

80TH
ANNIVERSARY
EDITION



THE

KIST 80

EDITORIAL

This, our 80th Edition, in colour for the first time, is a celebration. It is an achievement to have kept the NHASMA magazine – the Society's voice – flourishing for the past forty years. Without a break two issues a year have been produced entirely by volunteers, with contributions to fill the treasure-chest that is "Kist". Those who have taken on the mantle of editorship have strived to keep to the original aims of the publication whilst keeping up to date.

"Its aim is to publish your news of your discoveries, observations, memories, traditions – everything that is of interest to you all...Please do not feel that you have nothing worth recording; of course you have." Thus wrote Marion Campbell of Kilberry, FSA, FSA Scot in the editorial for the first edition. I read these words again, bashed out on a manual typewriter in a particular font that marks the time: the typewriter being the then writer's choice – and Marion Campbell was a writer.

It was fitting that despite all her other commitments she should have set the ball rolling and edited the first few issues before handing on the baton. It is typical of her, with her unique authorial voice, that she should boldly set out the aims of Kist at the outset whilst at the same time appealing directly to the members of the Society. She has both a keen editorial eye ("500 words is ideal for our purpose, and shorter items {proverbs, local sayings, notes on place names, or natural history notes} will be very welcome and can be used to fill pages and make the best use of our paper") and a long view: she can see that it will evolve with the times and with the inclinations of the readers and contributors ("its future is in your hands; it can be altered in any way you care to suggest").

Nowadays articles can be a lot longer than 500 words, but I feel that this is justified by the inclusion of photographs which break up the textual desert. Despite technological advance the editorial message is the same as it was forty years ago: this is your magazine, and we welcome your contributions as members of the Society, whether you class yourself as a professional in your field or an amateur. In the pages of Kist all are treated equally.

ERRATA: Apologies to Charlie Mitchell for twice mistitling the extract from his work "It's A Far Cry To Loch Awe" and also for a misspelling of Auchinellan in one of the latter paragraphs.

Ed Tyler

MARION CAMPBELL
BY MARIAN PALLISTER

Marion Campbell inherited the Kilberry estate twice. Difficulties in the family, economic problems, and inheritance complexities meant that by the time the estate was very definitely hers, it was scarcely worth the paper on which the deeds were written. So difficult was the situation in the early years after the Second World War that Miss Campbell considered selling the property in its entirety and moving away (a prospect which her correspondence suggests excited, horrified and saddened her in almost equal measure). A number of the estate's farms were sold, and then the castle itself went on the market.

Cistercian monks made the only firm inquiry: further inspection of the 49-roomed castle led them to make their excuses and seek more salubrious premises for their new monastery.

Miss Campbell had to make the most of her difficult circumstances and resorted to selling off the family silver – a phrase that in reality meant selling off ancient artefacts.

She had not previously taken much notice of the evidence all around her of Argyll's prehistory. Now she began to see the landscape with new eyes. She sent off flints to the National Museum of Antiquities in Edinburgh and began corresponding with various experts. One was Robert B.L. Stevenson, to whom she confessed in a letter dated April 3, 1949, that she was 'amazed' to find a great number of prehistoric sites in Mid Argyll. Another was Professor Stuart Piggott,

who had been elected to the Society of Antiquaries of London in 1937.

What began as a pecuniary exercise to raise a little ready cash by selling flints and the like very quickly became a passion for all things ancient. Despite a lack of formal training, she began a programme of intensive research, turning herself into something of an expert – certainly an amateur in the true sense of the word.

Asked by Stevenson to investigate the provenance of some bronze age food vessels, she became involved with the Kintyre Antiquarian Society, which had been founded in 1921. By the end of 1949, she had been accepted by the Society of Antiquaries and was embarking on the work that would lead to her name, and that of her companion Mary Sandeman, being forever associated with the ancient monuments of Argyll. The work carried out by the two women in identifying standing stones, cup and ring marked stones, cairns, henges and monuments of a later date such as grave slabs, laid the foundations of the volumes on Argyll produced by the Royal Commission for Ancient and Historical Monuments.

Miss Campbell's election as a Fellow of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland on December 12, 1949, admitted her to an inner circle and led to many collaborations with the country's sharpest archaeological and historical experts. She and Miss Sandeman visited over 1000 sites in a period of seven years, presenting papers in precise scientific terms despite less than orthodox methods (she is photographed with a cigarette in hand, flicking ash over a 'dig'). Along the way, she initiated the creation of Auchindrain Farming Museum, inspired by a visit to a similar museum in Scandanavia. Her family ties with the Duke of Argyll did not exactly smooth the way towards acquiring

Photograph by kind permission of Miss Campbell's family



the property but went a long way towards ensuring eventual success. The Duke told Miss Campbell that he could not have 'a bunch of derelict buildings rotting away alongside a main road'. She, however, had galvanised support from the National Museum, Edinburgh and Glasgow Universities, and had sought £5000 in funding from the

Carnegie Trust, and over £60,000 from the Highlands and Islands Development Board - enormous sums for the 1960s.

By this time, she was the only honorary member of the Kyntyre Antiquarian Society, a lecturer on local antiquities with the Glasgow University Extra Mural Scheme, and a founder (with Eric Cregeen) and first president of the Natural History and Antiquarian Society of Mid Argyll. In 1964, she was elected a Fellow of the Society of Antiquarians at a meeting in London, strengthening Scottish representation within the national Society. She was also a Member of the Society for Medieval Archaeology. All this despite her admission that at school she learned no Scottish history, and her much regretted lack of what she referred to as 'letters'.

The first edition of *Kist* came out at Whitsun, 1971, and it is telling that she wrote of the launch of NHASMA's magazine: 'All discoveries, both in natural history and in archaeology, begin with small scale local observations.' She encouraged readers: 'Let's be hearing from you all' and promised that if an expert in botany, ornithology and other subjects could not be found among the ranks of the Association to answer readers' queries, one could be found elsewhere. Her range of contacts was impressive and there is little doubt that she would have been able to conjure up someone eminent in every sphere.

Miss Campbell was a prolific writer – her books, newspaper and magazine articles are public testimony to that and her private letters, to which this author had free access during research for Miss Campbell's biography, revealed an enthusiasm for the written word that few could match. Between 1984 and 1993, she published eighteen articles in *Kist*. These confirmed her position as a polymath

extraordinaire. Her knowledge of wild birds, encouraged by her mother, was almost encyclopaedic. During the Second World War, she bird-spotted on her train journeys into Glasgow from Helensburgh, recording oyster catchers, curlew, redshanks, shelduck and ring plovers seen through grimy carriage windows.

It was during her time in the WRNS that she wrote home: 'Of course, the ideal thing would be to live at Kilberry, do a bit of farming and a bit of archaeology and write - but I can't see that happening.' That it did happen, and that Kist was one of the enduring outcomes of the writing and the 'bit of archaeology' has proved to be one of her most valuable contributions to Mid Argyll and to Scotland.

KILMARTIN MUSEUM - A HISTORY BY SHARON WEBB

As most of the inhabitants of Kilmartin Glen will be aware, this is one of the densest and most important mainland archaeological landscapes in Scotland. Many of these ancient monuments are of international and national importance. They include: Dunadd hill fort (the stronghold of the earliest Scots), the greatest concentration of cup and ring rock carvings in Europe, a unique Neolithic and Bronze Age cairn cemetery, a stone circle at Temple Wood and an exceptional collection of West Highland carved grave stones at Kilmartin Church. There are also castles at Carnassarie, Kilmartin and Duntrune. Less well known perhaps are sites such as the timber circle found at the Upper Largie Quarry - Scotland's largest. The landscape which is home to these enigmatic remains is also

environmentally important holding a richer biodiversity than any comparable area in Scotland.

Local Antiquarian Miss Marion Campbell, who founded NHASMA, was involved in many heritage initiatives in Argyll and apparently had a long held desire for a Museum or heritage centre in Kilmartin. This desire was realised in May 1997 when Kilmartin House Museum opened. Thirteen years on, the Museum is still here, and is flourishing.

Kilmartin House Trust was founded in 1994. The Trust aimed to create a centre which would raise awareness of the ecological richness and outstanding archaeological importance of the surrounding area, thus encouraging conservation and wise management. The centre would provide a place where locally found artefacts could be collected, preserved, displayed, and interpreted using local knowledge. Whilst protecting and preserving artefacts, this would also provide the local community with an opportunity to take their heritage as a focus from which to gain a sense of continuity, place and identity.

Visitors to the Glen could be oriented and informed what there was to see and do, which would enhance their enjoyment and control their impact. The Trust also aimed to stimulate children's interest in the local environment, as well as develop their sense of responsibility towards it. We now also aim to carry out and support research into the archaeology and environmental history of the area and to ensure that the public have access to the results.

Following several years of fund raising, and a great deal of unpaid voluntary work by the founders, David Clough and Rachel Butter,

the Museum opened in 1997. The Trust, which runs the Museum, is a registered charity and is governed by a Board of Trustees. Since opening the Museum has received much acclaim. In 1998 it won both the Scottish Museum of the Year award and the prestigious Gulbenkian Prize for Museums and Galleries. In February 2009 the Museum achieved full accreditation status from the Museums, Libraries and Archives Association, the first Museum in Argyll to do so. These are just two in a long list of awards.

Aside from creating the Museum gallery, collection store, audio visual show, and opening the café and shop, we have, over the last 10 years, provided an education service for local schools, as well as an events and workshops programme for people of all ages. Education is central to the work of the Museum – and it works! There are not many primary age children who could reel off the dates for the Scottish Neolithic with quite the proficiency of the children who go to school in and amongst the stones of Kilmartin and Kilmichael Glassary. Our Great Auks, a young people's after school archaeology and wildlife club, also has a role to play in that.

The Museum has also been the venue for a large number of temporary art and craft exhibitions by local and non-local artists, something we feel is important to support. The area has a wide variety of talented folk, and we can provide a venue to showcase their work both to locals and visitors. We have published books, including the Museum's own guide book, and created a publicly accessible library – named in honour of Miss Marion Campbell – which contains her own collection of archaeological and historical titles, bequeathed to the Trust following her death.



Table in the Marion Campbell Library, created by craftsman Martin Murphy using the different kinds of wood that would have been available to prehistoric people living in Kilmartin Glen. The surface of the table is set with deer antler, amber and jet. © Kilmartin House Trust/Aaron Watson

The Trust also aspired to create local jobs and indeed it did. In addition to the employment directly generated by the Museum it has been externally estimated that it, and the area's archaeology, generates an economic impact locally of around £3 million per year.

None of this would have been possible without a great deal of hard work, much of it voluntary in the early days. We've also received a huge amount of support from the local community, numerous volunteers, private trusts and charities, in addition to funding from local and national agencies. Despite a few 'hiccups' over the years with regard to funding, we now receive core grants from Historic Scotland and Argyll and Bute Council.

However the majority of our funding continues to be self generated, and we still rely on donations from individuals, grants to keep the education service running, and our Friends' Organisation subscriptions. Funding is a challenge for Museums the world over, but this is especially so in a rural location with a very seasonal tourist industry. We have nonetheless risen to the challenge and will continue to do so.

I have been at Kilmartin House Museum for over seven years now. Coming from a well resourced University Museum to a small independent trust with very little funding was quite a shock! My day to day encounters with objects altered significantly too; having worked with one of the countries' largest and best collections of archaeology, which contained artefacts from all over the world, to focus on objects from JUST Argyll was a major change.

Initially the Museum started with loan items, and a small core collection of local artefacts, again a Marion Campbell bequest. Over the last seven years this has grown hugely, and we now collect all archaeological material which is found in Mid Argyll and Lorne, and effectively also in Kintyre since I also curate the archaeological collections at Campbeltown Museum. Argyll and Bute Council own and run Campbeltown Museum, but asked us to curate the collections in 2006. We do this under a service level agreement, and a similar agreement is in place with Auchindrain whereby they look after the social history and fine art collections at Campbeltown.

Most material comes into the Museum via the Treasure Trove system, and this might be stray finds, or archaeological excavation assemblages. One of the most interesting examples of a recent acquisition is the Glennan assemblage. This Bronze Age urn, flint

blade and associated human remains were found accidentally in a rock shelter in 2001. Because of the presence of human skeletal material, an excavation took place and the assemblage was accessioned into the Museum's collections following research. The remains belonged to a middle aged man, and he had been cremated, and placed in the urn along with the flint blade, which was his only grave good. The pot had then been inverted and placed in a rock shelter, where it remained for nearly 4,000 years.

My favourite 'stray' find, as they are known, is a wonderful flint knife, found in a vegetable patch at a house in Kilmory Knap. The finder promptly brought the object to the Museum where it eventually returned having gone through the Treasure Trove system.

This beautiful flint knife was found by Dr David Green whilst digging in his garden at Kilmory, Achnamara. Dr Green brought the flint to the Museum, and we were able to report it to the Treasure Trove Secretariat. It was claimed by the Crown via the Treasure Trove System and then allocated to Kilmartin House Museum where it can be enjoyed by all who visit us. © Kilmartin House Trust/ Aaron Watson



Both the knife and fragments of the Glennan Urn are now on display in the Museum.

Another area I have been keen to develop at Kilmartin is temporary exhibitions. It's essential to be able to show people something different, and this is especially so for locals. Although there are major limitations to the space available to use, we've staged three major exhibitions over the last few years. The first was the 2007 year of highland culture exhibition 'Views, Visions Voices'. This showcased the prehistoric collections and included material from the Upper Largie Quarry, along with fantastic reconstruction illustrations by Aaron Watson which gave a flavour of what life might have been like 5 or 4 thousand years ago in Kilmartin Glen.

The Early Christian exhibition was the second and showcased the Torbhlairen Bell and Shrine – a wonderful ornate 12th century shrine case, which contained a 7th century iron bell - objects I first became aware of from the front cover of an early edition of the Kist! The bell and shrine were found in the 19th century in Kilmichael Glen, and they entered into the collections of the National Museum of Scotland. We were delighted when our loan application was approved, a special display case was purchased, and the bell and shrine were exhibited here for 6 months.

It has always been a dearly held aim, not able to be fully realised in the early days, that important locally found archaeological material should be displayed in the context of the landscape in which it was found. Indeed, this was one of the reasons for the Museum's founding, and prior to that so many important objects have gone to the collections of the National Museum of Scotland, the British Museum and Glasgow Museums.

During my time here, we have worked closely with the National Museum of Scotland to replace all the replicas displayed in the Museum gallery with the genuine artefacts. We've also tried to bring back significant items, such as the Torbhlaren bell and shrine, for temporary exhibitions. Sadly other important assemblages, such as the Bronze Age Beaker pot and arrowheads from Templewood, loaned when the Museum first opened by Glasgow Museums are now in new displays at Kelvingrove.

We were lucky enough to receive the Orkney Venus exhibition, which was organised by Historic Scotland following the discovery on the Links of Noltland excavation of the earliest representation of the human form to be found in Scotland.

Our current exhibition is called Dalriada Digs and Discoveries – staged to showcase the excavations and surveys done as part of the Dalriada Project. Again, it features reconstruction illustrations by Aaron Watson, as well as a film. The objects we found during our excavations are also on display.

Our understanding of the past is ever changing. However, conventional Museum interpretation tends to make it seem fixed as well as tending to divorce objects from the context in which they were found. But not here at Kilmartin, which presents a unique holistic interpretation that clearly entangles site and object, and this is very much a feature of the Digs and Discoveries exhibition.

A Museum engaging in excavation is relatively unusual in Britain. Myself and field archaeologist Roddy Regan initiated this area of work shortly after we arrived in Argyll. We have completed a

number of excavations now at Barnluasgan Dun, Balure Dun, the Ormaig Rock Art site, Kilmory Oib Deserted Settlement, and a prehistoric monument on Carnassarie Farm. Nearly 400 newly discovered sites and monuments have been reported to the National Monument Record by Kilmartin House Museum, most of which were discovered during survey work we undertook as part of the Dalriada Project and survey work done for the Forestry Commission.

All this work has been published as summaries in previous editions of the Kist, and as we work through the post excavation process, more articles will follow. Our reports are available on line on our website, and in the Marion Campbell Library. We have also supported other researchers and student's work. This new information is adding to the current knowledge about the area and the people who have lived here during the last five thousand or so years. Time and time again, I am struck by the sheer number of sites – especially prehistoric ones, and am reminded that Mid Argyll is a special place to live and work.

I know that many other people feel the same way, and this is probably the reason we receive so much support from volunteers. For example, the survey work would not have been possible without their support. Our long term volunteers, (along with our dedicated staff of course), are essential to the smooth running of the Museum, performing a variety of tasks ranging from keeping the library in order (including incidentally, NHASMA's literary collection) and managing the Friends, to completing funding applications and gardening.

During the last year we have also managed what could probably be described as our first successful and complete monument conservation project – the Kilmichael Cross. This 14th century cross had been moved from Glassary Parish, repaired with iron bands and re-erected in St Colombas Episcopal Church about 150 years ago. The repairs were failing and the cross was in danger of collapse.

The Museum is part of the Dunadd Historic Gravestones Group, and agreed to initiate a project to restore this masterpiece of medieval stone carving (not to mention find the money to pay for it!). Historic Scotland conserved the cross, and it has now been re-erected, looking somewhat nearer to its original magnificence. One of the proudest moments of my working life was seeing members of the local community (Episcopalians, Presbyterians, Catholics, atheists,



agnostics, a buddhist and a suspected pagan, as well as a good deal inbetween!) come together for a moving ceremony led by the Reverend Roy Flatt to welcome the Cross to its new home. The importance of history and heritage as part of the glue that holds a community together could not have been more apparent that evening.

Over the coming years, we are looking forward to continuing our work; undertaking more research and excavation, monument conservation, artefact collection, and developing the site, especially the exhibition space. We have plans too, for an updated version of the guidebook, and to pursue special status for the glen, so that future generations are able to experience this very special piece of Scotland's past.

WILDLIFE - 40 YEARS OF CHANGE

BY DAVE BATTY

"That's not a buzzard!" shouted my wife. Going along the Moss road 40 years ago any large bird on a telephone pole or fence post could only be a buzzard. However, today the large bird is worth a second look: on this occasion it's an osprey. The Crinan Estuary is now a regular place for birds on migration to stay and feed during August and September. Even better is that several pairs now breed in Mid Argyll. The first birds reached the Cairngorms in 1954 but it was not until 1987 that the first birds nested and laid eggs on Loch Awe and with successful breeding the next year. Since then the number of breeding birds has gradually increased and birds are regularly seen from April onwards. Over the next decade we can expect them to expand further in Argyll.

Ospreys arrived themselves in Scotland and Argyll but another large bird needed a helping hand. White-tailed eagles (or sea eagles) are increasingly been seen in Mid Argyll and although not a common sight they are not unusual. They were re-introduced to Mull and successfully bred for the first time in 1985. Now these huge birds are regularly seen and perhaps by Kist 100 they'll be breeding in Mid Argyll.

Not all the additions to the breeding birds of the Crinan area are as welcome. In the last few years the number of Canada geese has increased markedly. These are not native to Scotland but have been released or escaped from captivity and have taken to the area like a goose to water. Nowadays in the spring you expect to see a breeding pair on every lochan and coastal island. Later in the summer groups of adults and large goslings are seen off shore in the sheltered sea lochs and bays. By the end of summer large numbers, over 200, gather together on the Crinan Estuary and in the winter they are found on the agricultural fields round the Moss causing problems for the local farmers. The situation is repeated elsewhere in Argyll and other parts of Scotland.

With birds it is relatively easy to know what changes have taken place as there are plenty of bird watchers around to record the changes. One of the changes over the last 40 years has been the interest in other groups of animals, such as butterflies, moths and dragonflies. The number of species of dragonflies now recorded for Mid Argyll has increased but this is more due to better recording than perhaps new species colonizing the area. However the situation is not quite that simple. The southern hawker, a handsome large dragonfly, was refound in the 1980s after a gap of 101 years. Since then it has been found in many places in Argyll, both in natural sites

and garden ponds. As well as freshwater this species is also found along the shore just above the high tide line in pools of brackish water. Equally if you have a garden pond and you see a large dragonfly in September it will be a southern hawker. Some of these records are a mixture of greater searching but some is a result of natural colonization over the last few years. As the name suggests the southern hawker is a common dragonfly in England. Is some of the recent spread within Argyll due to climate change? Over the next few years changes in the distribution of species in the area might be an indication of climate change. Mid Argyll is a hotspot for dragonflies with more than half the Scottish species found here.

Other changes over the last 40 years relate not to species but to entire habitats. Mid Argyll still retains some of the best examples and largest areas of native broadleaved woodland in Scotland, principally oak woodland or oak dominated woodland. They are really better termed semi-natural woodland having been affected, altered and used by man over many centuries; both as a source of timber and other woodland products and also being cleared for agriculture. We can still see the result of the coppice system from the nineteenth century in the form of charcoal hearths to supply fuel for the iron ore furnaces at Bonawe and Furnace. The result is also seen in the relatively dense stands of young oak trunks in the woods. From that time when they were valued our attitude to these woods has changed over the years. In the last 40 years they have been viewed as of little or no commercial value, considered incapable of producing timber of any value so that they were felled, killed and planted with conifers. However since then attitudes have changed and they are valued for wildlife, landscape, amenity and leisure activities, and even for some limited timber uses. These woodlands are now recognized as being important in their own right. They support a very wide range of

animals and plants, some of which are of national and international importance.

It's not only woodland whose value has been recognized over the last 40 years. Peat bogs, in particular raised mires, have been re-assessed and not now regarded as waste land or useless ground (at least not by everybody). It was realized that these lowland raised bogs were literally a shrinking habitat due to drainage for agriculture and planting by conifers. The Moine Mhor is now recognised as one of the best examples of a raised mire in Europe with its range of habitats from the central, acid, Sphagnum bog to the wetlands on the edge and through to the coastal communities of the estuary. The acid and waterlogged conditions of the mire make it a very difficult place for plants to grow and so there is a restricted range of specialists (unlike the oak woods) able to tolerate the harsh conditions. More recently the value of peatlands as a carbon sink in terms of climate change has been recognized.

Over the last years the faithful readers of the Kist have seen changes to the local wildlife. Now even the words have changed and the latest buzz word is biodiversity. However, whatever term you use the range of wildlife has been retained over the years. Nevertheless, there have been many changes (some mentioned above). There will be many other changes before we see Kist 100. The challenge for all of us is to ensure that the changes are what we want.

TARBERT CASTLE CONSERVATION

BY ROBERT MCPHAIL

Clive Bowd presented an article for Kist 73 on the work of volunteers from Tarbert Conservation Initiative and Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust (the owners of Tarbert's Royal Castle). At that time stonework consolidation was a major issue requiring funding if the existing ruin was to survive in its iconic location above the village.

The Community Trust appointed an Historic Scotland approved design team - ALS Architects, Brian Jackson Quantity Surveyor and Martin Stewart Engineer. Specifications were drawn up, agreed with Historic Scotland under a Scheduled Monument Consent and tenders obtained from suitably qualified masonry companies.

A very detailed application was prepared to the Scottish Governments Rural Development Fund consisting of some 175 A4 pages and documents (not least a letter of support from NHASMA) and a public petition with over 400 signatures.

After some 18 Months of work a 100% grant of £750,000.00 was given to the Trust over a four year period. The Trust undertook to continue its volunteer improvements to the site and raise a further £45,000.00 to complete access and interpretation of the monument. Laing Traditional Masonry Ltd was appointed contractor in March 2010 and the first phase to consolidate the NW façade is due for completion in September.

Site inaccessibility is a major issue and partly solved by using a helicopter lift for 20 Tons of scaffold and initial material loads.

Scaffolding is extensive as it needs to be self supporting with no tie to the existing walls. Lime mortar samples were taken for analysis and some detailed structural inspections revealed that the walls had suffered badly during the frost /thaw cycles last winter. It was apparent that we had probably been given the opportunity to intervene just in time as a further winter could easily have seen the collapse of the remaining ruin.

Ivy covering to upper areas had been poisoned over two years ago and although much had stripped itself strands were deeply imbedded in stonework joints and had to be carefully removed by masons. Pointing samples were agreed using a lime/ sand mix including the

addition of broken shell to increase the texture. Deep consolidation and pointing commenced using small schist pinnings where appropriate..



© Fox Denham 2010

Research concluded that the large fractured opening in the NW masonry was probably not a widened existing opening but a collapse of the thinner wall structure at the entrance stairway. The whole internal corner was weakened by the wall core erosion which had occurred and compression cracks in individual stones showed that excess loads were present requiring action beyond consolidation. After some considerable consultation what will perhaps be the least understood action was instructed. Historic Scotland will not permit

rebuilding in stone to prevent confusion with historic work and the big opening was in filled in grey brickwork with supporting brick piers and lintels on the inside to distribute loads as quickly as possible to substructure level.



Smaller openings and some projecting stones have been supported using stainless steel bent bars: again, a procedure complying with the Scheduled

Monument Consent.

Vegetation was stripped from wall heads, stonework consolidated and topped with a clay/sand mix covered with locally sourced meadow turf fixed in place with hazel twigs. Not observed in many years but known to exist from historic records the moulded sandstone corbels at the wall head were now revealed and carefully pointed.



Scaffold will be left in place over the winter to protect the extensive lime mortar pointing and next spring it will come down and be re erected on the NE façade where very similar works will be carried out.

A further area of the site around the round entrance towers in the curtain wall is now being cleared of vegetation with the assistance of the Forestry Commission. Also, a section of the

Kintyre Way Path which was badly eroded has been improved with the help of the Argyll and Bute Access Officer and Kintyre Way management.

The overall conservation strategy for the site includes sustainable grazing by a small flock of Hebridean sheep looked after by volunteers.



In the meantime TCI volunteers continue with their clearing work parties on the first Saturday of each month with all hands invited to come along and help.

The Trust are hopeful that in three to four years time the whole scheduled site and its historic ruins will be secured, accessible and properly interpreted for scholars and leisure visitors while providing a pleasant open space for residents.

Various castle photographs courtesy of R. McPhail 2010

RED SQUIRRELS OF ARGYLL

BY ED TYLER



I am sure readers are aware of the plight of our Red Squirrels. The Scottish Wildlife Trust have begun an initiative entitled 'Saving Scotlands Red Squirrels' (SSRS) and the officer for Argyll is Lewis.

Lewis says: "We aim to establish a co-ordinated network of landowners, householders, volunteers and project staff all working together to help red squirrels. If we continue with this essential work I believe we will prove that targeted grey squirrel control is an

effective measure to protect our remaining populations of indigenous red squirrels”.

Red squirrels are still abundant in the forests of the west of Scotland. However, as elsewhere, grey squirrels have spread from the Central Belt northwards on both sides of Loch Lomond and as far north as Aberfoyle and Callander, and westwards along Strathearn as far as St Fillans and Lochearnhead. They are now threatening red squirrels in wider Argyll as they establish populations at Tarbet at the eastern end of the narrow pass between Loch Lomond and the Cowal peninsula. The occasional grey squirrel has made it through to Arrochar and Glen Croe, and if this were allowed to continue, some of Scotland’s major red squirrel populations would be at risk. At the northern end of Loch Lomond, a continued spread northwards from either Loch Lomond or Lochearnhead could potentially threaten Highland’s red squirrels.

Thanks to the mountainous terrain in this area which has a limited and confined distribution of the kind of broad leaved woodland favoured by grey squirrels, it should be possible to set up control networks among local volunteers and landowners at a few key places that will put a stop to further grey squirrel spread, and even push the limit of the grey squirrel population south to pinch-points that can be even more sustainably controlled.

At the same time, SSRS will work with Forestry Commission Scotland to begin the process of enhancing the large forest networks known as “[red squirrel strongholds](#)”, many of which will be located in Argyll. By means of careful management, the “strongholds” should in the future provide enhanced habitats for red squirrels and other biodiversity.

A trap loan scheme, with professional support and training is available for landowners and householders in key target areas.

Contact Lewis for details of how to become involved.

You can also help SSRS by volunteering to survey areas local to you or by reporting your squirrel sightings at:

www.scottishsquirrelssurvey.co.uk

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FROM EIGG TO EIGG - THE BARKER YEARS BY REBECCA PINE

This may sound like a rather lazy reference to his regular hard-boiled breakfast, but it is truly meant as an affectionate tribute to Douglas and his organisational skills over the last ten summer holiday island tours.

Supported by Valerie who always took meticulous note of the hundreds of birds we saw, Douglas's statistics are impressive: comprehensive accommodation organised for up to twenty folk in more than a dozen locations; over thirty islands visited and

itineraries, including some fifty water crossings, arranged from Shetland in the north to Islay in the south and St. Kilda in the west.

Ah, St. Kilda, the latest and most magical of destinations! From our first base on Harris this year we arrived at St. Kilda after a three and a half hour crossing through hovering mist, which lifted dramatically just as we dropped anchor in the bay. The harsh beauty of the main island of Hirta is somehow wholly appropriate to the simple lives once lived by its inhabitants, and the cliffs and stacs of Boreray are unbelievably severe, both for the thousands of birds that colonise them and for the men who once relied upon them for food.

So many other memories over these ten years come flooding to mind, as diverse as the seal colonies off the Monach Isles and the broch of Mousa; the tame puffins who greeted us from their burrows on the cliffs overlooking Muckle Flugga and the plane landing on the beach at Barra; the Iron Age house on the sands of Great Bernera and the gardeners cottage that was our hostel overlooking Dunvegan Castle on Skye; oh, and Calanish and Skara Brae and Jarlshof and many, many more. Thank you Douglas, for all of these.

It all started in Eigg ten years ago, and as my heading suggests came full circle when the boat back from Rum made Eigg its last island call again on our way home this year. Eigg in many ways was the ideal island on which to spend time after the magic of St. Kilda; familiar, comfortable and together en famille. As with all of our holidays down the years the sun shone upon us as we made pilgrimages to the Singing Sands, An Sgurr (the Nose), the infamous caves or the antiquities of Kildonan. And Muck joined our list of island explorations.

But Rum was Douglas's choice as "his" last island in charge and Kinloch Castle was to be our last accommodation. Surely Douglas could not have predicted some of the inconveniences of castle living, even one designed as a plaything for a cotton baron! Full of Edwardian charm in its preserved quarters – with a rare Orchestron among its features – it was somewhat primitive in its facilities for a back-packing clientele. But nothing daunted we coped, and the island itself was full of charm providing us with a variety of walking and climbing opportunities to suit all tastes and abilities.

My own poetic offering at dinner on our last night back on the mainland at Arisaig owed something to Lewis Carroll, but nothing to the giant television screen in the adjacent bar screening the World Cup to a rather raucous audience! ----- and was –

GOBBERSMACKY

*We ferried to Harris, and Lewis car-rolled;
we ogled at monuments ogled of old;
and that's when it struck me as trundled we back
that what we were seeking was Gobbers to smack!*

*'Twas brillig! 'Twas thurslig! I'll never forget;
the toves were all slithy, the bulwarks were wet;
all mimsy was Moisy and frabjous was Fred
as out of the mist came "St. Kilda ahead!"*

*We landed at Hirta, the curtain arose,
and beamish the sun gave the brightest of shows –
the village, deserted; the Mullachs so steep;
the pinnacles awesome; and Soay the sheep:*

*and down from the borogroves, vorpal the sea;
and purple the pond between New York and me.
Then back on the quayside strung up by their roots
at once reunited were man and his boots!*

*Then skiffing across to the Boreray heights
we chortled with glee at the wonderful sights
of gannets and guillemots vertic'ly stacked;
and beyond any question our Gobbers were smacked!*

*From Harris we hirpled through Uig and Skye
and spiered for Knock Castle, but still passed it by.
Then we ferried to Mallaig 'en passant' (they say)
to be ready for Eigg on the following day.*

*From sun on the jetty through haar in the west
The ferry emerged like the Marie Celeste
(except for the passengers!) – and, furthermore,
though manxome the mist there was sunshine ashore.*

*And once on the island our wheels were our feet,
the 'Nose' was our compass, the 'Glebe' was our seat;
and Galmisdale harbour the place of our berth,
and the end of the island, 'Five Pennies', our worth.*

*We sang with the sands on the soles of our shoes –
a little bit Gaelic, some Rhythm and Blues –
but John preferred Mozart, so uffish we rose
to head for the eagles and follow the Nose.*

*We took to the waters again like a duck
and crossed to Port Mor on the island of Muck.
We strode to the far end, and over the Sound
the views were splendifrous the compass around.*

*The last day on Eigg was an omelette: some chose
to go down to the Caves and some climbed up the Nose;
some potted and painted, some gimble and gyred,
and did (in a nutshell) just what they desired.*

*The sun was outgrabe and the jub-jub flew free
both high on the rock-face and down by the sea;
so we packed with our cases fond mem'ries of Eigg
and were out for nine-thirty next morning, next leg.*

*On the boat trip a basking shark came for the ride
and a red-throated diver took off alongside.
In the evening the Ranger showed all Rum's delights –
the flora, the fauna, the seashore, the sights.*

*But what of the Castle? We're told that a queen
once slept in the bed of Rebecca and Jean!
But she'd only a potty: no water; no loo!
And as for the neighbours – well, what a to do!*

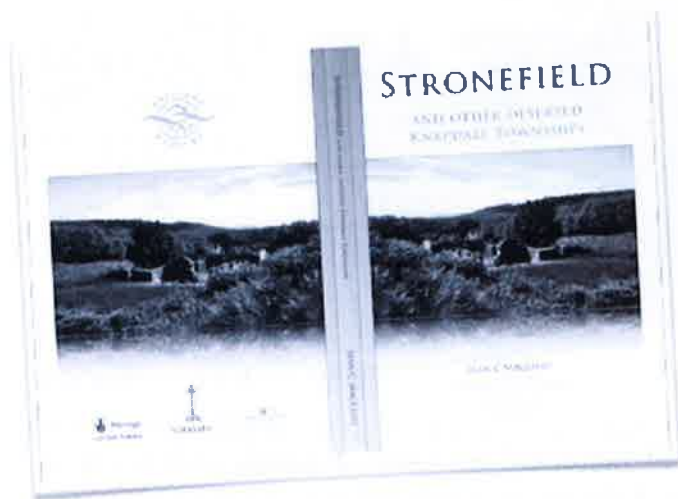
*But let us not quibble. Twelve days of the best
of the bonniest islands in Scotland's north west;
and the walks and the company good as they come.
So much to remember; not least of it Rum.*

*'Twas brillig! 'Tis Arisaig! Back on dry land,
and only a stone's throw from Morar's white sand;
and Bonnie Prince – Douglas! The standard is set!
And were all our Gobbers smacked, truly? – You bet!*

Rebecca Pine

STRONEFIELD AND OTHER DESERTED TOWNSHIPS

JEAN MACLEOD, NHASMA/DALRAIDA PROJECT,
AVAILABLE FROM ARGYLL BOOKSHOP AND KILMARTIN
HOUSE MUSEUM.



Several years ago Jean MacLeod was carrying out a family history search for relatives who had emigrated from the Point of Knap district in the early 19th Century. She started to catch glimpses of the social history of

the area and posed the question: what lay behind the desertion of the townships? These were once the manifestation of a subsistence farming system which went into decline. What were the causes?

The above publication is her answer to these questions. After painting a picture of life in the townships she delves into the religious upheavals of the time and the actual emigrations, including correspondence between Knapdale and people and their relatives and friends in Canada and America, collectively known as the McGilp letters.

The book is presented in an excellent colour format by our sub/picture editor Philip Foxdenham.

DALRIADA: A TWENTIETH CENTURY KINGDOM

MARIAN PALLISTER, ARGYLL PUBLISHING, 2010, £9.99.

This does for the 20th Century what “Stronefield” did for previous centuries. The changes to people’s everyday lives accelerated even further during this period, and this book captures these



changes through vivid first-hand accounts of people still living in Ardrishaig, Knapdale, Kilmichael, Lochgilphead and the area in and around the Crinan Canal. It is a multi-layered read, because behind the contributors are the volunteers who conducted the interviews, and behind them is the narrative voice of Marian Pallister, who wove it all together under the auspices of the Dalraida Community History Project.

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