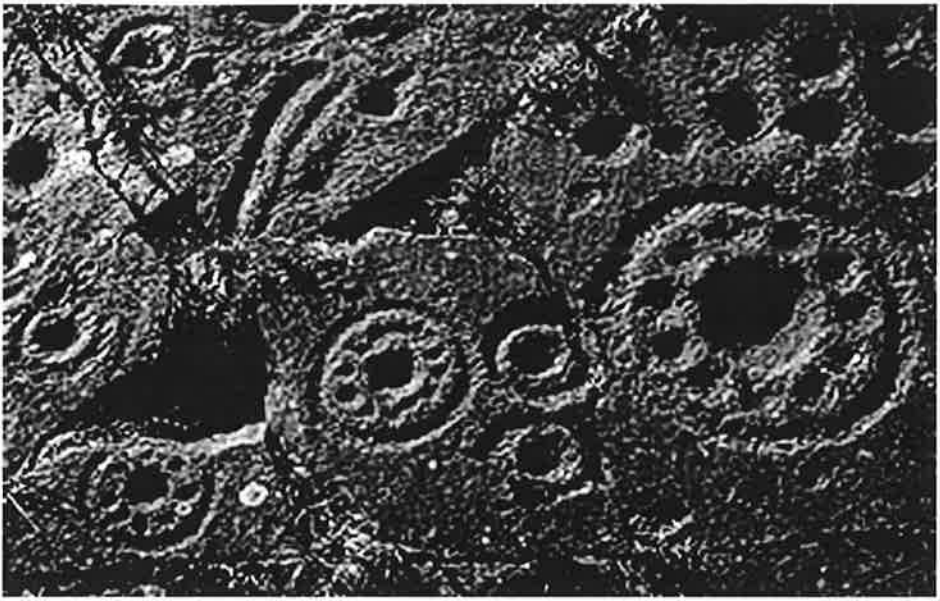


Ormaig rock art (photo from Kilmartin website)

KILMARTIN ROCK ART

S. Beckensall

Editor's note

The following article was originally published in 2006. It was prompted by the publication of **The Prehistoric Rock Art of Kilmartin**, "his last word on the subject", as he puts it (see review on p. 26).

The Kilmartin area of Argyll is very important to my thesis, and together with my detailed work in Northumberland, Cumbria and County Durham, along with an extensive working knowledge of other British rock art sites, it stands as a wonderful microcosm both of information, preservation and display.

The glen has a great range of monuments, some of which have rock-art incorporated, such as the Temple Wood spiral and concentric rings, the decorated standing stone settings and the

burials. All this shows the importance of motifs in ritual, with the addition of unique axes superimposed on cups at Nether Largie and the use of linear motifs on the re-used Badden cist side-slab, echoed by a recent discovery on Fylingdales Moor, north Yorkshire.

The Neolithic and early Bronze Age people saw their world as circular: their houses, monuments in the form of circular ditches, of wooden posts, of stones and the kerbs of burial mounds all reflecting their vision in an inclusive and exclusive image, itself visible in the sky at night time and day time. Circles were places which the scattered farming, hunting and herding communities could focus on as centres for trade, for a chat, for a celebration of their identity and for those ceremonies repeated to the point of becoming ritual. That is where the ancestors were, obvious in the large cairns.

However, what stands out is the way rock-art is placed in the landscape around this glen, for this points to the intermediate heights of metamorphic outcrop rock overlooking the glen as having been of crucial importance to a partly nomadic community, contrasting with the static monuments below. Their position emphasises the importance of trackways, of spring sources, of so many links across country to the flat valley below. Think for a moment of Glassvar, Achnabreck or Cairnbaan, and one can see at once the importance of the siting of rock-art locally.

It is only recently that Paul and Barbara Brown and I have added new sites, mostly with simple cup-marks, to the picture, sites to the east and west parallel to the valley that indicate other trails; future research should concentrate on finding more of these, for we cannot assume that all have been found. It means getting out on foot and examining places less familiar.

The rock art in monuments here is relatively simple, but remember that the act of making one cup mark was of great importance to the people who used a hard stone pick to do this. We can be overwhelmed by the artistry on the large panels, some of the finest in Britain, but we must not forget that the cup is the most common symbol. The people who made the motifs had basic symbols and motifs to work with, but brought individual ap-

proaches to their designs. Their starting point was always what was there already on the rock of their choice – the shape of the panel, the cracks, surface undulations, glacial grooves, and they worked their designs into that, each producing something different no matter how limited the symbols. Drawings must reflect this. One only has to compare the rosettes of Ormaig with the horned spiral at Achnabreck, the flow of grooves through concentric rings at Blairbuie or the obsession with large and small cups at Kilmichael Glassary to appreciate the variety of approaches to design. All over Britain the basic symbols were the starting point for individual manipulation over hundreds of years.

Cup-and-ring mark at Achnabreck (photo from Kilmartin website)

I can see that a programme of well-planned excavation throughout Britain is necessary to examine some still-unanswered questions. There is today a great emphasis on 'management' and re-recording with new techniques such as laser-scanning. That is fine, but not to the exclusion of new work. What is also important in new research is that those who do it should see how much they owe the researchers of the past 200 years, and not to try to give the impression that they have invented the subject.

DECORATED STONE, KILLEAN

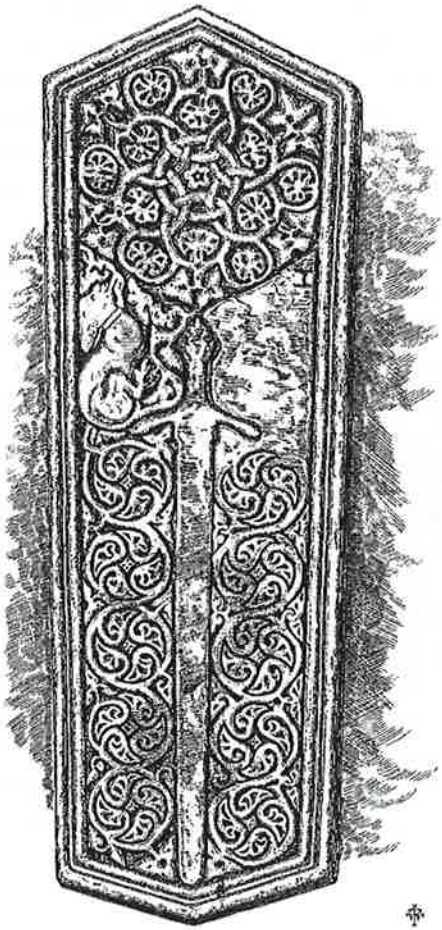
E. Tyler

Former parish church of Killean; note roofed aisle on north side of chancel

Leaning against the wall of a vault at the Medieval church of Killean, near Tayinloan, Kintyre, is a remarkable Medieval decorated gravestone.

First a note about the church itself. The church is dedicated to Saint Iain - hence Killean; in English St. John. The current church is on the promontory of A' Chleit, 2 miles to the south. Someone driving along the A83 could be excused for not noticing the old church because it is now roofless and covered in ivy, though the churchyard itself is still maintained. The double window in the east gable is evidence that this was once a fine building; indeed, once the finest parish church in Kintyre.

Within the burial vault of the MacDonalds of Largie (originally an aisle added to the north side of the chancel) are several slabs. One of these stood out, to Captain T.P. White, who published an extremely valuable volume known as **Archaeological Sketches in Scotland - District of Kintyre** in 1873. His sketches and accompanying text - commissioned by the Ordnance Survey - provide a vivid snapshot of sacred sites and monuments in the district. They are, in fact, far more than this : they show us an artist, responding to the artistry of others, sculptors in particular. This response is very much in evidence in the Captain's drawing of this particular stone (see sketch copied from his book). He describes it as among "the most elaborate and beautiful I've seen anywhere in the west". He continues : "round about it (the sword) the sculptor has let his chisel run into forms of the most exquisite grace and symmetry".



The act of sketching this stone has enabled the Captain to appreciate the sculptor's artistry on a deep level. I quote at length to show him literally following the line of the sculptor's chisel. He refers to "the running stems on either side (of the sword) - four leaves arranged spirally".

Then he notices the "blank space",

> "the only defect in the sculpture, due perhaps to the designer having been prevented by death or otherwise from finishing his work. On the opposite side of the sword this same pattern of circles passes into the tail of a grotesque creature, with a body like an ape's, a dragon's claw, and the face of a man, the lips rather protruded, and on his head, what I think, most resembles the peaked cap worn by fools or jesters in med. times... Could it have had reference to some jester in the service of the lord or chieftain here commemorated? Or, more probably, was it not a mere freak of the sculptor's fancy, after the manner of those queer grotesque figures of men and animals one sees so frequently introduced in the corbels, gargoyles and cornices of early Gothic buildings? Another offshoot of the creature's tail is carried up into a stem and leaves, which, like the blank panel on the other side of the sword, are so arranged as to leave room at the head of the slab for a hexagonal space, having one of its angles resting on the sword hilt. This space, again, is worked into a fresh pattern of interlaced stem - circles and foliage, with a boss or flower set like a gem in the centre....
>
> The lines of the carving on this slab are somewhat shallower and more delicate than usual, the effect of the whole suggesting lightness of hand combined with marvellous dexterity and precision. As for the way in which the curves are grouped their grace and power are magical, with the sort of witchery of effect only attainable by the curved line, and which these monkish sculptors of the west seem to have an inspiration in reality"

Having been "magicked" away by the sculpture, he is brought back to earth by the graffito in the black space namely the letter "H" carved by a "modern Goth..... doubtless seized on for a departed relative".

At least the stone is today protected from the weather, but its magic is barred from us by the locked gates of the vault, unless we read the Captain's words and look at his sketch.

A copy of **Archaeological Sketches in Scotland - District of Kintyre** is in the Marion Campbell library in Kilmartin House.

CILE BHRIDE, NORTH KINTYRE

E. Tyler

For years I had driven from Tarbert to Skipness and been drawn by the presence of an old chapel marked "Cile Bhride" on the O.S. map on the hillside above Kennacraig. I had heard that a dedication to Bhride (Bride, Brigit or Bridget), a Celtic goddess, meant that the site was possibly pre- Christian. However, from the road it looked far from ancient, with a line of pylons hard by and a spruce plantation immediately above.

View from the site looking south to West Loch Tarbert (burial enclosure to left)

Finally, early in June 2004, I cycled up towards it, joining the old road that used to run inland from Tarbert to Whitehouse (unlike the new road built close by the shore of the West Loch). The site lies above this road (now a track) and is in a state of abandonment. The rectangular former burial enclosure for the Campbells (dated 1799) is still clearly visible. A beech tree has fallen across it without causing much damage.

The older structure, which according to local tradition was once a chapel, is now invisible under rampant bracken, though when you get up close you can see the base of the wall. This consists of massive stones set length ways. The corners of the building are curved, not right-angled, a fact noted by both Captain T. P. White of the Ordnance Survey in his 1873 publication and by the compiler of the modern Inventory. They also mention a socket in a boulder just outside the chapel. In the Captain's day he described it thus: "just outside the east end I observed a pentagonal - shaped stone block about eight inches average width, and containing a long deep socket with a fragment of a pillar in it 2 feet high. This was probably an ancient cross." The pillar is not mentioned in the Inventory.

The former burial enclosure with older structure behind (not visible in photograph)

I was unable to locate the socket, possibly because the site was so overgrown.

The Captain also refers, around the pillar, to "some slight traces of what may have been more buildings here, or they may be due to old interments." Again, I could see no signs of these.

The boundary enclosure delineating the site of both enclosure and "chapel" is still visible. The east and north walls have been rebuilt relatively recently, possibly to separate in- bye pastures from "the hill" (which has been planted up by spruce). The west and south walls are still visible, though these have not been rebuilt in the same way. The entrance to the enclosure in the southern wall seems to mark the presence of an old track, roughly parallel to the old road but higher up, and this track leads to a spring which is marked on the Ordnance Survey map. The spring flows under a track, which is supported by stonework still in situ. A golden-ringed dragonfly was spotted here - and a horse fly heard and nearly felt! The spring itself is covered in primroses.

It was also heartening to see in the vicinity ash, oak, hazel and rowan - trees revered by the ancient Celts but sadly disappeared from many areas in Argyll. Could the spring itself be an ancient site of worship, which in later years led to the building nearby of a chapel dedicated to Bhride?

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Captain T.P. White, **Archaeological Sketches in Scotland - District of Kintyre**, 1873.

Argyll Inventory.

FILMING THE SNOW LEOPARD

M. Smith

Snow leopard (Pakistan)
courtesy Mark Smith

Editor's note

Those who attended our AGM in 2006 were privileged to be at a superb talk by Mark Smith, who lives with his wife and 2 children in Tayvallich. He has worked as a freelance wildlife cameraman for the past 12 years, mainly for the BBC natural history unit in Bristol. His work has taken him to about 20 different countries around the world from the Falkland Islands to the High Canadian arctic. He's also worked on 3 of David Attenborough's series, most recently the "Planet Earth" series. He specialises: "in filming in what I call "remote places"; more likely they're the places the BBC can't get anybody else to go to." The talk was about his most exciting trip of all: his search for the snow leopard.

I was fortunate enough to have already seen the particular episode of "Planet Earth" on the television that forms the climax of the narrative below. It was the most incredible wildlife sequence I have ever seen – one that had me riveted to the screen. The account below is an edited transcript of Mark's copiously illustrated talk.

It all began with a phone call from BBC producers on their "Planet Earth" series asking if Mark was interested in going to film snow leopards in Pakistan the following winter.

They'd had a tip off that there was a location near to the Afghanistan border where snow leopards were being seen regularly close to a town called Chitral. He immediately agreed to do the shoot, even though only 8 cameramen had ever caught it on film and then only from long distance. A colleague of his had just spent 5 years making a snow leopard film in northern India and had nearly died of altitude sickness in the process.

After various incidents he and his team finally arrived in Chitral, a place that's cut off from the outside world for 6 months of the year and has historically been a law unto itself. Even now with an airport a whole month can go by without a single flight coming in because of bad weather. The proximity to Afghanistan means there's still a trade in snow leopard skins, and the film crew were offered some during the short time they were there. The man selling these pelts had a cousin living in Afghanistan who supplied him with pelts.

The crew's first task was to get a sequence of the rutting behaviour of the Markhor, a goat antelope that was the leopard's main prey, and hope that the leopard would be hanging around in the same area. They only had 6 weeks not 5 years like the previous filmmakers so they'd need a huge amount of luck.

They set up camp in a stone hut in Chitral Gol national park and recruited a team of 20 local watchers to help them track down the snow leopard. The watchers thought that the plan was mad but stuck with it because of the prospect of a 10,000 rupee reward.

The markhor live on precipitous cliffs but the valleys are so sheer that you can film from the other side of the valley & still be quite close. The crew filmed a fight between two younger males that lasted for 3 hours. At one point in the fight one markhor knocked the other off a 70ft sheer cliff and it fell onto rocks below. They were sure it was dead but a few minutes later it came walking up the cliff to resume fighting for another hour!

Halfway through their stay, with no success on the snow leopard front and morale low, Mark persuaded a reluctant team to come out and check for snow leopards. They scanned ridges and checked out snow leopard shaped rocks as they'd done for the previous 3 weeks. Nothing. Then he

looked upwards at a cliff towering above them and saw another snow-leopard shaped rock. This one got up and walked along the ridge.

Panic followed. He rushed to get the camera set up and got one shot as it disappeared behind a ridge. Someone came running along the track to tell them the leopard was heading for a cave it supposedly frequented. They ran up the valley and got there just in time to see it disappear inside the cave. They waited, hoping it would come out again before night time. Rain turned to snow.

A few markhor came walking along the cliff close to the cave and one dislodged a stone that went tumbling down to the river below. The snow leopard came out of her cave like a spider on a web. She saw the markhor and started to hunt in the now-thick blizzard. She stalked and missed one large markhor and then in the worst of the blizzard when the snowfall was too thick to film she killed a smaller markhor and dragged it back up to her cave. She fed on it until it got too dark to film.

Back at the hut the crew and watchers enjoyed a celebration, but they were back outside the cave before dawn nursing hangovers. The leopard was still there guarding her kill. She slept through the day and then around 3p.m. got up and started to feed. Mark was filming her when Nisar, the leader of the watchers, whispered "there's another one!" A second leopard emerged from the cave entrance, walked over to the first, greeted her, then also started to feed. This was her cub: 6 months old and already looking like an adult. The next day the leopards had gone.

Mark wanted to follow but the locals said he must wait here; she will come back. After 6 days she did, indeed, come back, even though the cave was by the side of the main road to Afghanistan. By now it was obvious that this was an exceptionally snowy winter. In fact it turned out to be the heaviest snow for 25 years. In the upper valleys above 3500 metres of snow lay over 6 metres deep. On the one hand this worked well for them. The animals had all been forced down to lower altitudes where they could more easily film them. On the down side it meant that all roads out of Chitral were cut off and there had been no flights in or out for 2 weeks.

In order to stick to budget they arranged for the Pakistani air force to airlift them to Islamabad in a helicopter. Whilst waiting for a phone call from the air force to tell them when they would be arriving, they decided to have one last look at the snow leopard cave. Amazingly the mother was there. She again slept through the middle of the day. In the

early afternoon they spotted a small markhor about 400 metres from the cave and it seemed to be limping.

Mark continues the story:

"An hour before dark the snow leopard got up, walked to the edge of the cave entrance and immediately saw the markhor. She stalked it through the rocks, then when she was 100 metres or so away she took off running at full tilt across the steep cliff face. She caught the markhor from behind. For a few seconds it struggled in her jaws and then pulled free and fell down the cliff into the freezing river below and was carried away. Amazingly when I checked back I found that I'd managed to film the whole thing. Our dream shot had actually come true!

The call from the airforce never came and the next day the weather cleared and the first flight for 2 weeks left with us on it. It was a completely fairytale ending to an extraordinary trip."

Mark Smith on location, Courtesy Mark Smith

BOTTLENOSE DOLPHIN PROJECT

E.Tyler

As reported in Kist 66, the bottlenose dolphin (Tursiops truncates) is seen with reasonable frequency both on the Loch Fyne and Knapdale coasts. Since that article in 2003, I have spotted them bow-riding from a boat off the Craignish peninsula, and twice in different locations off the coast at Skipness. They are regularly spotted by the ferrymen on the Tarbert – Portavadie, Lochranza – Claonaig, Gigha and Kennacraig – Islay – Colonsay runs. Indeed, one Sunday a few weeks ago a pair of adults came into Tarbert harbour and started playing with a buoy. A man and his son launched a small boat, went out to them and watched as they played around the boat. This incident possibly coincided with a bow-riding episode with the Portavadie ferry (reported to me a week or so afterwards).

Lykeshia - an identified and named dolphin - plus baby
photo courtesy of HWDT

An important project to record bottlenose dolphins throughout Scotland has begun. Called the integrated Scottish Bottlenose Dolphin

Project, it is now beginning its second year and will continue to run through 2008. Sightings from the public, including of course Kist readers, are eagerly sought. Since they are often to be seen swimming relatively close to the shore, you don't have to be on a boat to make a successful sighting, just get to know an area they are known to frequent and watch from a suitable vantage point.

The project is a collaboration between members of the public, the Hebridean Whale and Dolphin Trust (HWDT - based on Mull), the Sea Mammal Research Unit (University of St. Andrews), the Scottish Association for Marine Science (Dunstaffnage) and Aberdeen University's Lighthouse Field Unit. The latter spent the summer of 2006 working from a small motor boat which they trailed between launch sites, responding to up-to-the-minute sightings reports. This method enabled them to photograph the animals and record their natural markings which in the case of the bottlenose dolphins are mainly caused by scars from tooth rakes from other bottlenose dolphins. Being able to identify individuals increases the power of the sightings data and enables researchers to gather accurate information on movements and abundance.

The field team worked in both the Outer and Inner Hebrides; in the latter case they found over 20 animals which ranged together between Skye and Kintyre.

Bottlenose dolphin tail-slapping, photo courtesy of HWDT

They are concentrating their work in West Scotland because the east coast dolphins are being studied as part of several long-term research programmes, and therefore the west coast dolphins are far less well-known. Initial indications suggest that relatively few dolphins use the west coast, but these animals may be long-term residents and part of a small breeding population.

The dolphin here is probably Tonic, who hung around Port Ellen, Islay, during the summer of 2003. Photo courtesy of Phil Johnston.

If, this summer, we as Kintyre/Knapdale/LochFyneside residents can supply the project with lots of sightings, perhaps a picture will emerge that knits together the sightings for Knapdale, Kintyre, Jura, Islay, Colonsay, Gigha, Loch Fyne, Arran and even the Northern Irish coast. Bottlenose dophins are powerful swimmers and do not recognize human-made political land boundaries, which in the past have limited research into these amazing animals.

As well as the photographs above, one taken by Phil Johnston during 2003 whilst he was based on Islay conducting similar research to that of the Lighthouse Field Unit, the notes below should help the inexperienced cetacean watcher distinguish between a dolphin and a harbour porpoise. A number of features tell them apart:

- the bottlenose is a lot bigger (2.2-4.0m. as opposed to 1.35-1.8m.)
- it is an exuberant animal, often to be seen leaping out of the water or playing round boats or bow-riding. In contrast, the porpoise is an elusive swimmer that is easily missed as only a small part of the back and fin are seen on surfacing. It is shy and will not usually approach a boat, yet alone jump clear of the water.
- the bottlenose has a curved, not triangular fin (as in the case of the porpoise).

Sightings can either be submitted using the freephone number 0800 0858110 or by visiting the project website on www.scottish dolphins.info.

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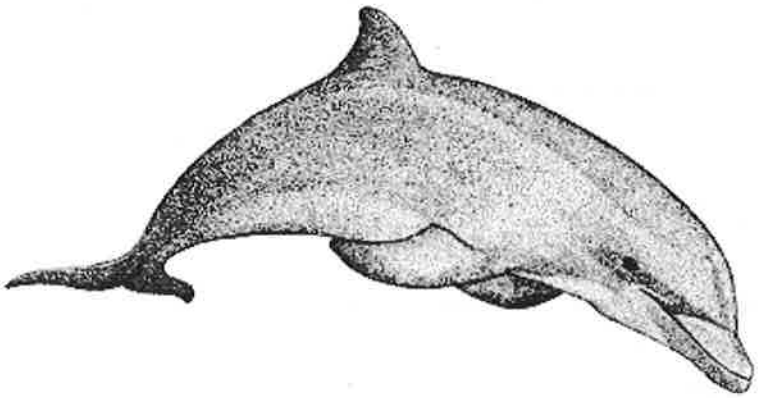

Bottlenose Dolphin line drawing courtesy of Roger Hall Illustration

BOOK REVIEWS

S. Beckensall, **The Prehistoric Rock Art of Kilmartin**, Kilmartin House Trust, 2005, 144 pages with colour photographs and line drawings.

Whilst staying in a holiday cottage in Northumberland I happened on a book which first opened my eyes to the wonders of Britain's prehistoric rock art. There was an amazing example only three miles from the cottage, and we have visited the site many times since. The book was by one Stan Beckensall.

Little did I know then that he was coming up to work in the Kilmartin Glen area; work that was to culminate in the publication of a book whose subject was the rock art of the glen and its surroundings. Well done for Kilmartin House for publishing it, and thereby highlighting a vital prehistoric area of study, one which is particularly well represented here, including the largest decorated panel in Britain at Achnabreck.

Mr. Beckensall shows a great love of this art – for art it most certainly is, though I hazard that the folk who chiselled it did not have anything like the narrow definition of "art" that we have nowadays (more of possible rock art meanings later). His copious drawings are distillations of the following process: a careful, thorough rubbing checked by reference to photographs often taken while the surface is wet, transferred onto graph with the help of a squared grid; then drawn.

Each of the panels is seen in various contexts: to begin with the context of the rock itself, "so that natural cracks, lumps, depressions and so on were incorporated into the design or suggested it. The direction in which a rock faces…is subsidiary to the shape and slope of the rock, and what can be seen from the rock is fundamental to its choice."

Other contexts include: local geology, topography, stream and river patterns, ancient route-ways, other prehistoric sites such as cairns and standing stones; also the wider context of the rest of rock art in other parts of Britain, and Europe.

What meanings did this non-representational art have for the people who created it? This is question that anyone studying a panel will have asked themselves, and the author rightly dismisses those who seek to impose their own modern interpretations based solely on what they think the art *should* represent.

Whilst on the trail of meaning he makes some interesting conclusions: for example, "the distribution of rock art in the Kilmartin region is largely centred on intermediate high places overlooking valleys". There are sites overlooking or close to the sea, sites dominating or marking route-ways from and to the sea, and yet others are found at stream sources.

As for meaning itself, he discusses various theories put forward by archaeologists. Ultimately, though, this wonderful outdoor art (perhaps called "nature" art nowadays) is shrouded in mystery - and this is of course part of its fascination.

Book Review by E. Tyler

A. Martin, <u>An Historical and Genealogical Tour of Kilkerran Graveyard</u>, 2006, Kintyre Civic Society, £7.50.

Martin's 12th published work, the Tour has as its starting point a selection of gravestones in Kilkerran graveyard, beside the shore of Campbeltown Loch. However, this is far more than a recording exercise: Martin (himself a Cambeltown man) uses his considerable knowledge to furnish the reader with various skillfully selected biographies of Kintyre families which shed light on the main industries of the area: farming, fishing, boat-building, shipping and whisky-distilling. He also touches on the various population groups: early "native" Gaelic families and the muta-

tion of their names, the arrival of Lowland settlers in the 17th C. and of Irish settlers in the 19th C. as well as referring to the Traveller community.

Illustration of Robert Robertson 'The Hoodie' an Innovative Fisherman courtesy of George John Stewart

Cultural and other achievements are also recounted, so that a rich picture emerges of the evolution of a fascinating Argyll town (Campbeltown) enlivened by such varied characters as tea experts, Italian café owners, a businessman who "transformed the face of British food retailing", a coachbuilder who designed, patented and sold hay-rick lifters and a highly acclaimed contemporary musician and composer (no, not Paul MacCartney!).

Characters, buildings and achievements are further brought to life by the copious drawings of George John Stewart, who along with his artist wife started the Oystercatcher Gallery in Campbeltown. You do not have to be a Kintyre resident to appreciate: this tour is of interest to all.

A. Crone and E. Campbell, **A Crannog of the First Millenium AD: Excavations by Jack Scott at Loch Glashan,** 2005, £25.
ISBN 0 903903 36 9. Hardback, 176 pages, 36 colour and 59 black and white illustrations, 8 tables (on sale at Kilmartin House Museum)

The crannog at Loch Glashan was excavated in 1960 after dam construction threw up the startling discovery of a virtually complete E ware vessel and other fragments. Jack Scott, Keeper of Archaeology at the Kelvingrove Museum in Glasgow, was one of the main excavators, and the rich assemblage of wood and leather artefacts recovered was conserved at Kelvingrove using techniques that were novel at the time. Over the course of the following decades, elements of the assemblage: a brooch, querns, wooden artefacts, crucibles, leather and timbers, formed the subject of various individual studies. Upon his retirement, Jack Scott began to pull together these various strands into a comprehensive interpretation of the site.

After his untimely death in 1999, the present authors were approached by Historic Scotland to complete the publication. The authors of this volume carried out supplementary work on the site-including dendrochronological analysis and sonar survey in addition to writing up the original data. More recent excavations at Buiston crannog have also forced a re-examination of some of the assumptions which underpinned the excavation of earlier 19th century crannog excavations and which also informed Jack Scott's interpretations.

Anne Crone is a Sector Manager for AOC Archaeology Group in Edinburgh. She specialises in the analysis of wood from archaeological and historic contexts and the study of Scottish crannogs, and has published widely on these subjects. Ewan Campbell is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Archaeology at the University of Glasgow. His particular interest is the early medieval period, and he has published books and articles on the origins of the Scottish Kingdom of Dal Riata.

The above description is taken from the Society of Antiquaries (Scotland) newsletter.

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