THE KIST 77

EDITORIAL

We are pleased to welcome a number of new and nearly-new contributors who write in this issue on subjects as various as the theatrical last High Court session in Inverary, the Greenland White-fronted goose, a visit to St. Conan's Kirk and Argyll seashore life. The treasure chest of knowledge about our local land-and-seascape that is Kist continues to acquire new gems.

On the archaeological front, we have summaries of two walkover surveys carried out by volunteers supervised by Kilmartin House Museum staff. I was lucky to take part in the Carnassarie survey: it was exciting to practice one's observation skills - in good company - over a piece of ground that proved to be full of surprises. Well done to Kilmartin Museum and the Dalraida Project for organising these events. If any more are forthcoming I thoroughly recommend them.

NHASMA subscriptions (Inc. two issues of Kist): £5 single, £7 couples. Cheques payable to N.H.A.S.M.A.

Front cover illustration by: Phillip Fox Denham

Carnassarie Farm Archaeological Survey

Sharon Webb and Roddy Regan

The archaeological walkover survey of Carnassarie Farm was undertaken by Kilmartin House Museum as part of the Dalriada Project. Kilmartin House Museum's involvement in the Dalriada Project aims to involve the local community in a series of archaeological projects including walkover survey, recording and excavation. The Carnassarie Farm walkover survey was the first in a series of planned surveys that are intended to thoroughly record targeted areas in and around Kilmartin Glen. Beyond the immediate participation of volunteers within the project it is also intended to create a body of interested individuals within the community who will continue to participate in future archaeological projects. A training day was held at the Museum prior to the work being undertaken, to introduce participating individuals to various forms of recording. These included: standing building recording, mapping, planning, photography and the use of historical maps.

The fieldwork at Carnassarie Farm has recorded over 240 sites, many of which were previously unknown. This has enhanced previous work, as well as substantially increasing our knowledge of past land-use in this northern area of Kilmartin Glen. Two burial cairns had previously been recorded within the survey area and another potential cairn was located, along with an artificially enhanced natural knoll which may also form a burial mound/cairn. A rather more ambiguous site which appeared to consist of an artificially levelled terrace forming a rough arc or circle was also found. Several large stones appeared to delineate its periphery and may be the remnants of a kerb on its southern side with a bank or berm on its western side. This may be some type of denuded monument relating to the prehistoric period. Eleven rock art sites are present on the

Team on Cairn Baan, Carnassarie - courtesy Kilmartin Musuem

farm, only one of which had been previously recorded. All the sites consisted of single, or groups of plain cup-marks, with most located on exposed natural rock panels, although four sites were located on loose boulders. The number of cups present varied from one 1 to 36, although the numbers on each rock might be increased if possible eroded cups are taken into account.

The discovery of probable burial monuments and cup-marked rock panels adds an upland dimension to the story of prehistoric activity in Kilmartin Glen. The presence of a saddle quern (NM 83967 02131) on an eastern terrace of Cnoc Creach, and the recovery of a worked piece of quartz perhaps indicates early occupation on the slopes around Carnassarie and is intriguing since much of the archaeological record for this period has a ritual or burial focus.

Aside from the Prehistoric period, the work has also highlighted the presence of fairly extensive, but dispersed settlement on the eastern slopes of Sron an Tighe Dhuibh. It is not known when this settlement was last inhabited, although it was certainly abandoned prior to the compilation of the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey in 1873. The size and form of some of the larger rectangular structures perhaps indicates a Post Medieval date, although other structures may be earlier in origin. The survey has also shown that the head dyke to the west of the township of Carnassarie Mor, strictly delineated activities on either side. The eastern and internal area was given over to rig and furrow cultivation. To the west on Cnoc Creach little settlement or cultivation evidence was found, thus this area has been interpreted as pasture. Although the north west of the survey area contained an occasional structure and field, it would appear to have been mainly exploited for peat – which would undoubtedly have supplied both Carnassarie Mor and the settlement/s on Cnoc Creach.

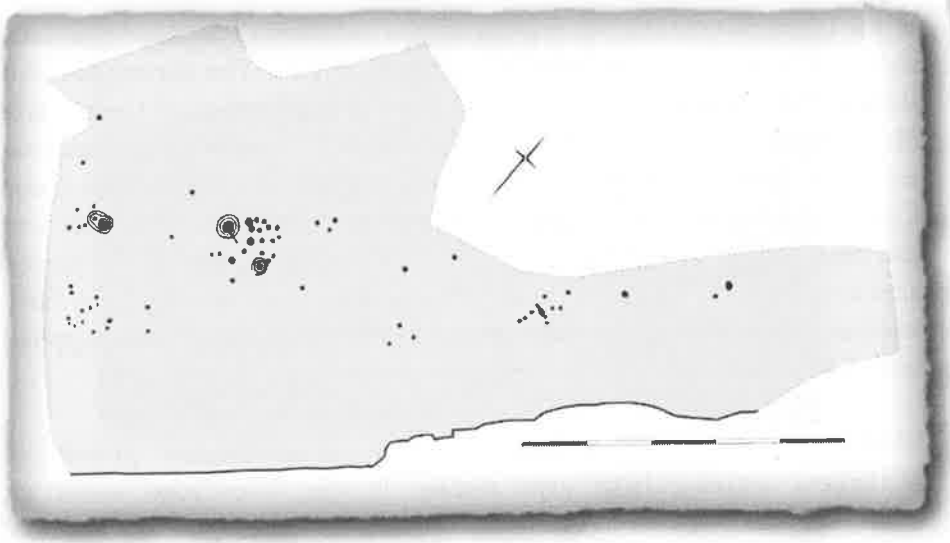
While the survey has provided a more comprehensive picture of settlement activity, large gaps remain in our knowledge about its chronology and function. To better understand the significance of the survey results, further study of the historical evidence would be needed along with evidence from targeted excavations.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Rosemary Neagle and John Campbell of Carnassarie Farm for permission to carry out the survey. Particular thanks go to the group of enthusiastic individuals who participated in the survey and were as follows; Jan Askness, Dennis Brackley, Mary Anne and Andy Buinton, Chris Carr, Liz Dollan, Jorg Ehrmann, Sue Furness, Francis Hood, Fiona Jackson, Maisie Kennedy, Vivian Little, Karl Pipes, Juliette Mitchell, Alan Steele, Ed Tyler and Sally Wilkin. Special mention also goes to Sheila Clark who proofread the text.

Kilbride Farm Survey (Dalriada Project)

Sharon Webb and Roddy Regan



Kilbride Survey Image - courtesy Kilmartin Musuem

The second Dalriada Project survey undertaken by Kilmartin House Museum was at Kilbride Farm. Kind permission was granted by Mr Robert Dixon, the owner. Surprisingly the January weather failed to deter our volunteer participants and as usual the success of the survey owed much to their enthusiastic participation. Kilbride Farm is situated approximately 5kms north of Kilmichael Glassary Village and can be accessed through Rhudle Glen. The farm consists of sheep and cattle grazed hillside with more level terraces or glens running NE/SE between the steeper slopes of the higher ground. Some stands of natural or naturally regenerated woodland are found along the terraced ridges. The higher slopes of the farm are covered by more scrubby grass with heather

cover with reeds and sphagnum moss covering the wetter more boggy ground. The south eastern boundary of the farm is bounded by the Kirnan Estate and the B road running past the present settlements at Fearnoch and Barmollach, bounded at the north by Stroneskar Farm. Much of the farm lies above 100m AOD although it descends to as low as 30m at the south. The land rises to over 200m on Barr Mor and on the heights west of Barmolloch. The farm contains three small lochs or lochans, from south to north, Lochan an Torrnalaich, Lochan an Curaich and Lochan Add. Conducted over two weeks the survey concentrated on the northern area of the land and it is hoped we can return to cover the rest of the farm at a future date. Nearly 90 sites were recorded during the survey which has considerably added to our picture of past land use in this area. The earliest evidence of past activity was recorded in four cup-marked and cup and ring-marked sites. Two of the rock art sites were previously known, although remained unrecorded, one site was pointed out to us by the farmer Mr Robert Dixon, while a second (which we suspected had been uncovered in the past) was remembered by Mr Colin Ferguson of Leckuary. The first of the sites consisted of a ground level stone with group of at least 15 single cups and it is possible the stone may have originally stood upright. A second similarly horizontal stone had at least 19 cups in its upper surface. A third ground level stone had a group of 37 cup-marks, six with evidence of surrounding rings. The most elaborate group of markings were incised of a natural rock panel and consisted of at least 72 plain cup-marks, including two sets of cups surrounded by three concentric rings, one group with a gutter. A more unusual motif (if not unique) was two incised ovals surrounding a single cup and a cup with two concentric rings and a gutter. The new discoveries show, as with the Carnassarie survey, that many rock art sites are still waiting to be discovered and reported.

Possibly dating to the Iron Age or early medieval period was a site that had been variously identified and dismissed as a defensive structure or

Kilbride Rock Art - courtesy Kilmartin Musuem

dun. The site occupied the end of a steep escarpment that enjoys fine views over Rhudle Glen towards the Mhoine Mhor. A tumbled wall suggested that the southern extent of the plateaux had been deliberately blocked off the other sides of the escarpment being steep enough to provide adequate deterrent if needed. As such the site does not appear to represent a traditional dun site (which tend to be oval or rounded structures set atop steep escarpments) but may represent some form of defended outlook.

Other sites of importance recorded during the survey were a series of settlement related enclosures or enclosure complexes. In all eight of these systems were recorded, situated along predominantly SE facing slopes of the hills within the survey area. Most were related to or contained buildings and were surrounded by evidence of rig and furrow cultivation along the more level terraces. As few of these sites are depicted on the 1st Edition Ordnance Survey map then these were probably long abandoned by the time of its compilation in 1873. Of the 30 structures recorded during the survey most were rectangular in plan, possibly indicating a post medieval date, although several structures were circular or oval in shape perhaps indicating an earlier origin. One small structure of note appeared to be hidden from view, situated in a small gully next to a burn. It is tempting to interpret this as an illicit still site, as it lay well away

from other settlement evidence. The above sites recorded during the survey along with others including tracks, quarries, peat hags and kilns suggest an active and constantly changing landscape inhabited and exploited more than the quiet hills suggest today.

Greenland White-Fronted Geese in Mid-Argyll

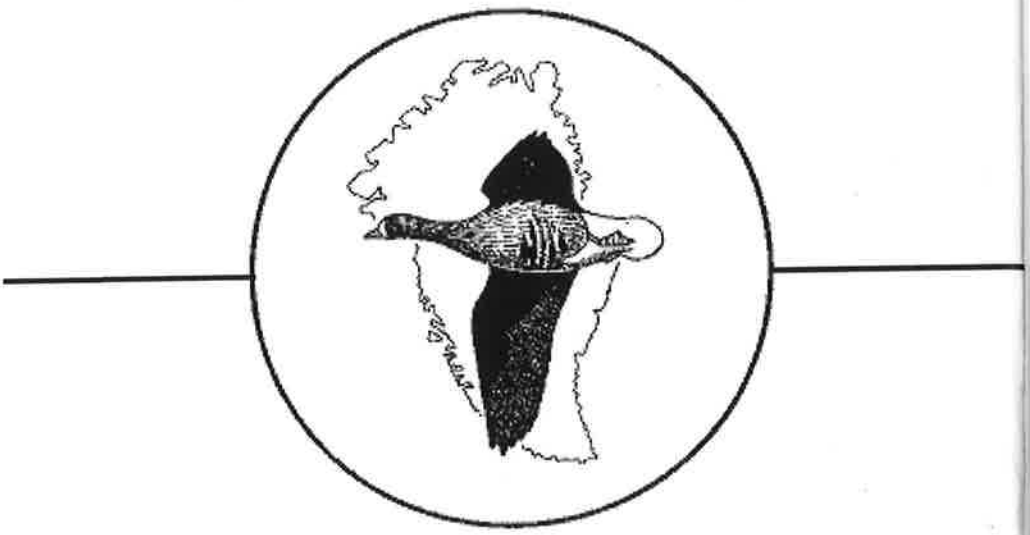
Pat Batty

The Greenland White-fronted Goose over winters in western Scotland, Islay and Ireland. They arrive in October after stopping off in Iceland and return in late-March or April to their breeding grounds in West Greenland, an arduous journey over the Greenland ice cap. The White-fronted Goose is smaller than a Greylag. Adults have distinctive black chest bars and a white area above the bill.

The geese originally grazed on coastal marshes eating the roots of cotton grass and white beaked sedge but have now adapted to the better grazing of agricultural fields. Flocks use fields in the Tayvallich peninsula and in Mid-Argyll. On Danna geese used to graze stubble fields of south Danna when they first arrived in October. However now no cereals are grown and geese graze the pasture and coast throughout Danna, Ulva and Keills. Originally the geese were confined to Danna but they spread to Keills and Ulva probably because fields were reseeded in 1989. Now the fields on Keills in particular are used less frequently as there is less agricultural input here and therefore less productive grazing.

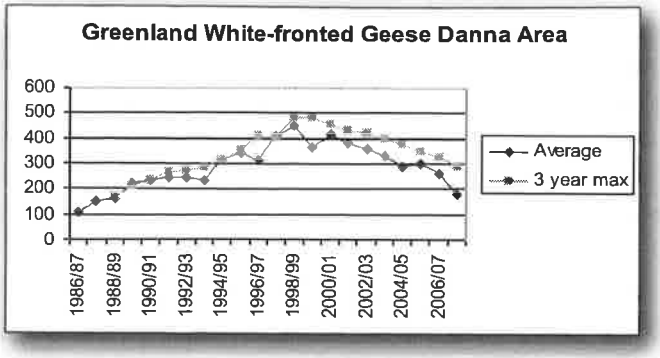
Tayvallich Peninsula

The geese have been counted each winter month since 1986 as part of an international study. There has been a large rise and then a fall in numbers. In 1986 an average of 111 Greenland White-fronted geese were counted in the Danna area, this rose to a peak of 446 in 1998/99 which has since declined to an average of 182 geese in 2007/08. The 3 year maximum average follows a similar pattern starting at 168, peaking at 480 and declining to 288.



This trend in goose numbers here reflects the trend for the species as a whole. Numbers declined from the 1950s to the 1970s but a hunting ban in 1982 enabled numbers to increase and the total population doubled to 35,600, peaking in 1999. However since then numbers have declined. The 2007 spring census was 12,536 in Scotland plus 9713 in Ireland

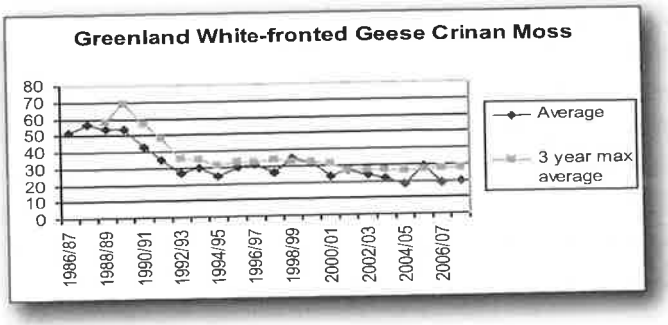
totalling 22,249 (Fox and Francis 2007) suggesting factors other than hunting are involved. Reduction in breeding success may be a key cause with fewer geese breeding and having fewer young. Several factors including June weather and increasing competition on the breeding grounds could explain this. However the most likely explanation (Fox et al, 2006) is the arrival in Greenland of Greater Canada Geese which compete for the nesting grounds. If this is the cause there are few conservation actions that can be taken.



Crinan Moss Area

A much smaller flock on the Crinan Moss winters in a few rushy fields near Barsloisnoch. Numbers here have declined from 52 in 1986 to 23 in 2008. This has been the fate of other small flocks elsewhere and some have disappeared from traditional areas. The flock on the Crinan Moss sometimes gains and looses family groups. In November 1996 a collared bird, which was marked in Greenland, was seen here, it then reappeared in Wexford, Ireland the following month with its mate.

It is hoped that the population will not fall further. The Greenland White-fronted goose is still hunted on its autumn migration in Iceland,



just over 3000 were shot last year. Though not the cause of the decline this has an impact on the population and there have been calls for this cull to be stopped and this has resulted in a ban from Autumn 2008.

Other Geese

The only mainland flock of Barnacle geese also winter on Danna in large grazing flocks. Numbers have steadily increased from an average of 250 to 350 in the 1980s to 500 in 2007/08. Maximum numbers of over 700 have been seen in March in some years when grazing is at a premium before spring growth. In the late 1980s and early 1990s the Barnacle geese more commonly grazed the Mc Cormaig islands, now however they are present at Danna on every visit.

Mid-Argyll has witnessed the arrival of Canada geese in larger numbers. Four were first seen in March 2003 but this increased rapidly with the 3 year maximum average being 153 in 2007/2008, though numbers have been reduced due to shooting. It is resident, breeding on local lochs and as numbers have increased has taken over the traditional grazing fields on the Moss. The Greenland White-fronted geese continue to graze alongside it, but the Greylag geese - the other winter visitors here - now use the fields at Slockavuillin, Dunadd and Dunamuck more regularly.

Numbers of greylags have fluctuated with an average of 269 in 1986/87, rising to 346 in the early 1990s and declining to 155in 2007/08. Pink footed geese are irregularly seen and there was a Snow goose reported in the area.

Since 2003 a small flock of Greylag geese has been on Danna averaging 19 this year. Recent reports indicate that some Greylag geese are now staying in the area during the summer. Canada geese also graze on Danna with a maximum of 18 seen 2007/08, this number is rising.

Conclusion

The wintering Greenland White fronted goose population will not remain the same, with agricultural and climate changes and breeding fluctuations who knows what the next 20 years will bring. Hopefully we will still be able to see these striking birds in the fields of Mid-Argyll.

Preliminary results for 2008/2009 indicate that the population is similar to the previous year's level.

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Acknowledgements

I would like to thank David Batty for his help with the goose counts. Also Ian Francis for the use of the Greenland White-fronted Goose Study Group logo and report plus SNH for their support.

THE LAST HIGH COURT TRIAL AT INVERARAY

Bruce Weir

The High Court of Justiciary is the supreme criminal court in the country and it deals with all serious crimes, including murder and rape, and other cases which by reason of the potential length of the sentence in the event of a conviction are too serious to be disposed of in the Sheriff Court. From early times the effective administration of justice required the judges of the High Court to travel throughout the kingdom on circuit. In time, three areas were designated as circuits, namely, the northern circuit comprising the towns of Perth, Dundee, Aberdeen and Inverness; the southern circuit comprising Ayr, Dumfries and Jedburgh; and the western circuit comprising Glasgow, Stirling and Inveraray.

The reason why a burgh of modest size and relatively remote location such as Inveraray was included as a circuit town along with the large towns of Glasgow and Stirling is historical. The office of Lord Justice General, the head of the High Court of Justiciary, was originally held as a hereditary office by the Earls of Argyll. The office was resigned into the hands of Charles I in 1628 in return for which there was reserved to the Argyll family the office of Justiciar-General for the Sheriffdom of Argyll and Tarbert and the Hebridean Isles. After the rising of 1745 the hereditary jurisdictions of the Clan chiefs (including that of Clan Campbell) were abolished. As a consequence, the jurisdiction of the Duke of Argyll ceased and was replaced by that of the High Court of Justiciary. Argyll and Bute were incorporated into the western circuit with Inveraray designated as the circuit town.

The circuit judges thereafter made periodic visits disposing of such cases as there were. Lord Cockburn referred in his book, "Circuit Journeys" to a number of visits to Inveraray between 1838 and 1850. He wrote vividly of the grand scenery of Argyll and commented in less favourable terms on the quality of justice sometimes dispensed by Argyll juries. As the 19th century progressed business at Inveraray, never abundant, declined, possibly associated with the general rural depopulation of the times. The journey from Edinburgh for the legal luminaries was tedious. No railway connected Inveraray to centres of population. For reasons of convenience the resident sheriff was transferred in 1903 to Dunoon, although that court occasionally sat at Inveraray just as today the sheriff at Dunoon sometimes sits at Lochgilphead. Many years went by without a case being heard by the High Court. There was a brief flurry of circuit business in 1908 when two cases were dealt with. Finally, after over quarter of a century later the High Court sat at Inveraray for what proved to be the last time. This took place on 29 March 1934.

Visits by the court to a circuit town were, until 30 or 40 years ago, accompanied by pomp and ceremony. They were also major social events. There was a procession to the court by judge, counsel and local dignitaries. A military guard of honour was provided; the arrival of the judge on the bench was heralded by a fanfare of trumpets, and there were dinners and civic receptions. These days have gone. The last occasion when the judge inspected a guard of honour is believed to have been in the early 1970s when a detachment of the Gordon Highlanders was reviewed outside the court building at Aberdeen. In criminal circles in Glasgow, when someone was in severe trouble he was liable to be told: "It's the Trumpets fer you!" But the trumpeters too vanished mainly because, with the growth of crime, visits of the High Court to the circuit towns became frequent rather than occasional. Circuit dinners were notorious and even scandalous due to the liberal flow of alcohol and much disliked by the Bench because the judges as a body had to subscribe

Trial display at Inverary Courthouse - courtesy Sue Kenworthy - webshots

towards the costs of a circuit dinner. All that remains of the old days is a civic lunch here and there and in some places, prayers said from the Bench by the parish minister.

Whether or not there was a premonition that this might be the last sitting of the High Court in Inveraray, the authorities were prepared to make the most of it. The opening scene is described in picturesque terms in the edition of the Oban Times immediately following the trial.

"Shortly before 10 a.m. the pipers of the 8th Argylls struck up a marching tune at the Territorial Hall at the south end of the burgh, and a strong section of this distinguished regiment, under command of Captain

Grant Forman, Lochgoilhead, entered the highway at Newtown, and carried on to the Argyll Arms Hotel, where Lord Wark, the presiding Judge, Advocates, and Court officials were in residence. Other officers present were Lieut.-Colonel Bruce A. Campbell, Soroba House, Oban, Commanding Officer 8th Argylls; Major Lockie, Secretary of the Territorial Force Association; Captain and Adjutant George Malcolm yr. of Poltalloch; Captain Campbell, yr. of Succoth; and Lieut. Lockie, Drum-Major Seton, D.C.M., and Pipe-Major George MacDonald. The military were drawn up in two lines. The old Parish Church bell began to toll, and a large crowd surged on to the ground known as the Mercat Cross in front of the arches leading on to the old beech tree avenue.

Lord Wark stepped out from the hotel, and inspected the guard of honour. At the sharp word of command, the Territorials fixed bayonets, and the order 'present arms' was smartly responded to. The procession was formed. Gaily accoutred pursuivants from Edinburgh with silver trumpets; Inveraray Town Council guarded by two halberdiers in picturesque red coats trimmed with yellow facings. School children looked on, their young minds filled with wonder and amazement at the brilliant and impressive sight before them. On such procession their ancestors had gazed centuries ago".

The procession comprised important people of the county, including Sheriff Principal J.P. Dickson, K.C., Sheriff McMaster Campbell, Campbeltown, the Provost of Inveraray, the Chief Constable of Argyll and his Deputy, and the Vice Convenor of the County representing the Duke of Argyll who, although expected, was unaccountably absent.

The case was one of murder. At that time the punishment for murder was death by hanging. Anyone old enough to remember capital murder trials will recall the tense atmosphere in the court as soon as the accused entered the dock because everyone knew that as a result of what might be

said and decided in court, that person might die. If convicted, he would be sentenced by the judge who would briefly put an 18th century tricorn black hat on his head and utter the awful words "This sentence is pronounced for doom". It is not surprising therefore that the court room was packed while a large crowd remained expectantly in the streets.

The Crown was represented by Mr. John Cameron, Advocate Depute, who no doubt relished the irony of a Cameron prosecuting in Campbell territory. The accused was defended by Mr. David King Murray, K.C. The accused was Thomas Joseph Ledwidge, described in the indictment as "a billiard saloon attendant". The incident in question took place in or near Argyll Square, Oban. Ledwidge was accused of assaulting Hugh Martin of Drimvargie Terrace, Oban by striking him on the face and head and knocking him down, whereby he received injuries from which he died.

The deceased, it appears, was a habitual drunkard addicted to drinking, amongst other things, methylated spirits. He had many convictions for drunkenness, molesting the police and assault. On the day in question his behaviour was aggressive and he was making a nuisance of himself in Argyll Square. The accused came up to Martin complaining about allegedly indecent behaviour by him towards his wife. A quarrel developed and the accused struck him a blow causing him to fall to the ground. He was assisted to his feet and then followed the accused, who had made his way towards "Messrs Boots's shop". Martin was shouting at him whereupon the accused gave him what was described by witnesses variously as "a smart blow on the face" or "more a jab than a blow" causing him to fall to the ground. Martin became unconscious and never regained consciousness. The medical evidence was that there was no fracture of the skull but there was a haemorrhage within the skull which could have been caused by Martin's head having come into contact with the road surface. The post mortem revealed that the deceased was

"sodden with drink" and there was medical evidence that the amount of methylated spirits drunk by the deceased had an effect on the arteries whereby blood vessels would tend to be more easily ruptured than normal. In this discouraging situation for the Crown at the end of its case, the Advocate Depute indicated that he was withdrawing the libel so far as charging the accused with murder but would be asking for a verdict of culpable homicide. The presiding judge stated that in his opinion the Advocate Depute was exercising "a wise discretion."

The accused gave evidence to the effect that Martin was pestering him and waving his hands in an aggressive manner. In trying to get rid of him, he finally gave him a jab. He had no intention of seriously hurting him.

After speeches from counsel and directions given by the judge, the jury retired and after five minutes they returned with a unanimous verdict of not guilty. To have convicted Ledwidge of culpable homicide, the jury would have had to be satisfied that he had assaulted Martin and that the result of the assault was his death. That verdict was clearly open to the jury if they were satisfied that the blow was of the character described as "a smart blow." On the other hand it was open to the jury to regard "the jab" as described by the accused in evidence as a means merely of ridding himself from Martin's unwelcome attentions without any intention to do him any harm. Whatever the legal niceties the jury clearly took a broad and unhesitating view of the justice of the matter.

When the verdict was announced applause broke out in the court and the public were rebuked by Lord Wark, saying, "This is a court of justice. It is not a theatre". This admonition was quite appropriate in the circumstances, but in a wider context his Lordship was arguably wrong. Looking at the pageantry of the occasion, the guard of honour, the halberdiers, the trumpeters, the tolling of the Parish Church bell, the

procession, the crowds, the wigs and gowns, the tension of the trial, and the jury's verdict, it can be fairly described as pure theatre. It is said that afterwards there was some mutterings from higher authority about the cost of such a magnificent display as a setting for a trial concerning a minor scuffle which happened to have fatal consequences. In retrospect, it does not matter. Justice had been dispensed at justiciary level since at least the late Middle Ages and Inveraray justice was raised to permanent, if controversial, prominence by the Appin murder trial and the novels of Robert Louis Stevenson. So it was fitting that the end of this long association should be carried out with style.

After scolding those who applauded in court, Lord Wark addressed the magistrates and Town Council congratulating them on the rarity of serious crime in Argyll. It was over 25 years since the High Court had been in Inveraray and he sincerely hoped that "Another similar period would elapse before another court was held." In fact, exactly 20 years later a order was made making Oban the circuit town for Argyll instead of Inveraray. Only the handsome court house and jail now so well exhibited remain as a memorial to these times.

In reporting the trial which was about to take place the Oban Times stated "Lord Wark will hold an official or circuit dinner in the evening in the Argyll Arms Hotel at which there will be at least 30 guests." There is no record as to how well this occasion was enjoyed.

Note: the author is indebted to the Oban Times for permission to use extracts from its article covering the trial.

Seashores of Argyll in a changing world

Robin Harvey

Part 2

At low water on a spring tide, the elegant brown seaweed known as Dabberlocks is revealed at the edge of the kelp. Investigations in the 1980s by divers from the SAMS marine laboratory near Oban showed that there are extensive beds of kelp off west Kintyre that could be harvested for their chemicals. Although considered to be economically viable, the environmental damage would have been considerable and, fortunately, the project was shelved. There are a few edible seaweeds on the lower shore such as dulse, laver and carragheen that can be bought in specialist shops. With the rise of global commodity markets, the large scale use of Scotland's seaweeds for the extraction of alginic acid and other chemicals has disappeared, but the expansion of marine biotechnology may well see the rebirth of this industry, albeit in a different form and exploiting different species. SAMS scientists are currently researching the viability of growing selected seaweeds alongside salmon. The lower shore is the place to look for sponges, especially the greenish breadcrumb sponge Halichondria panacea and the orange Hymeniacidon. The narrows at the entrance to Linnhe Mhuirich, Loch Sween are a haven for sponges, which thrive in the strong tidal currents there. They are best seen by snorkelling or SCUBA diving at slack tide.

In sheltered sea lochs, algae often cover the rock completely. Knotted wrack Ascophyllum nodosum is usually the dominant species on the lower shore and can grow to 2 m in length. It is common to find low densities of large limpets under the algal canopy and it has been discovered recently that these can clamp down on the fronds of brown algae and snip off small pieces which they then ingest. Some shores have short tattered Ascophyllum plants surrounded by limpets as evidence of

this. Clumps of large mussels frequently occur where algal cover is patchy.

The large brown seaweed, Dabberlocks at Westport, Kintyre - courtesy Robin Harvey

Non-native Species

Britain is home to around 80 non-native species of marine plants and animals. Many of these are small and require specialist knowledge to identify. One which we are all likely to encounter in the coming years is the Japanese Sargassum weed Sargassum muticum. First found in Argyll in Loch Fyne in 2006, it has now spread to other parts of the Clyde, is well established in outer Campbeltown Loch and has made it around the Mull of Kintyre. Doubtless it will spread up the whole west coast in due course. It is a large brown seaweed, growing up to 2 m long, with a rather coarse stringy appearance and feel to it and usually with many globular gas bladders around 5 mm across. When held up, the side branches hang

Sargassum muticum 'washing line' found at Campbeltown 2007 - courtesy Dr E. Cook

down like washing on a line. It can cause problems in marinas and docks as it attaches itself just below low water mark and the long fronds float.

Other species occasionally find themselves in Argyll's waters, far from the centre of their geographic range. Among these are the Trigger fish Balistes carolinensis which turns up every year or so, the Sunfish Mola mola and turtles of various species. As the Atlantic warms up, we can expect to see these welcome visitors more often.

Trigger Fish - Balistes carolinensis found Ormasary 2007 - courtesy Phillip Fox-Denham

The 'Naturalist' Beachcomber

Argyll is blessed with a number of good sandy beaches that, in addition to being a recreational resource, provide nursery areas for young flatfish such as plaice and dab. Young fish of the year around 15 mm long can be caught in fine-meshed nets in March and April in the shallows. At SAMS, we have been studying 24 beaches from Wester Ross to Ayrshire in an attempt to understand the large differences in growth rate apparent between these sites. For example, Loch Caolisport plaice have a very reduced rate of growth compared with those at Crinan and Skipness, despite appearing to have plenty of food resources in the form of worms, shrimps and the siphons of small beach clams that they can bite off when these protrude above the sand surface.

A visit to any beach in Kintyre will reveal clues as to the denizens of the beach and the zone immediately offshore. Skeletons of sea potatoes and shells of razor clams are frequently found, along with the shells of species that live around the low water mark such as tellins, the banded wedge shell, various clams and cockles. Lugworms occur on almost every beach except the most wave exposed; their tell-tale faecal coils can reach densities of over 100 per square metre when there has been a good settlement of juveniles. Like many marine animals that have early life history stages that live in the plankton, settlement is patchy, leading to areas with abundant animals separated by stretches of similar beach where there are hardly any.

In addition to the regular moon and lion's mane jellyfish along the strandline, more distant species such as the by-the-wind-sailor occasionally appear. There was a large influx of these around much of south and west Britain, including west Scotland, in November 2006. Just below the strandline you may see lots of small holes around 2-3 mm in diameter. These are the entrances to the burrows of the sand hopper Talitrus saltator. They play an important role in the breakdown of drift seaweeds, their mandibles cutting off small pieces and giving bacteria access to the softer inner tissues of the weeds.

There are many books on marine life of the shore and shallow sea. For those with internet access the MarLIN website www.marlin.ac.uk is an excellent point for identifying unfamiliar plants and animals and learning about their distribution and life history. You can also submit your own sightings and digital images after registering and then search the database for species of particular interest. SAMS has been based at Dunstaffnage since 1970 and now has a staff of around 140, two research vessels and access to ocean-going vessels belonging to several nations through collaborative research programmes. In recent years our research has taken us into the Arctic and Antarctic, as well as some of the deepest ocean depths. To learn more about the SAMS laboratory go to www.sams.ac.uk

NHASMA outing to St Conan's Church and Kilchurn Castle 2008

Charlie Mitchell

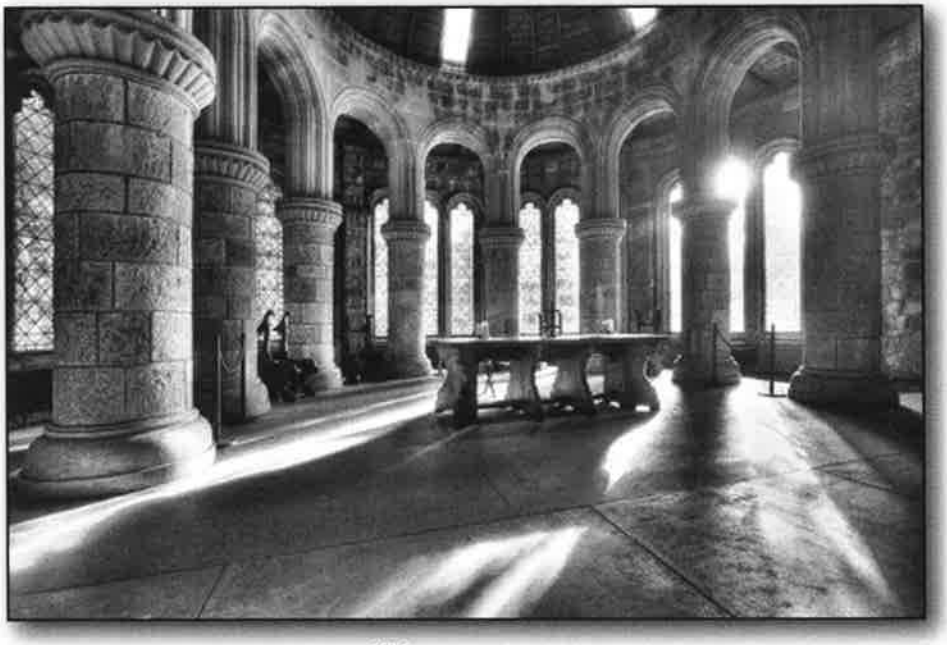
Kilchurn Castle - courtesy 'Entire Scotland'

On a pleasant September day last year, a group of members went on an outing to St Conan's Church and Kilchurn Castle. St Conan's Church is a relatively modern building that expanded from a small 1880s church, into a truly amazing building of many styles and periods. The main structure is of granite, but that sombre stone is brightened by light sandstone inserts and carvings. Incorporated into the building are many

old relics and objects salvaged from old religious buildings; including a small bone of Robert the Bruce, taken from Dunfermline Abbey, and built into an ossuary; below a larger than life effigy of him in the Bruce Chapel.

A write-up of the church from the 1930s, says that it was built from worked granite boulders that were rolled down the mountainside, but that appears to be largely fiction and most of the stone would come from the local granite quarry.

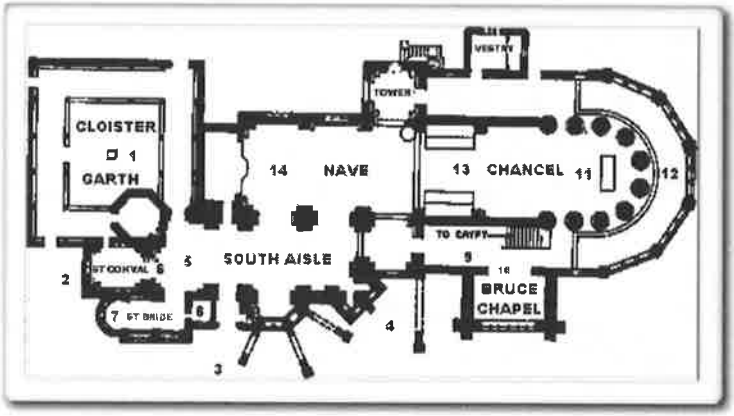
For lunch, we had to drive somewhat further afield than intended, as a coach load of American visitors to the church had booked up all the local eatery's space. However after an enjoyable lunch, we walked the half mile out to Kilchurn Castle. It started life in the 1450s as a fortified



St Conans Kirk - courtesy Mike 138 - Flickr

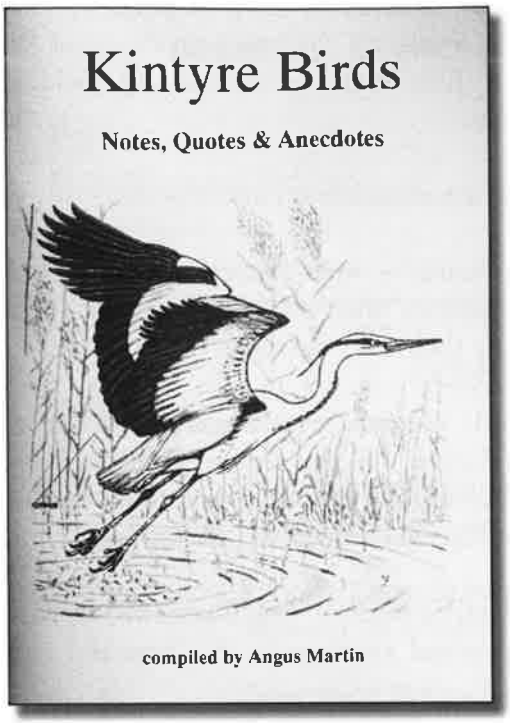
tower-house and home to Sir Colin Campbell, Laird of Glen Orchy. He was the son of the Campbell Chief from Innischonnel Castle; further down the loch; and had been given title to the Glen Orchy land by his father; despite the fact that the MacGregors occupied it and regarded it as theirs.

Over the following centuries, the Campbells of Glen Orchy prospered and succeeding chiefs enlarged and added to the castle; with the last addition being barracks for 200 Government troops: in the troubled Jacobite times of the 1690s. After Culloden and the break-up of the Highland clans, there was no further need of the castle as a barracks; and as it had long since ceased to be the main residence of the Glen Orchy/ Breadalbane Campbells; it was allowed to fall into decay. The castle never had to withstand an enemy attack, but in 1654; when there was a rising of the people loyal to King Charles; Kilchurn was surrounded by a loyalist force; who were about to storm the castle; when a large force of General Monck's troops arrived and drove them off.



Floor plan of St Conans Kirk

Book review



Kintyre Birds: Notes, Quotes and Anecdotes, compiled by Angus Martin, Kintyre Natural History and Antiquarian Society, 2008, £2. Copies available (£1 extra for postage and packing) from the author: Angus Martin, 13 Saddell St. Campeltown, Argyll PA28 6DN.

This book is ostensibly about birds, and birds are indeed the subject matter, but as always in Angus's books, it is his ability to record fascinating historical and folkloric detail and his ear for anecdote and quotation that shine out.

I greatly enjoyed dipping into the 61 pages and wished there were more, but he refers to copious source material which I will be following up: for example, Vie Tulloch's The Isle of Gigha: Wild Flowers, Birds and Mammals.

Gaelic, Scots and even local Kintyre names for the birds are given, as is a tentative coining by the author himself which I particularly liked: "limpet-knocker" for the Oyster catcher.

Angus notes in his introduction that our present attitude of admiration and wonder towards birds is a recent phenomenon. He describes how wild birds were once a part of people's diet, being shot for meat, and their eggs collected for food as well as for collections. As if to point up the contrast between then and now, he dwells on the sum – in excess of £2 million – spent by Scottish Power Renewables in encouraging Golden eagles to breed near their 46 turbines.

Here are a couple of illustrations which elucidate the above points:

"Shag... locally known as 'scarts' – were formerly eaten in the Kintyre fishing communities, sometimes after being wrapped in cloth and buried for a few days to mitigate their fishy flavour".

"...the raven was Odin's bird. Supreme creator and god of War in Norse mythology, Odin had two Ravens, Huginn (Mind) and Muninnn (Memory), who were his intelligence-seekers, returning from their world-ranging flights to perch on his shoulders and impart their knowledge."

The book is a fitting accompaniment to Birds of Argyll reviewed in Kist 75, adding historical detail and personal anecdote to this beautiful and varied region of the county.

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