Atlantic Hazel Woods

Stone In Mid Argyll - Pt II

Elephants In Argyll

The Kist 82

EDITORIAL

Welcome to a packed edition of Kist, with - among other offerings - Roger Anderton's excellent second article demonstrating how geology informs our historical buildings and gravestones. Also we hear from another new contributor - Gordon Gray Stephens - who writes about our ancient hazel woods. I fully agree with him that they are magical places and I am pleased that people like him are putting them on the map and highlighting their uniqueness before many are neglected through overgrazing.

The fascinating articles on the Appin Head and the settlement of Glennan appeared first in the Museum newsletter which is available exclusively to Friends of Kilmartin House. **If you would like to become a Friend please contact Kilmartin House. Benefits of becoming a Friend include free entry to the Museum, free entry for you and a guest to all the Museum exhibitions and free copies of the Newsletter.**

Kist 83 will be an unusual edition in that all of the contents will focus on one subject - Auchindrain. As will be known to members who heard Bob Clark's talk in March, or who joined the visit to Auchindrain in July, the past year has seen an intensive process of research into the evolution and significance of the site by a multidisciplinary team of specialists. The story that has emerged is fascinating, and in many ways quite different to what we all thought we knew about Auchindrain and why the place is important. For Kist 83, Bob Clark will be working with the Editor to reduce a considerable body of new data and analysis down to a length that will fit into one edition of Kist. A series of pieces will reflect different strands of research including early history, the buildings, the people, and how the place was farmed, all generously illustrated with historical documents, maps and photographs.

... COVER DESIGN - PHILLIP FOX-DENHAM ...

The Appin Head

Sharon Webb

Almost 30 years ago now, Mr William Breckenridge unearthed a curious carved stone head from the vegetable patch at his home in Appin. National Museum of Scotland Curator Trevor Cowie inspected the head and suggested that it might well be part of the tradition of carved heads found in pagan Celtic Britain and Ireland, thus making it perhaps as much as 2,000 years old (PSAS 1986:91). The head might have been the focus of veneration, perhaps placed so that its stone eyes appeared to be gazing out across the Lynn of Lorn to the Isle of Lismore. Perhaps this was a sacred shrine, where people came to offer thanks, or appeal to the deities they held dear? Other evidence for the existence of cult sites at this time has been found in Argyll. The Ballachulish Figure, an incredible survival found in the 19th century, and believed to be

The Appin Head

Iron Age was found at the head of a loch with the remains of a woven screen or perhaps small building. Of course, the Ballachulish figure is somewhat different, being female, and constructed from wood. The sex of the Appin head is hard to determine, but however roughly carved, the features have a definite male appearance, and there's also a faint suggestion of a moustache. As noted by Cowie (PSAS 1986:89) it is quite possible that the carving was not done all at one time. Parts of the eyes and around the nose especially look less weathered than other areas of the carving, suggesting the carving had been modified in its later life.

Kilmartin House Museum was contacted about the head, as the Breckenridges felt that Lugh (as the head has been nicknamed) would be best preserved in a museum. The case is passing through the Treasure Trove system, and the Scottish Finds Allocation Panel has recommended that it be awarded to Kilmartin, so hopefully he will enter the collections in due course. In the meantime the Appin Head has been brought to Kilmartin, and is now displayed in the main gallery for a short time as Lismore Museum have expressed a willingness to apply to have him on loan. Perhaps Lugh can once again gaze out over the Lynn of Lorn, albeit looking in the opposite direction! We are very grateful to William and Jean Breckenridge for allowing the head to come into the Museum collections so that he may be enjoyed by many more folk in the years to come.

Reference: Cowie, T 1986 A stone head from Port Appin, Argyll Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, 116 (1986), 89-91

HAZEL WOODS

GORDON GRAY STEPHENS

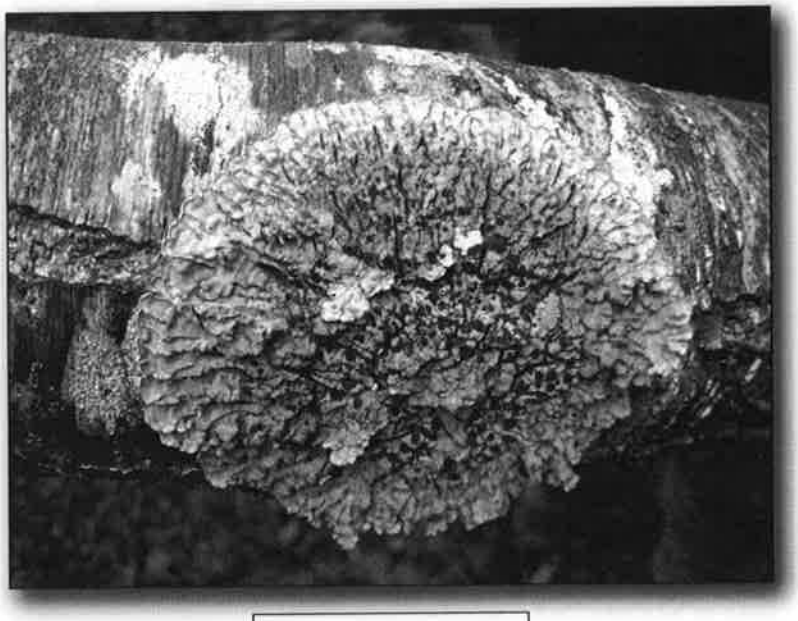
The Atlantic Hazel Action Group (AHAG) is an informal partnership of government agencies, local authorities, NGO's and lichenologists. AHAG promotes awareness of our Atlantic hazelwoods, and encourages more sympathetic management of hazelwoods. At the moment it is delivering the EU Leader and SNH funded hazel glove project.

Atlantic hazel is concentrated on the oceanic west coast of Scotland, with Argyll and Lochaber as strongholds. Hazel occurs throughout the west coast, however these special Atlantic hazelwoods form a distinctive habitat which has a high biodiversity value. Forming a part of our "Celtic rainforest", these woods are home to some of the richest assemblages of

Hazel Tree

mosses, lichens, bryophytes and fungi in the whole of Europe.

Hazelwoods are one of Scotland's oldest woodland type, recolonising Britain well before oak. Pollen records show that hazel *(Corylus avellana)* arrived in Mid Argyll over 9,500 years ago, and pollen records also indicate that pure hazel stands covered much of the west of Scotland. The pollen records are backed up by the presence of hazel shells in the Mesolithic shell middens and pits on Oronsay. Some of our remaining hazelwoods are still pure stands, without any larger trees such as oak, ash, alder or wych elm. These woods are probably remnants of these first colonisers, and if this is the case, they are some of Britain's most ancient habitats.



Plum Fruited Felt Lichen

Hazel was important in the physical world of Argyll's people. It appears in the archaeological record, whether as food on Oronsay, or as building material and charcoal as found by Eric Creegan in the 1962 excavation at Bruach an Druimein, Poltalloch (Abernethy 2009). It also appears in the Poltalloch Estate Records (A&BC Archive), with records of over 27,000 wands being produced in one year from Inverlussa for barrel hoops, and over 700 man days devoted to managing the hazel in the same woods in one month in 1838.

Hazel was also important in the world of myths and spirituality. Hazel was regarded as the best material for dowsing, with St John's Day considered the best day to cut your dowsing rod. Hazel was one of the nine sacred woods that should form the new fire on Beltane, while Holyrood day, the 14th September was the traditional nut picking date. Robert Burns "Halloween" describes the role of Hazelnuts in selecting your partner:

"The auld guidwife's well-hoordit nits,
Are round and round divided,
And monie lads' and lasses' fates
Are there that night decided:
Some kindle coothie, side by side,
And burn thegither trimly;
Some start awa, wi' saucy pride,
And jump out-owre the chimlie
Fu' high that night."

Today the continuity of woodland cover, coupled with the west coast's plentiful rain, mild climate and clean air, allows

specialist plants to continue to thrive in Atlantic hazelwoods. Notable inhabitants includes the white script lichen, *Graphis alboscripta*, which is almost entirely dependent on Atlantic hazelwoods, and which has only been found in Scotland. Atlantic hazelwoods also provides the main home for 23 other very rare species of lichen for which Scotland has an international responsibility (Woods and Coppins 2003).

Atlantic Hazelwoods also provide the main Scottish home for the Hazel gloves fungus *(Hypocreopisis rhododendri)*, which is found on about 25 hazelwood sites. This fungus was first discovered in Britain on Mull in the 1970s (previously it had been recorded on Rhododendron in North America). Hazel glove has been selected as a Species Action Framework, a Scottish Government recognition of its importance.

Hazel Glove Fungus

Despite the importance of the Atlantic hazelwoods, they have tended to be sidelined over the years, a forgotten temperate rainforest. They do not fit in with the British National Vegetation Classification (NVC) community types, nor are they recognised as distinctive in the European Habitats Directive.

When we think about hazel at all, it is often as coppice, the system for managing hazel which was developed to suit England's demands for timber and the growing conditions found in England. This focus on coppice has led to the following misunderstandings about hazel:

- Hazel is an understorey shrub
- Multi-stemmed hazel is all hazel coppice
- Hazel will die out if it is not regularly coppiced
- Hazel will develop into a single-trunked tree if left uncoppiced.

AHAG is working to counter these misconceptions, which are not very accurate, and which can be particularly misleading when applied to Atlantic hazelwoods. Instead hazel should be regarded as a light demanding pioneering species, which will form self perpetuating pure stands. Conservation grazing regimes are normally the best way of managing Atlantic hazelwoods, with a grazing level which aims to allow the hazel to regenerate, while preventing bramble and other growth from overwhelming the bryophytes and mosses that are such a special feature of these woods.

For more information about the Atlantic Hazel Action Group and its work please contact Gordon Gray Stephens Gordon.graystephens@scottishnativewoods.org.uk 01852 500366

Web based information

Sandy and Brian Coppins are Atlantic hazel champions, and provide a lot of information at http://www.snh.gov.uk/about-scotlands-nature/habitats-and-ecosystems/woodland/

The RBGE is holding a Forgotten Forest exhibition in September. The associated website includes a clip from a BBC film on Atlantic hazelwoods http://elmer.rbge.org.uk/forgottenforests/

References:

Abernethy D et al Bruach An Druimein, Poltalloch, Argyll: excavations directed by the late Eric Cregeen, 1960–2. Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports 2009

Woods, R and Coppins, B: A Conservation Evaluation of British Lichens, 2003

Elephants in Argyll

Jim Gray

Editor's note: *Jim Gray, who originally comes from Minard, unearthed a fascinating story about an elephant which - as part of a circus - used to make an annual appearance in Argyll. Particular thanks to Ian MacIntyre, who owns the eponymous shop in Tarbert, and from whose collection the photograph below comes from:*

An Elephant in Tarbert!

The story is centred around the picture in Ian's collection. Behind the elephant is the Cadora Cafe (white building) with the old Templar Hall on the left with long narrow windows. Ian was a child at the time (1947) and actually followed the elephant and his handler (on the horse) from

Tarbert to West Loch Tarbert where, he tells me, they came across an old woman called Mrs. Legg (husband had been a vet apparently), sitting on the wall outside her house opposite West Loch Pier. On seeing the Elephant coming around the corner she made a 'beeline' for the house, slammed the door and, according to Ian, bolted the door! The following paragraphs have been taken from a brief internet history of Roberts Brothers Circus:

In the winter months, their acts would travel with Don Ross' Stage Circus, or with their own Hip-Hip-Zoo-Ray circus, continuing until the death of the variety theatre circuit in Britain. Both Bobby and Tommy Roberts were skilled animal trainers, Bobby specialising in elephants, horses and ponies as well as dogs. His first elephant was Maharanee. a 23-year old acquired from Dudley Zoo in early 1946. With wartime restrictions, she had been unable to travel by rail so a cattle float was used to transport her but on the journey to Campbeltown, she turned round in it bursting the sides and her handler had to walk the elephant the rest of the way. The delay caused the show to miss two performances but they eventually found the elephant and her groom sitting on the roadside. He had sent the Robert's brothers a telegram stating I'm here - where are you?"

By 1947, the show boasted a menagerie of lions, Indian and African monkeys, llamas, bears, Shetland ponies, Arabian horses, a laughing hyena, zebras and even a giant rat.

I think that another Circus called Pinder and Ord used to visit Lochfyneside from time to time and a man from Minard (where I come from originally) had a nickname `Tinder`

and/or 'Ordie' thought to have been as a result of his mispronouncing the name of that Circus!

Mary Wilson of Glenreasdell Farm, Whitehouse has a remarkably similar story, though this one goes back to around 1924. "The elephant was being transported down to Campbeltown in a lorry; but the lorry couldn't get up the old road (Mill Brae). They took it out of its box and walked it up the Brae. My mother - Christina Galbraith - was in the garden. Being a child, and having never seen an elephant before, she got a big fright and ran back to the house. I think that the elephant was allowed to graze on the War Memorial green in Whitehouse."

Going back even further, I have in my collection a book called `Days at the Coast` by Robert Preston published by Richard Stanlake, Ochiltree Sawmill, The Lade, Ochiltree, Ayrshire KA18 2NX. In it is a photograph of an elephant in Inverary.

This elephant and cart would have been a rare sight in any town at the turn of the century. The circus had arrived and would parade through the streets before setting up the big top. This scene of Inveraray dates from about 1905.

STONE IN MID-ARGYLL: LINKS BETWEEN GEOLOGY, ARCHAEOLOGY AND ARCHITECTURE

ROGER ANDERTON

PART II: 1800 AD TO THE PRESENT

In Part I we saw that local stone was used for building, monuments and graveslabs from the earliest times until 1800 AD. Epidiorite, an ancient metamorphosed volcanic rock, can be extracted in large slabs which make it ideal for a variety of uses from standing stones to door lintels. It was also the material on which nearly all the local Neolithic to Bronze Age rock art is found. It is soft enough to be suitable for carving yet sufficiently durable that the carved patterns have endured for millennia. Chlorite schist, a similar rock type that can be split into thin sheets, was also used for graveslabs. In comparison, the other common local rock types that are hard and durable, grit and quartzite, are too hard to be carved and tend to break into small blocks. Their use was restricted, therefore, to building and walling.

Fig 1

THE EARLY 19TH CENTURY – LOCAL MATERIALS STILL DOMINATE

Buildings dating from the early decades of the 19th century were invariably constructed of local stone using techniques that had not changed significantly for hundreds of years. Simple domestic and farm buildings, for example at Arichonan (Fig.1), show a mixture of epidiorite and grit walling with epidiorite for lintels and cills. In Lochgilphead itself, early 19th century buildings constructed largely of epidiorite rubble (irregularly-shaped blocks) include the Baptist Church (1815) in Argyll Street and the store in Smiddy Lane. In these, the walls are enlivened by the placing of epidiorite slabs on-edge to form quoins at the corners. A different local stone is seen in the Kilmory area, the oldest part of Lochgilphead, where the terrace in Patterson Street was built around 1815. With the exception of the epidiorite lintels, this was built entirely of quartzite and quartz-mica schist, possibly from coastal quarries at Ardcastle, near Lochgair, from where it could easily be shipped to Kilmory quay.

Fig 2

19TH CENTURY GRAVESTONES PROVIDE KEY DATES

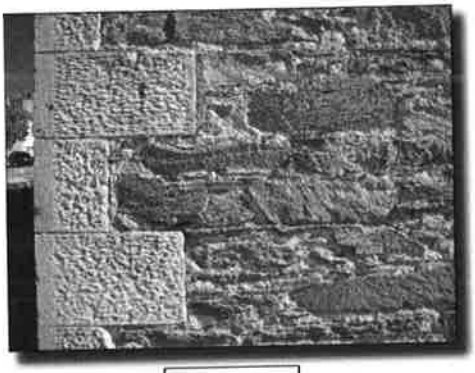


Fig 3

The study of the rock types used in gravestones is instructive because they are nearly always dated. Not surprisingly, early 19th century examples are invariably of local stone. Epidiorite or chlorite schist predominates although local black slate, limestone and micro-granite are also found. In the 1830s, buff to brown sandstones first appear then become the predominant type in the middle of the century (Fig.2). These are not local and have been imported from the Glasgow area. Their appearance does not relate to any problem with the availability of local stone, but to the huge improvements in transport at this time with the development of rail transport to take stone from inland quarries down to wharves on the Clyde and of paddle steamers to transport it onwards round the Argyll coast. Sandstone is much more easily cut and shaped than epidiorite, although not as durable, and the development of large-scale, modern, mechanised quarries in the Glasgow area meant that it could be produced relatively cheaply. The sandstone is of Carboniferous age, about 320 million years old (i.e. much younger than the local stone). Carboniferous sandstone was used for building much of Victorian Glasgow, Edinburgh and the cities of northern England. The Clyde Valley quarries remained important producers of sandstone until they became

Fig 4

exhausted towards the end of the century. This is reflected in the graveyards of Mid Argyll by the replacement of sandstone, as the main rock type for gravestones, by a variety of more exotic rock types including grey, pink and black igneous rocks such as granite, diorite and gabbro, from about 1890 onwards. These could now be worked by power tools into any shape and even polished, following the invention of tungsten carbide as a cheap polishing medium. And the source of these rock types was not just Scotland, but the world, as transport became easier and cheaper.

MID 19TH CENTURY IMPORTS CREATE A LOCAL STYLE

Returning to Mid-Argyll, Lochgilphead developed rapidly during the mid 19th century and many buildings of this age remain. Epidiorite was still the main material used for building, but now only for the wall

Fig 5

structure, with dressings of imported Carboniferous sandstone. These dressings usually took the form of tooled long and short blocks round windows, doors and wall corners (Fig.3). This style is seen in all the older streets of Lochgilphead; for example, the Community Education Centre in Manse Brae (completed in 1872 as a school), the Court House and Police Station in Lochnell Street (Fig.4), the Hollies in Poltalloch Street and most of the houses in Argyll Street. Up the hill, the larger scale buildings of the Argyll & Bute Hospital East House (1864) and the Lochgilphead Combination Poorhouse (1861) show the same materials and details. Some buildings were entirely faced in sandstone, such as the east side of Colchester Square, (Fig.5) and the Clydesdale Bank (1868) although the local epidiorite was still

Fig 6

Fig 7

used for the less visible gable ends and backs of such buildings.

The period during which Carboniferous sandstone was used in building mirrors that during which it was commonly used for gravestones, i.e. the 1840s to the 1880s. In order to find when it was first used, we need to look at when it was used in the highest-status buildings in the area as it is in these that new ideas and materials first appear. The highest status building of the period is Kilmory Castle. Its oldest part was built, or re-built, between 1828 and 1836 and, interestingly, the ground floor facade is entirely of epidiorite but, by the time the first floor was being constructed, Carboniferous sandstone was being incorporated as window surrounds and stringcourses (Fig.6). It is tempting to conclude that sandstone

was not considered during the initial design of the building but that the possibility of its use arose during construction. That would imply that its earliest use in Mid Argyll would have been during the 1830s.

END OF THE CENTURY – THE RED TIDE ARRIVES (JUST)

As the evidence from gravestones shows, the Clyde Valley sandstone quarries were becoming exhausted by the end of the 19th century. In Glasgow and elsewhere the buff Carboniferous sandstone was superseded for building purposes from about 1890 onwards by a red Permian sandstone quarried in Ayrshire and Dumfriess-shire. This is geologically slightly younger than the Carboniferous stone, at about 270 million years, but is of very good and uniform quality. It was used on a huge scale in Glasgow to build tenements and public buildings like the Kelvingrove Museum and numerous schools and is common in Campbeltown and Oban where a building boom continued up until the outbreak of war in 1914. In Lochgilphead, however, building activity was more subdued during this period and there are no buildings entirely faced with red sandstone. The use of red sandstone here is restricted to dressings on a few houses, notably Coronation Mansions (1902) on Lochnell Street (Fig. 7), the Memorial Fountain (1897) in Colchester Square (Fig. 8a) and a particularly early use on the Argyll & Bute Hospital West House (1883).

CONCLUSIONS

Fig 8

The local materials used for building and monuments in 1800 AD had changed little since prehistoric times. But, by the 1830s the development of rail and steamer transport enabled Carboniferous sandstone to be imported from the Clyde Valley for the first time. By 1840 its use was ubiquitous for door and window dressings and other detailing, for gravestones and, occasionally, for entire building facades. Together with the continued use of local epidiorite for the wall structure, the use of imported sandstone produced a distinctive mid 19th century type of construction which gives Lochgilphead an attractive and coherent architectural style. By the end, of the century red Permian sandstone was replacing the buff Carboniferous for dressings, but not on the scale seen elsewhere in Argyll. Local epidiorite continued to be used occasionally after 1914 (e.g. the Stag Hotel, 1938, Fig. 8b) and is still recycled into some rural buildings today.

FIGURE CAPTIONS

Fig.1 Farm building, Arichonan Township, Knapdale, early 19th century. Building material is local stone, about 70% epidiorite (the darker elongate blocks and lintels) and 30% grit (paler, squarer blocks).

Fig.2 Gravestones in Kilmartin churchyard. Dates on local stone (top photo) are 1832 and 1838, on Carboniferous sandstone (middle) are 1838, 1858 and 1883 and on igneous rocks (bottom) are 1892, 1910 and 1913.

Fig.3 Long and short quoins of imported Carboniferous sandstone with local epidiorite walling, Community Education Centre, Manse Brae (1872).

Fig.4 Lochnell Street. Original plain Court House on left (1849) with baronial Police Station on right (1899). Note that the sandstone on the older building is less weathered than on the new, indicating that good quality stone was worked first and only poorer quality stone was left by the end of the century.

Fig.5 East side of Colchester Square (1841). High quality Carboniferous sandstone facade.

Fig.6 Kilmory Castle, central block (1828-36). Ground floor is entirely epidiorite, first and second floors have sandstone window dressings, stringcourses and skews.

Fig.7 Coronation Mansions, Lochnell Street (1902). Permian red sandstone dressings and epidiorite walling.

Fig.8 (a) Alexander Rodger Fraser Memorial Fountain (1897), Colchester Square, in red Permian sandstone. (b) Stag Hotel corner turret (1938), Argyll Street, in epidiorite.

Searching For A Medieval Settlement At Glennan, Kilmartin, Argyll

Heather F James

The farm of Glennan is mentioned in the earliest surviving Scottish charter relating to lands in Argyll which is dated to 1240. This charter records Alexander II, King of Scotland's gift of the lands of 'Glennane' to a local chief Gillascop MacGilchrist and so provides evidence for the existence of a farm of some significance at Glennan in the mid 13th century, although the farm may well have been occupied for centuries.

My research into medieval settlement in mid-Argyll started in 2003 with numerous visits to deserted settlements in the hope of identifying remains which might date to the medieval period. The site at Glennan attracted my attention because of this rare documentary evidence and the remains of an unusual two storied structure with six fireplaces. Nearby were the low, stone built foundations of further structures, a kiln, a standing stone and several enclosures. In the hills around there were shielings and other curious enclosures. Prehistoric cairns within the farm had resulted in the site being designated a Scheduled Ancient Monument and therefore of national importance.

Over the next seven years I investigated the historic and archaeological remains at Glennan, with the assistance of students, friends and the owner (and his family) who has converted the unroofed remains into a bothy. A standing building survey, geophysics and excavations were carried out during this time. Unfortunately, no medieval remains were

Alexander II gifted the lands of Glennane circa 1240

uncovered in the areas chosen for excavation. This may be because the medieval farm was located at some distance from the current remains and with the subsequent ploughing of the valley floor, all remains have been concealed or erased. Perhaps some of the remains seen in the hills and identified as shielings or platforms are in fact much older and relate to this earlier period when farm structures were relatively unsubstantial. Only excavation of these structures and the retrieval of dating material would clarify this.

However, much of the story of Glennan has been uncovered since Alexander Campbell of Glennan, a younger son of Colin Mor of Kilberry, died in 1619. Glennan suffered during the disturbances of the late 17th century with enemies of the Campbells being accused of theft of 14 cows, 15 horses, 24 sheep and 30 goats. By 1751 Glennan had been acquired by Alexander Malcolm. The prosperity of the farm reached a

peak at the end of the 18th century with the construction of Glennan House and a new farmstead, probably funded with money from the Malcolm estates in Jamaica, but debt and bankruptcy resulted in the farm becoming absorbed into the neighbouring Stronesker farm. By 1851 about 38 people lived at Glennan, but by the late 18th century the main house was unroofed.

The excavation of Glennan House produced copious amounts of predominantly 19th and 20th century pottery, glass and clay pipes as well as sewing pins, buttons and a thimble. The New Kitchen, and a farm building nearby were found to belong to the early 20th century occupation.

The discovery of stone foundations of possibly 18th century buildings, invisible on the surface, were uncovered beside the stream and there are other humps and bumps which clearly indicate that there is still great potential for the discovery of earlier remains at Glennan.

A full description of the work at Glennan and a list of the funding bodies is included in my thesis, which is held in the Kilmartin House Museum Library. All the finds have been deposited with Kilmartin House Museum.

MULL 2011

REBECCA PINE

After the Barker years our 2011 Island extravaganza was always going to be much in the same mould but yet that little bit different. From various parts of the County, stalwarts of previous holidays and newcomers alike, made their way to Oban in good time for the sailing to Craignure and the drive along to Glenaros Lodge, the hostel chosen for us by our new management team of Fred, Mary, Moisie and Morag.

While 'the Tayvallich girls' prepared our first evening meal some of us took our first antiquarian footsteps in the evening sunshine around the estuary to the ruins of Aros castle, dating from the 13th Century. This was the first of several castles, brochs, duns and standing stones which we were to enjoy during the week, and happily a precursor of the good weather which also stayed with us.

Sheena - Mull 2011

Most of our tours were taken together of course, but some were of

necessity duplicated due to limited space on mini-buses, and by the weekend we had all covered much the same programme of events. So while some were tracking the wild life, our first journey was largely following the trail of Lachlan MacQuarrie, the 'father of Australia', whose mausoleum is central to Mull, and whose birthplace was on the island of Ulva off Mull's west coast. Much of interest here included a museum in the form of a crofters' cottage and a small but fascinating 'parliamentary' style church designed by Telford. Some of us lost our way coming back!

Mausoleum - Mull 2011

John led us on a fine antiquarian day starting with a visit to An Sean Chausteal broch, across a slightly waterlogged field on the Sound of Mull, and finishing at Dun Ara on the northwest point. We took in standing stones at Baliscate, south west of Tobermory and another group of stones in the grounds of the 19th Century Glengorm Castle, all with good

vibes for Anne ! Along the way another broch eluded John's Satnav, but at the time we had just visited the Mull Cheesery and were ready to spread out for lunch.

Our Natural History element was well catered for with the wild life trips and a visit to the Forestry Commission sea eagle hide in the course of which we did indeed see the eagles both at rest and in flight, and many other animals and birds around the island. My own favourite was a Whinchat that settled in text book pose on a foxglove at the side of the road down to Grass Point. I so enjoyed looking at it that I entirely forgot to get my camera out! The owls and the otters however proved rather elusive.

Of course we had a day on Iona. Our intended guide lady did not appear so we set off to walk southwards to St. Columba's Bay. Bright and sunny but with a strong head wind against us Fred, Lorne and Sheena turned back for an early ferry, while the rest of us completed the exhilarating walk. It was only discovered at the evening head count that we had somehow mislaid Lynda, who had travelled down with Fred but had in fact taken a different walk around the island. Alarm bells were sounded with the local constabulary, but game to the last Lynda hitched a lift and was first arrival at our evening restaurant. Only the policeman, I think, was disappointed.

Over the course of the holiday we dined elegantly at five different restaurants or hotels, and in more cramped style, but with great camaraderie, at our hostel on the opening and closing nights of this our latest island holiday. The events reminded me of another adventure so, on our last night I regaled the company with:-

A DIVERTING HISTORY OF ANTIQUARIANS WHO WENT FURTHER THAN EXPECTED, AND RETURNED SAFE HOME AGAIN.

Fred Davies was a citizen of credit and renown,
Once captain of a narrow boat in famous London Town.
He knew the basins, locks and docks from Manchester to Hull;
But that was not a lot of use the day we sailed for Mull.

With Douglas in retirement after ten years at the helm
We'd viewed a lot of islands at the outskirts of the realm;
So with Mary, Moisie, Morag, he formed a motley crew
And plans were hatched and scouts dispatched a lodging house to view.

Fred knew his way to Oban, and Mull was not so far:
He had a word with Skoda and they built him a new car.
It took nine months – the car that is – the scouting took a day,
Now he and it are here of course, and so are we and they.

When Sona, Sarah, George and Co. fleshed out the wild life bus
The highways and the byways were left to Fred and us.
While they had trained binoculars on pinnacles and corries
The Douglas Clan were seeking out the haunts of the MacQuarries.

The 'Father of Australia' – his church, his mausoleum,
His birthplace to his burial; the Douglas had to see 'em.
Thoughts more poetic crossed my mind as we crossed Ulva's water,
But still I missed Lord Ullin's men, and didn't see his daughter!

Our journey back to Aros was a Heineken affair;
We reached the parts of Mull that others, didn't know were there!
(Although on antiquarian and wild life hunting days
We almost came to understand the error of our ways).

On antique day we made a play for standing stones and brochs
Though only one I know of, came away with muddy socks.
The first broch lay across a bog, the second had more savvy,
It lay beyond the ken of John, despite his Satty Navvy.

The stones were more amenable and showed some better form –
The two before the Cheesery, the three beyond Glengorm –
Though buttered scones and tea pots nearly spoiled the Dyment plan
The stones still had their proper share of loving care from Anne.

The wild life ran in duplicate with twitching stories shared
And common seals and common sights collectively compared.
With eagles, deer and eider ducks and many more observed
The bragging rights and honours were quite evenly preserved.

Next morn before the clocks awoke we headed for the Ross
And just to miss the rush hour run was worth the sleep hour loss.
At five past eight the good and great set out, it's understood,
To catch the ferry to Iona, isle of the Great and Good.

Our courier had less success with tracks or clocks (or tar?)
We saw no hide or hair of her, nor did we see her car.
But we are all resourceful, come not, or come what may

And plotted out our own wee course to St. Columba's Bay.

Into the wind went those who'd sinned (so none were left behind!)
The sun shone on the wicked, but no one seemed to mind.
Some got sunburned, but Fred returned before he turned to cinder,
Alas without full complement. He left behind poor Lynda.

But Lynda was resourceful too; she commandeered a lift,
And though reported missing her discovery was swift.
With Doctor Barker on the job her case was quickly closed.
She wasn't sold to slavery as everyone supposed!

Then all the rest was how you chose to occupy your leisure.
There were some painful moments, but the most of it was pleasure.
Nurse Moisie's tick removal service offered quick dispatch
While Lynda's ointment after-care became the perfect match.

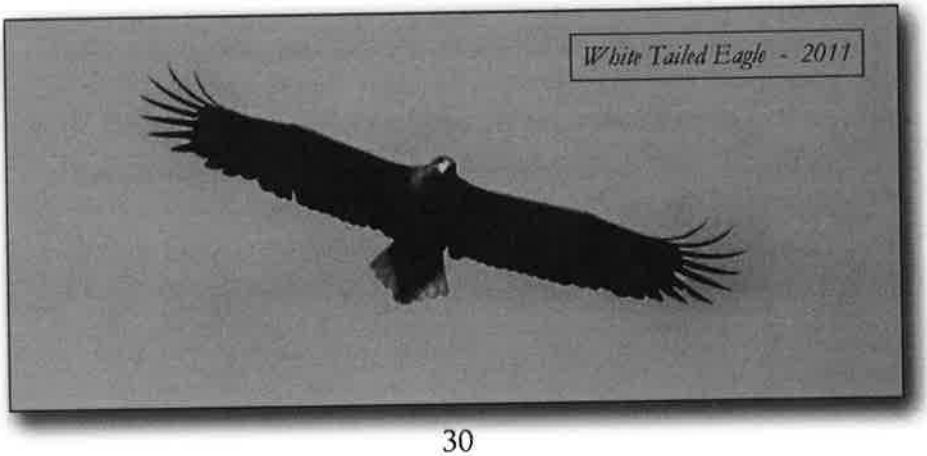
And all the while we dined in style from Western Isles to Fish,
Italian to homespun, with many a varied dish.
We knew we'd found each right address, confusing though t'was said,
When round the door would come a beard, pursued of course by Fred.

So here on Mull our days were full, our nights were tightly packed
And Mary, Moisie, Morag all, ensured we nothing lacked.
Then let us sing Long live the King; Fred Davies, long live he;
And when he goes abroad again may we be there to see.

Mull and Iona bird list June 2011

Valerie Barker and Morag Rae

Blackbird, Common buzzard, Blackcap, Bullfinch, Chaffinch, Hooded crow, Cuckoo, Cormorant, Curlew, Great Northern diver, Collared dove, Dunnock, Golden eagle, White tail eagle, Eider, Spotted flycatcher, Fulmar, Gannet, Goldcrest, Goldfinch, Canada goose, Greylag goose, Greenfinch, Black and Common guillemots, Black headed, Greater black back, Common and Herring gulls, Hen harrier, Grey heron, Lapwing, Sky lark, Mallard, House and Sand martins, Red breasted merganser, Tawny and Short eared owls, Oyster catcher, Pheasant, Wood pigeon, Meadow, Rock and Tree pipits, Raven, Razorbill, Common Redstart, Robin, Rook, Yellowhammer, Common sandpiper, Shag, Shellduck, Siskin, House sparrow, Starling, Stonechat, Swallow, Whooper and Mute Swan, Common tern, Song thrush, Great, Blue and Coal tits, Mistlethrush, Tree Creeper, Twite, Grey and Pied wagtails, Wood and Willow warblers, Wheatear, Whinchat, Greater Spotted woodpecker, Wren, Shearwater, Jackdaw, Corncrake.



BOOK REVIEWS

KINTYRE FAMILIES

ANGUS MARTIN, 2011, SELF-PUBLISHED, ANGUS MARTIN, COPIES AVAILABLE FROM THE AUTHOR AT 13 SADDELL STREET, CAMPBELTOWN, ARGYLL PA28 6DN, £5 POST AND PACKING INCLUSIVE.

In Kist 78 Angus Martin appealed for information about Kintyre families. The booklet is the result of this searching. At the back he lists an impressive list of sources, including some of his own published research - genealogy being one of his specialisms.

I found it a fascinating read - a book to dip into. As an incomer I enjoyed looking up people I had got to know during the past 10 years as a resident of Tarbert. Others will be fascinated to learn about various characters in the past to whom they might be related; inspiring them perhaps to delve deeper into their own family tree.

KILMARTIN PARISH KIRK: A BRIEF HISTORY

ON SALE AT THE KIRK.

This excellent 10-page booklet is a fascinating study of both the church building and its rich treasury of carved stones.

Local retired archivist Murdo Macdonald has written the text and displays his expert knowledge of the social history of Scotland's kirks.

Using Kilmartin Parish Kirk as an example he charts the changing fashions and customs in church practice, from the original long central communion table (which despite its length required many "sittings") and Gaelic psalm singing to the modern layout we see today. Murdo writes with a great sympathetic understanding, always grounded in actual features within the building, many of which have disappeared due to drastic renovation between 1899 and 1900 (fortunately he includes a pre-renovation photograph is which the long communion table is clearly visible).

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CONTENTS

1 - 2 The Appin Head
Sharon Webb

3 - 8 Hazel Woods
Gordon Gray Stephens

9 - 11 Elephants In Argyll
Jim Gray

12 - 20 Stone in Mid-Argyll: links between geology, archaeology and architecture (Pt II)
Roger Anderton

21 - 23 Searching For A Medieval Settlement At Glennan, Kilmartin, Argyll
Heather F James

24 - 29 Mull 2011
Rebecca Pine

30 Mull and Iona bird list June 2011
Valerie Barker and Morag Rae

31 - 32 Book Reviews

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