

TARBERT CASTLE
CONSERVATION

DUN MHUIRICH



SLOW WORM



RINGLET
BUTTERFLY
SIGHTING

THE

KIST 85

EDITORIAL

The Society is very sad to report the passing away of three of its members: Sheena Carmichael, Ian Macdonald and Geoffrey Matthews.

Sheena passed away on the 5 April after a short illness and only a month short of her 93rd birthday. She was a staunch supporter of the Society and was extremely knowledgeable on everything to do with local places and people.

Ian kept in regular touch with Kist up until last year, submitting handwritten letters to add valuable information to published articles. His knowledge of the history of South Knapdale and Kintyre was unsurpassed.

We will be including tributes to Sheena and Ian in the next issue. An obituary for Geoffrey is included in these pages.

We are pleased to include in this issue reports of two important excavations in mid-Argyll: Dun Mhuirich and a Bronze Age roundhouse; also articles on natural history and folklore and Robert McPhail's update on recent work on Tarbert Castle.

Cover pic of Tarbert castle - courtesy of James McPhail

MID BRONZE AGE DOMESTIC SETTLEMENT IN KILMARTIN GLEN, ARGYLL, SCOTLAND

CLARE ELLIS

Typically the discovery of a single roundhouse during the course of a watching brief is not particularly noteworthy. However, such a discovery in the heart of Kilmartin Glen in Argyll is most certainly a cause for great excitement. Kilmartin Glen is to be found nestled in mid Argyll, on the west coast of Scotland. It and the neighbouring glens are renowned for the plethora of impressive, early prehistoric ceremonial and funerary archaeological monuments that span over two thousand years. The density of 'ritual' monuments and the apparent lack of domestic sites and structures have led some preeminent archaeologists to argue that Kilmartin Glen was not only a focus for ritual activities but actually set aside for this purpose. Bronze Age monuments include: a linear cairn cemetery (made up from Nether Largie South, Mid and North and Glebe Cairn and Ri Cruin with perhaps two cist sites Rowanfield and Crinan Moss extending the line to the southern portion of the Glen); numerous other cist burials; the enormous timber circle of Upper Largie; and numerous cup and ring marked sites. The closest excavated Bronze Age roundhouses are located in Oban; two or three were recently excavated by Argyll Archaeology at Glenshellach, next to Oban hospital and then last year six were also excavated by Argyll

Archaeology at Dunbeg, which lies just to the north of Oban.



Photo courtesy C. Ellis

The roundhouse was found just above Killinochonoch Farm, which lies some 600 m south of Ballymeanoch henge and kerb cairn and 1500

metres south of the cup and ring marked rock of Baluachriag. The roundhouse was nestled between two low ridges of bedrock with fine views over the Glen and the moss of Moine Mhor and Loch Crinan beyond. On discovery all that was visible was the internal ring-ditch, two external parallel linear features that lay off centre from the ring-ditch, later to be revealed as a substantial porch, and a large pit located just outside the ring-ditch. Given the domination of Bronze Age funerary monuments in the Glen our first assumption was that this was a ring-ditch cremation cemetery, where typically cremations, often in inverted urns are buried within pits and sometimes on the outside of the ditch. However, with continued excavation the ring-ditch proved to be surrounded by deep postholes. Most of the posts appear to have been rammed into the gravel and had clearly

rotted in situ. The ultimate confirmation of the site's domestic nature came from the discovery of inverted saddle querns that been placed on the floor of the ring-ditch prior to its deliberate backfilling with a mixture of midden and hearth rakings.

The roundhouse is relatively small and if the external wall was set between the timber uprights it would have had an

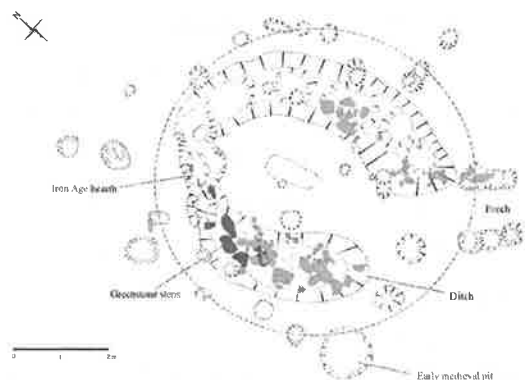


Photo courtesy C. Ellis

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rested on the ground, or a low wall or bank. Until now the general consensus is that roundhouse ring-ditches are erosional features, created by cattle and/or sheep being penned and overwintered around the edge of the domestic space. However, if stock had created the ditch within the Killinlochnoch roundhouse the internal usable space by the resident family would be restricted to around 2.5 m in diameter. Recent excavation of roundhouses at Dunbeg has yielded evidence that indicates that such internal

ditches were vented by wood lined slots and appear to be shallow cellars or proto-souterrains which must have been covered by wooden flooring. Although the ditch at Killinochonoch was not vented its undulating base, the presence of rough stone steps down into the ditch indicate that it too was deliberately dug and may also have functioned as a cool cellar for the storage of foodstuffs such as grains, dried meats and cheeses.

Charcoal from the basal fill of the ditch dates the backfilling of the ditch to the middle Bronze Age around 1640-1450 BC just when many of the monuments in the glen such as the timber circle at Upper Largie was being built and used. Intriguingly some thousand years later (760-410 BC) in the early Iron Age a hearth was set over the backfilled Bronze Age ring-ditch. It is probable that at least some of the internal postholes relate to this period of use. Over on the other side of the Glen at Bruach An Druimein is the location of two excavated Iron Age roundhouses (4th to 2nd centuries BC), the first to be excavated in Argyll. Radiocarbon dates have demonstrated that the dun at Dunadd was also occupied at this time. Another 1000 years passed and then around 770-970 AD a large pit was dug on the south side of the ring-ditch, lined with hazel twigs and then set on fire. This period in the Glen (6th to 8th century AD) is dominated by early historic activity centred on the early historic fort of Dunadd, the seat of the kings of Dál Riata, which

encompassed modern day Argyll and Bute, Lochaber and County Antrim in Ireland.

The discovery and excavation of the Killinochonoch ring-ditch roundhouse has demonstrated the presence of mid Bronze Age domestic settlement within the heart of the 'ritual landscape' of Kilmartin Glen. It seems highly improbable that this is the sole example or survivor of early prehistoric domestic settlement within the Glen. The hitherto lack of evidence of early prehistoric domestic settlement can perhaps be explained as a reflection of past and current archaeological research agendas coupled with limited developer funded archaeological investigation.

STRANGE HAPPENINGS

PAT DOUGHTY

When we first moved to Kilmory Knap over 12 years ago I was intrigued by reports of strange musical sounds or singing having been heard at times by people living there before and up until the 1950s. The sounds were associated with a stretch of road in the vicinity of the rock outcrop known locally as the Fairy Door or Fairy Castle. Later, when looking for any written accounts connected to these events, I came across an article in an early edition of Kist, Number 21.

The Kist article was entitled "Doide, Loch Sween" and was contributed by Dilys.M.Hooton and Agatha.T. Lewis. A rock formation resembling a doorway with "a flat lintel and a recess below with the appearance of door jambs on either side" is described. The doorway, "called Cachailleith na Sith is a way into the hill for the Good People who may dwell there and a tradition exists that 'They' are sometimes heard singing." The writers mention an instance as recent as the 1950's told by John McTaggart's nephew Dougal, who "once heard 'Them' and had known others who had also heard the sounds." Dilys then tells in some detail of her own experience in which she heard repeatedly "a short cadence of notes" whilst walking southwards along the stretch of road past Doide towards the Fairy Door. After she had passed the Fairy Door rock she "heard it no more". This she said had happened in 1941, some ten or twelve years before she had ever heard about the door in the hill and the singing. The article itself gives us further interesting detail of her experience.

In "Dalriada. A Twentieth Century Kingdom" Marian Pallister refers to legends and superstitions as "the stuff of islands and peninsulas that in Mid Argyll hang, like Ulva, to the mainland by a thread". The fact that such were manifest, told and passed on to others speaks to me of a deep connection at that time between the people who lived and farmed in Knapdale and with every aspect of their environment. Sadly, with social change this quality

has for the most part become lost. The area of Kilmory Knap has become peopled in the main by tourists and urban dwellers, who reside only periodically in this part of Argyll. Many, nevertheless, claim long standing affiliations with and attachments to the area, often the result of returning year after year for holidays.

Scot an Sgeulaiche, the Storyteller wrote in an article entitled "The Old Faith" that "Within the older culture of the Celtic peoples, there is a particular viewpoint on matters metaphysical. Included within this system of beliefs are such topics as Second Sight, the Fairies/ Wee folk and a reverence for signs and patterns in nature." He goes on to say how this very ancient culture was still extant in Mid Argyll within living memory.

In looking into this topic, I came across further handed down tales relating to other aspects of the Celtic belief system referred to above. However for this article I intend to mention just a few which suggest evidence of beliefs around Fairies or Wee folk in Mid Argyll.

After reading the earlier Kist article about Fairy Music being heard, an emigrée of Knap, Diarmid A. Campbell of Boulder, Colorado wrote to the Natural History and Antiquarian society of Mid-Argyll on on 2nd August, 1981. Here is an extract from his letter:

.....Some years ago my brother and sister had a similar experience when walking over to the standing stone halfway down the Craignish side of the Beallach Mohr - the one generally known as "The Danish Prince's Grave".

First they thought it was from a transistor or car radio, but there was no-one below and the music faded as they got away from the stone. They could not clearly identify it, describing it as "eerie" and got back to their car rather quickly.

I know the Loch Sween stretch of road, having lived at the late Colonel Eddie Campbell's place at Craigmaddy [Creag a Mhadaigh], now Dick and Nancy Tuthill's, at various times during WW 2 as a child. I never heard anything on that road. On a still night you could hear the tide by the rocks of Eilean Mohr. The phosphorescence could be spectacular with every strand of a net outlined. There were Campbells at Castle Sween farm then too. We used to stook for them and for a treat ride on the horse drawn reaper-and-binder. Mrs Campbell painted white patterns round the threshold "to keep away the fairies"

Other references to the wee folk occurred in interviews carried out for the Dalriada project and can be accessed in the local archives or the School of Scottish Studies. I understand that at that time many Gaelic words and phrases were still used in this relatively isolated community and further afield. In one of the Dalriada interviews, Donald Shuttleworth, who is related to many families in Mid Argyll and spent his school holidays at Kilmory Knap where his grandfather farmed, told the interviewer that as local people passed the Fairy Door

they would whisper "God protect the Wee Folk" or "God bless the Wee Folk", as he did himself.

Some, Donald said, believed quite sincerely in the existence of the wee folk. Archie Jenkins was one of them. Another, "old Mr. McTaggart of the road end at Kilmory Knap" is recalled as having come in one night saying "I had a lovely while listening to the sìorraidhs". Apparently "sìorraidhs" was what he always called them. His son Angus McTaggart then "went down to the sea himself and sure enough he heard this lovely lilting". He tried to find an explanation for this and one such was that "it was wireless waves striking a fence or the wind in a subterranean channel". He elaborates on the fact that there are a few caves coming up from the Point of Knap and "it was the wind right through that gave this".

The translation provided for "sìorraidhs" is "ever living ones" and one speculation was that Mr. McTaggart might actually have been at the Fairy door rather than the point of Knap.

A long time has passed but I hope there may be people native to and still living in Mid Argyll who could add more knowledge and perhaps share further memories of a culture in which beliefs and values contrasted so sharply with those of the present day.

Kist 21 - Kist Archives

Marian Pallister Dalriada, a 20th Century Kingdom

Transcribed interview with Donald Shuttleworth provided for the Dalriada Community History project by Scot an Sgeulaiche with notes on old Celtic belief system

TARBERT CASTLE CONSERVATION

ROBERT MCPHAIL

Articles in Kist 73 and 80 have recorded Tarbert and Skipness Community Trust's efforts to open up, conserve and maintain the castle ruins working with community volunteers and various funding agencies.

We have just completed the third and final year of the Tower House stone consolidation contract with £3/4M funding from the Scottish Government's rural funding program.

Kist 80 described in some detail the type of work being done in the early phases including vegetation stripping, deep consolidation, structural interventions, pointing and wall head capping. This has now been completed on remaining elevations with some additional stone building to support one side of a major arch which had collapsed in living memory and where detail photographs were available allowing matching reconstruction. New stonework has been dated to record the repair work.

A new flagpole has been installed allowing us to fly the Saltire whenever the weather is suitable and our floodlights are on cheering up the village in the evening darkness.



Photograph Courtesy James McPhail

Volunteers have completed clearing the area around the Bruce Drum Tower ruins. After some stone consolidation works and assisted by Historic Scotland volunteers have installing turf, biodegradable matting and seeding to protect the remains.

The Heritage Lottery Fund has assisted our volunteers to build stone cairns for five new interpretation panels now available for visitors. With the removal of the safety fence

which has been around the tower for 40 years an access platform has also been built by volunteers to prevent access damage and provide a safe viewing platform for visitors.

Some five years ago random surveys determined that there were about 2000 visitors to the site per annum. We have been aware that visitor numbers have been increasing and last year carried out some further on site surveys with questionnaires for visitors giving us some data where from and why they were there. At Easter this year we installed a people counter and have recorded an average to date of approx 100 visitors a day over that period. This suggests that over the summer months we will have attracted over 14,000 visitors to our now very visible and accessible heritage site.

The strategy prepared by the Trust 6/7 years ago has now almost been completed and a sustainable maintenance program is in place.

With Biddy Simpson of Archaeology Scotland – Adopt a Monument project and Roddy Regan of Kilmartin House Museum we are progressing a “Research Design” which will inform us further about the site and its history. The project is called “Explore Tarbert Castle” and hopefully this will lead to consent being granted for community archaeological exploration on the site. Funding is in place, a preliminary public meeting well attended and a laser

survey completed. Less able members of our community are being asked to help us develop further access and interpretation to meet all needs..

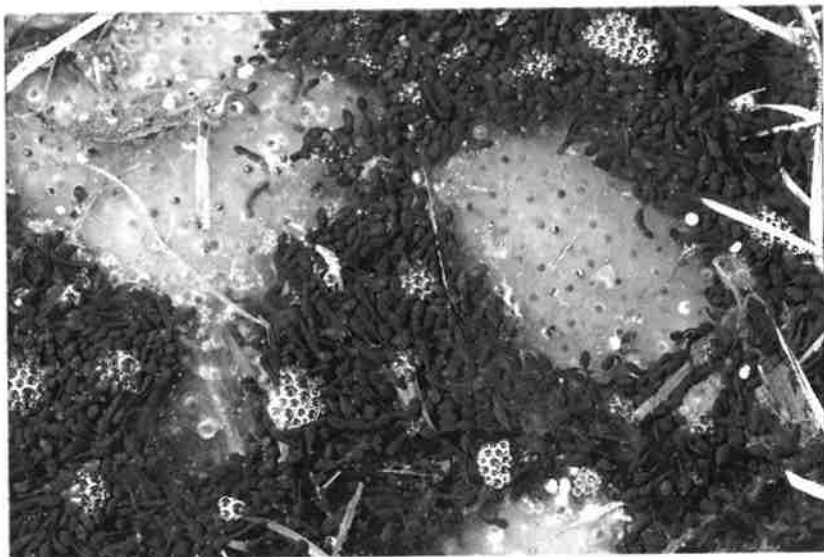
We continue to work closely with Tarbert Academy providing an outdoor history classroom for both junior and senior pupils. The latter assisted our volunteers with drawings of medieval characters for our new interpretation panels and will be involved in the site surveys to be carried out for the Research Design and any future archaeological activity.

As a celebration of our volunteers work we plan a "Medieval Melee" on the 1st of June as a fun day with medieval costumes, story telling, demonstrations and games. Michael Russel has agreed to help us celebrate by raising the Saltire on our new flagpole.

HIBERNATION WAKE UP

DAVE AND PAT BATTY

We are used to amphibians (frogs, toads and newts) and reptiles (adders, slow worms and common lizard) hibernating for the winter in Mid Argyll in the autumn until warmer conditions return in the spring. However we had some strange wildlife sightings in our local area over the Christmas-New Year period.



Photograph Courtesy Phillip Denham

On 28 December 2011 on a walk with the family along a forestry road in Kilmichael Glen my daughter suddenly pointed to the road and said look at that. Looking down it took me a few seconds to realise there was a slow worm on the bare track. On inspection we found it was alive but very sluggish. I picked it up and although cold it did move a little. I placed it in the long vegetation by the track. The weather had not been warm nor had it been very wet to wash it out of a hibernation site and so it was strange to see it still active in those conditions.

Our next unusual sightings were of toads. On 3 January 2013 we saw a toad walking on the public road in Kilmichael Glen. This was during a period of mild

weather (10°C during the day and night) with light drizzle. These are just the conditions when we expect to see toads emerging in the spring and going to their breeding pools. Later on 8 January we saw a toad along the Crinan Canal and one in the hills above Kilmartin. It is a little easier to understand why the toads had been fooled into reacting as though spring had arrived. I wonder whether other members saw similar sightings at this time.

DUN MHUIRICH (PART 1 OF 2)

RODDY REGAN

1. Introduction

The Excavation at Dun Mhuirich was part of the Connected Communities: Community Archaeology in Argyll and Ulster Project. This is a collaborative initiative led by the University of Ulster, in partnership with Kilmartin House Museum, Historic Scotland, Queen's University, Glasgow University and the Northern Ireland Environment Agency, that seeks to explore the cultural connections from Ulster, the Hebrides and Argyll in the Medieval and late Medieval period. Archaeologists from Kilmartin House Museum, Queens University Belfast and Ulster University led a team of students and local volunteers took place between and 4th and 17th June 2012. The site Permission to carry

out a survey and excavation of the site was kindly granted by the owners and the work was funded by the Connected Communities Project with support from the Arts and Humanities Research Council. Scheduled Ancient Monument Consent was granted for the work by Historic Scotland and Scottish Natural Heritage permitted the project to go ahead as the site lay within an area of Site of Special Scientific Interest. Kilmartin House Museum and the Connected Communities Project would

like to thank the owners of the Tayvallich Estate for allowing the excavation on their land and to Alex Brockie of the estate management team for help in organizing the dig. Thanks must also go to the staff of Historic Scotland and Scottish



299 structure 3 gable below entrance. R. Regan

Natural Heritage for help in gaining the necessary permissions to excavate on a scheduled site which also lay within an SSSI. Thanks also go to all those who participated in the dig, including Mary Ann and Andy Buinton who as usual were also on hand when it came to backfilling. Again thanks to Sheila Clark who has ploughed through my text, graciously pointing out the many errors.

2. Site Background

2.1 Location and Topography

The site lies within North Knapdale Parish, Argyll and is situated on the western shore of Linne Mhuirich (centred NR 7228 8441). This an inlet of Loch Sween that separates this promontory of Keills from that of Taynish to the east. The B8025 road that runs between Tayvallich and Keills passes the site some 100m to the west.

The site is located on an undulating terrace that gradually slopes up from sea level at the north culminating in steep, near vertical sides at its southern end. The underlying geology consists of limestone bedrock with glacial till between the undulating bedrock outcrops. The vegetation cover principally consists of bracken and blackthorn scrub, with a few more mature trees growing within the site. The site was described by Christieson in 1904 (Christieson 1904) and more comprehensively surveyed by

the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland, this work published in their Inventory of Argyll in Volume 6 (RCHAMS 1988). Both these descriptions are reproduced below in Appendix 7. The site was scheduled in 1955.

3. Site Survey

A topographic survey was undertaken on the site prior to the excavation and while the description of the site by the RCHAMS for the most part still holds several other features perhaps deserve mention. Lying between the foreshore wall and the base of the steep escarpment on which the upper enclosure sits is a heaped pile of stone, which likely derives from the upper enclosure wall. The heaped nature of the stones suggests this was unlikely the result of natural degradation and may have derived from the robbing of the upper walls, the stone intended to be carted or shipped off. The mass of stone in this area might also mask earlier structures, and what might be wall alignments can be discerned amongst the rubble. This area needs to be more thoroughly investigated, possibly when the undergrowth has died back. Below the upper enclosure and built into/from the rubble are two areas of rudimentary revetting, at the W of the upper enclosure entrance and below the W side. It is likely both these were built to give easier access to the upper enclosure and are likely of late date. Also of recent date are a small cairn built over the N wall of the upper

enclosure and a small twinning pen built against and natural outcrop within the lower enclosure, this having been roofed with a corrugated iron sheet.

4. Excavation Results

Eight trenches were excavated. (Trenches 1-8, Figure 1) and vegetation was cleared over some features to clarify their nature. Full context descriptions appear in Appendix 1 below and a full list of these appears in Appendix 2.

4.1 Trench 1

This trench was placed over the possible SW corner of a possible building as identified by the Royal Commission during their survey of the site (RCHAMS 2008). The trench revealed the badly robbed remains of what was originally a well constructed rectangular building, Structure 3 (Figure 2). The building was oriented SW/NE and measured 9.0m by 5.0m externally, although the NE end remained ill defined. The walls of the structure, were well-built with particular care given to producing near vertical inner facing by a use of split stones with close pinning, the whole bonded by a grey brown clay.

The lowest deposit reached was what would appear to be a partially cobbled floor which appears contemporary with a now rotted post in the corner of the building. At the

base of the gable wall was a projecting ledge or scarcement which may have supported a suspended wooden floor. This was sealed by another floor level and then by a substantial amount of building rubble. The only finds associated with the building was shell, and this was recovered from the collapse/rubble deposits.

4.2 Trench 2.

The intention of this trench was to establish the nature of the modified entrance to the lower enclosure and examine the ill defined E side of the entranceway. Removal of the blocking rubble from the N half of the entranceway revealed what was likely the last utilised entrance surface. This consisted of flattish schist slabs, set within a light grey brown clay (Figure 3). Mixed within the rubble sealing this possible surface were animal bone and mollusc shells, suggesting some middening within the entrance passage. The entranceway measured 1.80m in width and was originally 2.20m in length, with what may be a possible bar-hole in its W side. Later two abutting piers were added to the N side of the entranceway, these matched by a second pair on the S side. These additions effectively extended the entrance passage to 3.90m from its original length. The nature of these later additions is difficult to gauge although it is possible that they supported some form of platform over the entrance.

4.3 Trench 3.

This trench was excavated in order to establish the nature of a cross wall and its relationship to the lower enclosure wall (Figure 3). The earliest deposit reached was a dump deposit of rubble mixed with midden material. This was earlier than the inner face of the lower enclosure wall and apart from animal bone and a possible slag fragment no readily datable artefacts were recovered from this deposit. The midden dump and the foot of the enclosure wall were overlain by a peaty clay deposit that is likely the remains of a surface deposit that also had distinct signs of burning (reddening). Over this surface was built the SE stone pier of the entrance modification and it would appear the N end of the enclosure wall was also modified at the same time. This construction phase was sealed by an occupation deposit or surface as it contained animal bone along with several iron objects including a knife and coin dating to the reign of Charles I. This was a two penny piece or 'Turner' which was the only Scottish coin minted during the civil war and dates between 1642-50. Above this was constructed the cross wall which effectively divided the internal area of the N side of the lower enclosure E and W of the entranceway. After this the wall and pier begin to degrade leading to an accumulation of collapsed stone along their E sides.

4.4 Trench 4.

A natural limestone outcrop was revealed within the E part of the trench, which was sealed by an accumulation of midden material. This was overlain by stone surface within the W part of the trench that ran along the internal wall face (Figure 4). Lying over this was an accumulation of midden like trample, containing charcoal shell, bone and several iron objects. Thereafter there is a build up of relatively homogenous soil, this likely representing worked/turned soil, which may indicate some arable use of the internal space of the dun.

4.5 Trench 5.

This trench examined the nature of Structure 1 and the deposit accumulations between it and the inner face of the upper enclosure wall.

4.5.1 Structure 1

This structure measured 8.20m by 5.0m externally with an entrance on the E side (Figures 5 & 6). The walls of the N half of the building stood up to 1.52m high while the remaining walls at the S stood just above current ground level. As only the S half of this 'building' was excavated no relationship as yet has been firmly

established between the S excavated 'room' and the structural remains at the N.

Southern Room

This part of the building consisted on a single 'room' and was slightly trapezoidal in shape, measuring 2.60m-2.90m N/S and 3.4m E/W internally. A door lay along the N side while a niche or cupboard lay within the E wall. There is the possibility a second, now blocked, niche existing in the opposite W wall. The walls were mainly constructed in epidiorite rubble with some evidence of patches of lime mortar adhering to the face of the niche, which might indicate secondary work or repair.

Internal sequence

This lowest deposit reached was a mixture of midden material and large stones, the latter perhaps laid as a rough make up prior to construction of Structure 1. This was sealed by a relatively even deposit of mixed silt clay and redeposited burnt peat ash this likely a floor accumulation. A threshold stone marked the entrance into the building and this displayed distinct signs of burning as did the floor deposits lying immediately to the S, although there was no apparent trace of any such burning on the entrance walls. It is possible that what became the threshold stone was originally a central hearth within an open building, this later divided by the later addition of cross walls which also appear to abut rather than tie into the walls at the E and W.

The threshold stone and its associated floor and were sealed by a trampled midden deposit that appeared to be concentrated around the doorway. This deposit contained numerous animal bones along with a few iron objects and green glazed pottery dating to 15th/16th century. This in turn was sealed by a very humic deposit that may represent another midden/surface deposit, again most of the recovered artefacts were situated around the entranceway. Contemporary with this surface was a deposit of charcoal and burnt peat that indicates a fire/hearth position on the W side of the room. No formal floors are seen thereafter and it may be this building may have no longer been directly occupied, with a build up of a series of trampled rubble and humic accumulations that possibly suggest animal penning? These were then sealed by an extensive accumulation of wall collapse.

4.5.2 External Sequence

The earliest feature uncovered was what would appear to be the remains of the original line of the dun wall. This early stretch of wall was sealed by a very dark organic midden dump, containing bone, shell and pot, the latter dating to the 12th century. This deposit likely corresponds to similar deposit encountered within Structure 1. Above this midden dump were two mixed deposits that appear to be related to the construction of both Structure 1 and the inner face of the upper enclosure wall. The footings of both these structures were at the

same level and suggested they were constructed around the same time, where as the original dun wall was rebuilt and 'widened' to incorporate Structure 1. This was sealed by a deep deposit of very humic blocky material indicative of a dried peat accumulation. Given that this deposit also sloped down to the N from the SW external corner of Structure 1 it is likely this was a peat store at the rear of the building. The peat deposit is in turn sealed by collapsed rubble, this either deriving from the enclosure wall or Structure 1.

4.6 Trench 6.

Rubble was removed from within the entrance passage, from over the NE wall of the 'hornwork' and from over the putative garderobe chute (Figure 7). Between the entrance passage walls there is what appeared to be a revetted surface of flattish stone slabs and clay. This lay over what may be the line of the original enclosure wall. Removal of the rubble from the S of the entrance revealed the inner face of the hornwork which abutted the enclosure wall. Rubble was also removed from over two projecting 'chute' stones. These appear to have been inserted by cutting through the original hornwork wall and as yet their function remains unclear, but the suggestion that they are a drain or garderobe chute appears attractive. Any gap or channel above these stones may then have been blocked by the later reestablishment of the 'hornwork' wall, this utilising a threshold stone in its

build. Both the rubble within the entranceway and that to the S contained animal bone, shell and pot, suggesting the dumping of midden material within this part of the site.

4.7 Trench 7.

The Trench investigated whether a possible wall or outwork represented a building and established the presence of the very badly disturbed N wall of a possible rectangular structure constructed over a natural limestone outcrop, Structure 4. The overall dimensions of this structure could not be gained as extensive blackthorn growth prevented access to the S and W. The remaining wall suggests an insubstantial structure, the rubble of which had collected to the N and E of the natural ridge on which it was constructed. Above the rubble at the N this was a layer of homogenous soil similar to the upper deposit seen in Trench 3 and again was indicative of this area being utilised in arable cultivation. Lying over this was the most recent collapse of the structure this evidently caused by tree root disturbance from the mature sycamore growing at the E side of the structure.

4.8 Trench 8.

A boat naust is positioned immediately below the steep near-vertical eastern rock face of the Dun promontory on the foreshore of Linne Mhuirich. This is roughly

rectangular in shape running eastwards from the base of the cliff to below the low-water-mark in the sheltered loch. The feature is delimited by a rubble mound on its northern side faced with a large boulder wall at its eastern terminal. This area consists of a contained mound of rubble, probably originally constructed with a levelled top to create a 'hard' surface. Internally the naust has a length of c.4.80m and a c.3.70m width. At its southern side the basal remains of a roughly built wall run from the upper foreshore area to a double-kerbed terminal below the low water mark. This feature would originally have provided a degree of shelter for the naust and would also have marked its seaward entrance. The rear of the naust is marked by the basal remains of a low cross wall. A small test trench (Trench 8) measuring 2.5m by 1m was excavated in the northwest corner of the naust. This revealed very shallow and limited stratigraphy with no artefactual evidence recovered. It is clear that the build up in this area consists of collapsed rubble and sediment that is continually mixed by marine action. Once the initial collapse and overburden was removed a thin deposit of brown organic soil was exposed ranging in thickness of 0.02-0.05m in thickness. This in turn directly overlay the subsoil consisting of a sandy/ gravely marine type sediment. A small area of rough paving overlay this subsoil and comprising a number of stones laid flat to create a level surface in the interior of the naust. This paving abutted the line of the rear wall.

For site discussion see part 2 in next issue.

Figure 1. Site

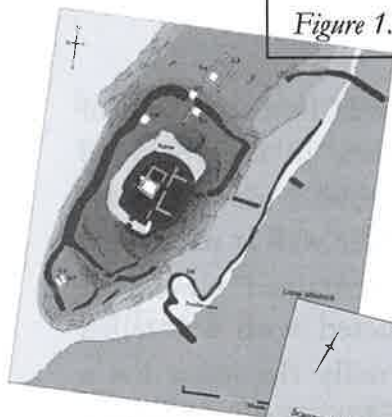


Figure 2. Trench

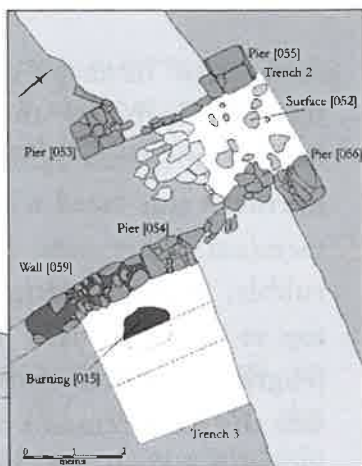


Figure 3. Trenches 2 & 3

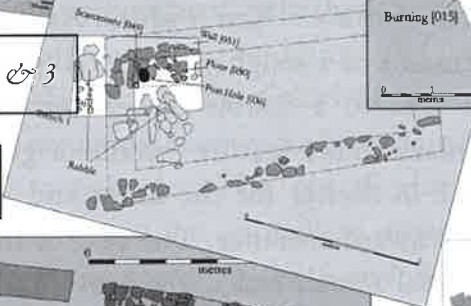


Figure 4. Trench 4

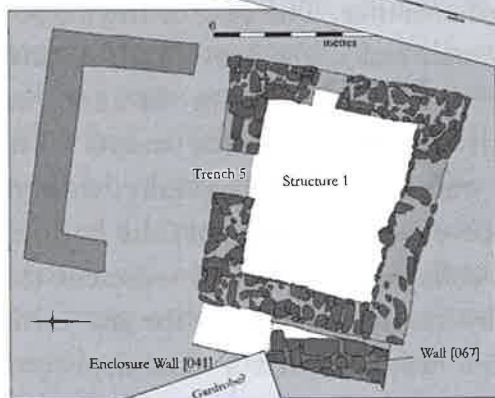


Figure 5. Trench 5

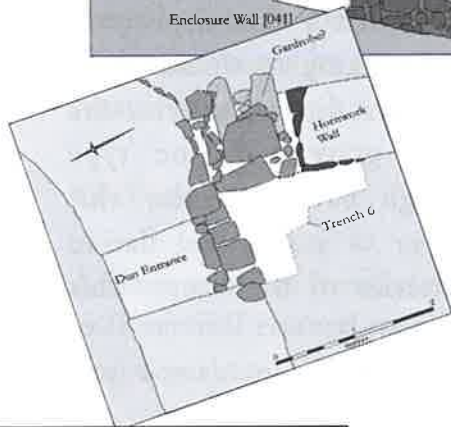


Figure 6. Trench 5 Structure

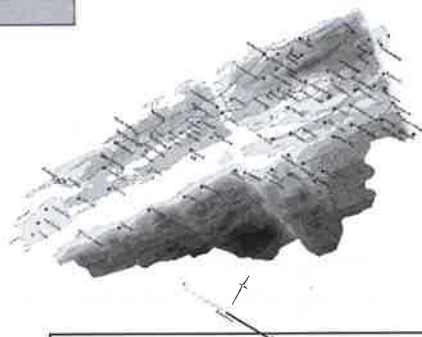


Figure 8 Macnail map of Taynish land

NEW BUTTERFLY FOR US IN MID ARGYLL

DAVE AND PAT BATTY



Ringlet Butterfly Courtesy Phillip Denham

We were plant recording at the southern end of Danna in unimproved wet ground near the coast in July 2012. Scotch Argus butterflies were on the wing but we also noticed a

new species for us in Mid Argyll, Ringlet. The species has a velvety appearance and looks almost black with small circles (the ringlets) on the underwings which give the butterfly its name. The food plant of the caterpillars is a range of common grasses. It flies mainly in July and resembles the Meadow Brown, so have a good look at any strange looking Meadow Browns. It is found in self-sustaining colonies of varying size. It is active in gloomy weather and will fly in light rain, so it is well adapted to Argyll summers!

This was the first time we had seen it in Mid Argyll but had previously seen it in Glen Shira near Inveraray and on

Islay. It is a species which, unlike many other species, is expanding its range in Scotland and is actively colonising the highlands and the west. There are several records from Mid Argyll and elsewhere up towards Oban, and one from Kintyre. Thus it might have been on Danna for a while and we had just not visited the area at the right time of the year.

The sighting of Ringlet was the highlight of our butterfly observations in 2012, which was a very poor year in our experience. Although we saw a range of species we saw none of them in any number apart from Scotch Argus.

OBITUARY

SOCIETY MEMBER GEOFFREY MATTHEWS, WHO HAS DIED AGED 89, PLAYED A CRUCIAL ROLE IN WATERBIRD AND WETLAND CONSERVATION.

In 2004, Geoffrey and his wife, Mary (originally from Greenock, and used to spending many childhood holidays at Machrihanish) acquired a small cottage in Skipness. They both much enjoyed the wide variety of birds on the Skipness shore, as well as the occasional sightings of the golden eagle in the hills behind.

He was one of the founding fathers of the Ramsar Convention on wetlands, the first truly international effort to save natural habitats from destruction. He spent

more than 30 years, from 1955 to 1988, as director of research and conservation at the Wildfowl Trust.

Whilst in this post he became one of the first to understand that the only way to save endangered waterbirds was to safeguard the wetlands where they live. Today, this concept is at the centre of mainstream conservation, but at the time most effort was focused on saving individual species, as it was widely assumed that their habitats were not under immediate threat.

Waterbirds such as ducks, geese and swans are particularly dependent on cross-border co-operation, since their migratory journeys take them from their Arctic breeding grounds to their winter quarters farther south and west – including, of course, the UK. But their need for different places to breed, where they can stop over during migration, and where they can spend the winter, makes them uniquely vulnerable to habitat loss.

At first, Matthews focused on the key wintering sites for waterbirds in Britain, co-operating with wildfowlers and landowners to establish a network of reserves and refuges. Meanwhile, he and his team of scientists at the trust's HQ, at Slimbridge in Gloucestershire, were conducting in-depth research on wildfowl, making crucial new discoveries about their migratory habits. Mary, his wife, also worked there.

He built up an extensive list of international contacts who agreed with him that something needed to be done to prevent the world's wetlands from being drained and destroyed. His efforts, and those of his colleagues, bore fruit when, in early 1971, the historic Ramsar Convention was signed at the city of that name in Iran. Delegates from 18 countries, including Iran and the Soviet Union, agreed to safeguard wetlands and their wildlife.

Today, the convention has 164 member states, and more than 2,000 designated wetlands of international importance, which cover a total area of almost 200m hectares – about 800,000 square miles. The date when it was signed – 2 February – is now designated as *World Wetlands Day*.

The convention includes areas within Argyll. In 2006 there was a second application for wind turbines on the Largie Estate in Kintyre, the first having been refused. These turbines were to be situated next to the only Ramsar site in Kintyre, "The Kintyre Goose Roosts", which protect the Greenland Whitefronted Goose, numbers of which were declining alarmingly. In winter, the geese roost in the hill lochans, and feed in the coastal fields, and there was a clear risk of mortality through collision with the turbines, which would have been in the flight path between the two sites. The application was again refused, citing this Wetland of International Importance / Ramsar site.

THE KIST ISSN 0307-529

The magazine of the Natural History and
Antiquarian Society of Mid Argyll

ISSUE NO. EIGHTY FIVE - SPRING 2013

EDITOR:	EDWARD TYLER
SUB/PICTURE EDITOR:	PHILLIP FOX-DENHAM
PRESIDENT:	DAVE BATTY

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Office bearers:

President	Dave Batty Kirnan Farm, Kilmichael Glassary, PA31 8QL. (Kist contributions to the editor)
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Editor: Ed Tyler, Ron-Mara, North Beachmore, Muasdale, Tarbert, Argyll, PA29 6XD. email - tyleredward@hotmail.com

The Society's year runs from 1st September until 31st August.
Charity No. SC000894

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