

## DRAGONFLIES OF MID ARGYLL



## UPPER LARGIE EXCAVATIONS



## BOOK REVIEW THE ROYAL CASTLE OF TARBERT



THE

KIST 89

## EDITORIAL

*Kist is changing and evolving*, like the multi-layered landscape it describes. Some of these changes are obvious to the reader, as when we started producing our covers in colour, others are more subtle, such as the switch to digital self-production beginning with Kist 65. This was my first issue as editor and involved a sea-change in how Kist was produced.

I asked if the Press would handle the material on a computer disc but they declined, so I got together with Jonathan Arnot and we produced the first in-house digital edition using Word. Future editions were produced using a publishing package with the help of Scot anSgeulaiche; then Phil Denham took over compiling print-ready files and in the last few issues Moira Young has joined the team.

In the last few months the committee have started discussing the next stage in Kist's evolution; offering Society members a digital edition instead of a printed one. We are in the process of setting up a Society website and at some point will be inviting you to consider using the internet to download future editions onto your home computer. We will discuss this at our AGM in October, so make sure you come along and have your say.

### SEARCH FOR A NEW EDITOR

Whilst we are on the subject of change, I have been editing Kist for the past 12 years. During that time I have built up my skills as an editor and worked with talented contributors and graphic designers. It has also given me an opportunity to be a contributor in my own right. This has reminded me of other writing projects I have on the go. With this in mind, I would like to hand over the editorship to someone who could be behind the digital evolution described above.

In this issue I hope to inspire you with a roll call of previous editors. Adeline Clark, who passed on the reins to me, passed on a folder with A4 transparent pockets into which each typeset page of Kist was inserted before being sent off to the printers.

Whoever follows in my footsteps will be the possessor of a tradition stretching back to 1971, when the Society was still young. If you are interested in exploring the idea of taking on the role of editor, please phone me on 01583 421275 or email me on [tyleward@gmail.com](mailto:tyleward@gmail.com). You will be taking on a vital role at a time of change for the Society as a whole, when all of us – members and committee alike – need to look ahead as well as keep to our roots.

# EXCAVATIONS AT UPPER LARGIE QUARRY (NEW LIGHT ON THE PREHISTORIC RITUAL LANDSCAPE OF KILMARTIN GLEN)

MARTIN COOK, CLARE ELLIS  
& ALISON SHERIDAN

## *Introduction (by the Kist editor)*

Visitors to Kilmartin Glen often end up making a day of it and take in Kilmartin House Museum. From there they can look down on the glebe cairn and perhaps go on to visit the many other cairns, tombs and standing stones that are strung like beads along the valley floor. However, they will most likely overlook one of the most fascinating archaeological sites in the glen. Unfortunately the site itself has largely disappeared, for reasons explained below.

The site is located on one of the many gravel terraces in the area (the village of Kilmartin itself sits on one); interesting features in their own right: fluvio-glacial deposits made by a huge torrenting river that once flowed down the glen as the glacier in Loch Awe melted for the last time.

The terrace in question is less than a mile to the north of the museum, on the west side of the glen. It appears to be an intact feature, but if you take a walk up there you will be surprised to see that it is the site of a quarry and has been



hollowed out for its useful resource of gravel, handily sorted by the melting glacier. Archaeological excavations were carried out here intermittently between 1982 and 2005, by various excavators, in advance of quarrying activity.

They revealed abundant evidence of prehistoric activity, dating from the Mesolithic to the Middle Bronze Age. Some evidence was doubtless destroyed without record during a period of unmonitored quarrying but, still, an impressive amount was found.

I quote from the report's conclusions:

“The excavations... have helped to transform our understanding of nature and sequence of activities in the Glen. For the first time, evidence – albeit slight – for Mesolithic activity has been revealed; and an entire 'ritual landscape', contemporary with and complementing the ritual landscape which it overlooked lower down in the Glen, has been revealed”.

*The following consists of extracts from the article which appeared in the Proceedings of the Prehistoric Society 76, 2010, pp.165-212. Apart from the map, which comes from the article, all photographs were taken by Roddy Regan and are copyright of Kilmartin Museum.*

## PRINCIPLE DISCOVERIES

### Mesolithic Pits

Mesolithic activity is represented by four pits, probably representing a temporary camp; this is the first evidence for Mesolithic activity in the Glen.

Temporary occupation, possibly in a clearing in the forest. Perhaps the people who camped here were on their way north-eastwards along the Glen towards the hinterland, where game was presumably plentiful, or southwards to exploit the marine resources of the west coast.

## Cursus

Activity of definite and presumed Neolithic date includes the construction, and partial burning, of a post-defined cursus (*editor's note -*

*cursus was a name given by early British archaeologists such as William Stukeley to large parallel lengths of banks with external ditches which they thought were early Roman athletic courses, hence the Latin name cursus, meaning 'course'. Cursus monuments represent some of the oldest prehistoric monumental structures of the*



*British Isles; cursus may have been of ceremonial function. Banks at the terminal ends enclose the cursus).*

The Upper Largie example comprises a series of postholes running in two, roughly parallel, lines and tapering slightly towards a gently squared-off southern terminal and (to judge from the 1988 aerial photograph), a more abruptly squared-off northern terminal). Oak charcoal was predominant in all

15 of the post-holes examined, and this indicates the deliberate burning of at least some of the posts in situ. Might the presence of smaller-diameter post holes between larger ones relate to the cladding of the cursus with some kind of organic screen, which would not only have regularised the shape of the monument but would also have restricted access to the interior and dictated the movement of participants in associated ceremonies?

Its positioning on a fluvioglacial terrace close to water is characteristic: cursus occur preferentially upon flat river or fluvioglacial gravel terraces and are more often than not aligned upon, or within sight or earshot of, rivers or tributaries. This association with water may be partly practical: floodplains or fluvioglacial terraces are generally flat and therefore ideal locations for long, linear structures. The association is also thought by many to be embodied within social meanings and the significance ascribed to water: fertility, birth, death, liminality, linearity and a social and spiritual boundary.

The orientation of the Upper Largie cursus is such that anyone walking down the outside of the monument may well have extensive views down the Glen and more restricted views up the narrowing glen; for those inside the monument, the view down would have been obscured by the southern terminal. The site, and activities within it, would have been visible from above, from the hills framing the northern part of the Glen to the west and east. An archaeoastronomical survey of the cursus has concluded that its southern excavated section could have been aligned to where the southern moon would have set near the top of Barnasload Hill during a major standstill – a phenomenon which occurs every 19 years.

Its presence represents a significant outlier to the overall distribution of cursus in Scotland. The 50 or so Scottish cursus tend to be found in the south and east, in lowland areas, with a marked concentration around Dumfries. Pit or post-defined cursus are a Scottish phenomenon, with over half of the Scottish monuments falling into this classification. It is becoming increasingly clear that the earliest cursus monuments are to be found in Scotland.

### Beaker grave

Editor's note: the find of a Beaker grave with three finely worked pots is one of great significance. I quote from the report: 'the grave is...of international significance, not only as

one of the earliest Beaker graves in Britain, but also as a rare example of a probable immigrant's grave.' It is worth quoting extensively from the relevant discussion section of the report. It begins by looking at the grave itself:



PK with collapsed cairn material

'Despite the absence of human remains, a strong argument can be made for the pit, with its surrounding ring ditch, its set of three Beakers, and its flint artifacts, having been a grave for

an unburnt body. The body had probably been placed in the pit, along with the grave goods, in a wooden chamber of some kind.

While no precursor for either the form of the Beaker grave, or for the Beakers found within it, can be found in Late Neolithic Scotland (or indeed in the whole of Britain and Ireland), one can draw close parallels between this grave and those in the Netherlands. Some of these Dutch graves contained wooden chambers or plank-built cists, and the former presence of such a structure at Upper Largie – covered with a small cairn of stones that tumbled into the grave when the chamber collapsed – would account for the observed stratigraphy and for the condition of the pots. The presence of a ring ditch surrounding a grave is known from numerous Dutch Beaker graves, both flat and under barrows. The possibility that we are dealing here with Dutch immigrants demands to be taken seriously.'

The discussion then goes on to deal with the pots themselves:

'All three beakers are of international style, with two Epi-Maritime vessels and one All-Over-Cord decorated vessel. These are the earliest kinds of Beaker to be found in Britain. Numerous Continental parallels exist for the individual vessels, and Epi-Maritime Bell Beakers can be found alongside others across a broad swathe on north-west Europe; but the area providing the closest comparisons for the Upper Largie assemblage is the Netherlands.'

The authors then go on to describe the 'technical competence of the potters in making such thin-walled, fine-textured pots, and in controlling their firing so as to achieve specific surface colouring.'

## Pot 1

Pot 1's surfaces 'had been very carefully smoothed before decoration of the exterior, and have either been slipped (ie covered with a thin clay slurry) or wet-smoothed to produce a slip-like appearance. Prior to decoration, and while the clay was still moist, the exterior had been buffed to a low sheen. The exterior had been painstakingly and skilfully decorated by applying a short, fairly straight, fine-toothed comb several hundred times to create 13 zones of horizontal lines.'



Pot 1 upper large base

## Pot 2

Pot 2's 'exterior is a slightly mottled orange-buff, the interior a lighter orange-buff and the core is black, indicating rapid firing. The exterior is decorated with a zoned design featuring blank zones interspersed with four zones of impressed herringbone decoration. Each zone consists of opposed diagonal comb-impressed lines, made using a narrow comb with rectangular, close-set teeth.'





Pot 2 as found with collapsed rim to right

Faint scrape lines are visible on the interior, as are slight irregularities where the wall was manipulated with the finger tips.



Pot 3 as found

### Pot 3

Pot 3's exterior is a light brick-red colour, slightly mottled with buff. The interior is a yellowish-buff...The surfaces had been exceptionally well-smoothed, especially on the interior, and on the base are small facets, suggesting the use of a pebble as a smoother.

The decoration, which covers the whole of the exterior from immediately below the rim to immediately above the base, was effected by wrapping a long, S-twisted cord carefully around the vessel before the clay had dried, to create an almost imperceptible spiral. To create the impression of horizontal lines, the cord would have been wrapped around the pot a few times, then lifted and moved to create the next set of



Pot 3 beaker reconstructed

impressions.'

A flint knife was also found in the grave.

The discussion ends with a comparison with other early Beaker graves. 'The best-known example is from Newmill, Perth and Kinross, where a Dutch-style beaker was found in a Dutch-style grave pit, encircled by a ring ditch. The flint knife found in this grave is comparable to the one found at Upper Largie.'

## Bronze Age Pottery

"The terrace was used again as a place of burial during the early Bronze Age, between the 22nd and the 18th Century, and the graves include one, adjacent to the early Beaker grave, containing a unique footed Food Vessel combining Irish and Yorkshire Food Vessel features.



Footed food vessel

The pot, which had been skilfully made, probably by a specialist potter, uniquely combines elements of Irish Bowl Food vessels with the applied feet (or rather legs) that are typical of some Food Vessels found in Yorkshire.

It is a globular ridged bowl with four protruding feet. Found upright but slightly crushed, it is now virtually complete but with some deep cracks.

The exterior is a buff to light brown colour, slightly reddish in parts; the interior, mottled buff and grey-buff; and the core, medium grey. The whole of the exterior is decorated with a dense design, executed by incision and impression.

The close proximity of this presumed grave to the earlier, Dutch-style Beaker grave – it cuts the latter's ring ditch – is unlikely to have occurred by chance, and indeed the two structures are similarly orientated...this...suggests that here was buried a significant individual, whose grave deliberately referenced that of an illustrious immigrant ancestor or predecessor...it encapsulates the cosmopolitan nature of the Kilmartin Glen elite during the 22nd-21st Centuries BC. The wealth and power of this elite may well have been based on their monopoly of the flow of Irish copper to other parts of Scotland (especially north-east Scotland, at the other end of the Great Glen), and bolstered by their harnessing of the sacred authority of pre-existing monuments in the Glen. The monuments include 'elite' cists with grave goods that include some very fine Irish-style Food Vessels.

The Upper Largie Food Vessel and the grave in which it was found can therefore be understood against this background. The grave may have been of equivalent social status to the other elite graves (in the Glen) by virtue its privileged

juxtaposition against the older Beaker grave. The unique design of the Food vessel explicitly references two areas – Ireland and Yorkshire – with which the elite must have had especially important links. It is clear that the skilled potter who made the pot was familiar with Food vessels both in Ireland and in Yorkshire. Connections with north-east Scotland are also, indirectly, attested through the presence in the north-east of a few distinctively Irish Food vessels, as at Seafeld West on the outskirts of Inverness. The route



Complete food vessel from 1993 clx burial

between Ireland and north-east Scotland is likely to have been along the Great Glen and to have passed through Kilmartin.

Stone cists dating from the same period were also discovered. Cist 1 was excavated in 1993 and a complete Food Vessel was discovered within it. It was found virtually intact. The outside of the neck and upper belly is decorated with rows of fingernail impressions. The lower belly is decorated with diagonal, partly criss-crossed lines which have been incised with a sharp-pointed implement. The decoration is far cruder than that seen on the footed Food Vessel.

### **Monuments including timber circle**

At some point/s during the first half of the 2nd millennium BC, three monuments were constructed on the terrace: a pit, surrounded by pits or posts, similar in design to the early Beaker grave; a timber circle; and a post row.

The timber circle is of slightly elliptical shape, with its main axis aligned north-east to south-west – the same basic orientation as the Early Neolithic cursus, the avenue and several of the individual graves. It had been constructed – probably in a single episode – using massive oak posts, the waterlogged remains of which were found in three pits. This, and the absence of charcoal from most of the post-holes, suggests that the posts had been allowed to rot in situ. The four radiocarbon dates...suggest a likely date of construction...between 1600 cal BC and 1400 cal BC – in other words, well over a millennium later than the similarly-shaped timber circle at Temple Wood North.

While the overall trend in Britain tends to be from early, large, and sometimes complex timber and stone circles to later,

smaller circles, the Upper Largie circle bucks this trend. Perhaps, once more, this highlights the special nature of the communities who lived around the Glen.

The presence of a pitchstone blade core in one of the post holes is noteworthy as a further example of external contacts.

The latest datable activity consists of a grave, containing cremated bone in a Bucket Urn, the bone being dated to 1410-1210 cal BC; this may well be contemporary with an assemblage of pottery from a colluvium spread.

## **Conclusions and Future research**

Much still remains to be investigated: relatively little is known about the evolution of the landscape, although a sizeable clearance of trees is implied in the layout and construction of the cursus, and it seems likely that the establishment of the Early Bronze Age linear cairn cemetery in the Glen bottom would have occurred in a largely tree-free area.

There can be no doubt that unmonitored quarrying between 1983 and 1993 has destroyed other material, although it must be admitted that the quarry development has led to the active investigation of much of this landscape. Future research might profitably be directed towards investigating the area immediately to the north of the quarry; locating likely locations for other Mesolithic activity in the Glen; and investigating the putative Neolithic sites lower down in the Glen”.

## DRAGONFLIES OF MID ARGYLL

PAT & DAVE BATTY

Dragonflies and damselflies are members of the insect order Odonata and are commonly just called dragonflies. As a general rule dragonflies are larger, rest with their wings at right angles and are seen in lower numbers, whilst damselflies are smaller, rest with their wings folded along their body and are seen in larger numbers. All (or nearly all) are beautifully coloured or patterned.

Dragonflies need water as they spend the majority of their lives as larvae in water. Eggs are laid in or close to water plants and hatch in water as larvae which are predators and grow by casting their skins and expanding in size many times. When fully grown and developed the larva crawls out of the water usually up vegetation when the outer skin splits along the back and the adult emerges. This can take several hours and the case left behind is an exuvia. The immature adult rests to harden up and develop full colouration. The dragonflies return to their breeding areas after a period of several days feeding and maturing. Damselflies usually take one year to complete their larval stage but some of the larger dragonflies can take 4-5 years depending on weather conditions. How long the adults live depends on the weather but none overwinter.

Given Mid Argyll has so much water it is no surprise that it is such a good place for dragonflies. Of the 24 species found in Scotland, 16 are present in our area and 20 in Argyll as a whole. Dragonflies don't just like obvious areas of water like lochs, lochans and burns but also use bogs, Sphagnum pools

and small ditches. Nor does it have to be high quality water as some species will use polluted and splash zone pools.

What species of dragonflies are you likely to see easily in Mid Argyll? In terms of damselflies the earliest and most easily recognisable is the Large Red Damselfly (it is red but not that large) seen from May onwards. Soon afterwards there will be blue damselflies but there are several species which fly at the same time and in the same habitats. The most common is the Common Blue but there are also the Azure Damselfly and the Blue-tailed Damselfly (black with a blue band at the end of its abdomen).

Sometimes they land and can be identified but usually you have to catch them. Another common species is the Emerald Damselfly which, as the name suggests, is a metallic green.



Beautiful Demoiselle

An uncommon species in Scotland which is found in several sites in Mid Argyll is the Beautiful Demoiselle which is one of the most spectacular with lovely metallic blue/green wings in the male. The adults like burnsidcs with shade and trees and display with a fluttery flight in the sunny areas. You can get large numbers congregating in one area. A flash of dark blue is often the

first sign of them. Unusually this species lays its eggs in submerged vegetation in flowing rivers and burns.

If there is a boggy area adjacent to a lochan then you are likely to see a larger dragonfly, the Four-spotted Chaser. This looks like a flying cigar and has a distinctive dark spot on each wing. Sometimes the bog is covered by them buzzing about chasing each other.



Four-spotted Chaser

In terms of the bigger dragonflies the one most commonly seen and recognisable is the Golden-ringed Dragonfly which is black with a series of gold rings down its body. The female is the largest British insect. Despite their size they breed in the gravel of small and shallow ditches and runnels, including roadside ditches. They often land on stones or vegetation providing a good opportunity to admire these beautiful insects more closely.

There are two other large dragonflies commonly seen, both members of the hawk group. One, the Common Hawker, has a black and blue abdomen, and the other, the Southern Hawker, has a green and blue abdomen. Both are fast fliers and are often only glimpsed before they gone. Despite being called the Common Hawker this species is perhaps not as common as it once was. The Southern Hawker was only re-

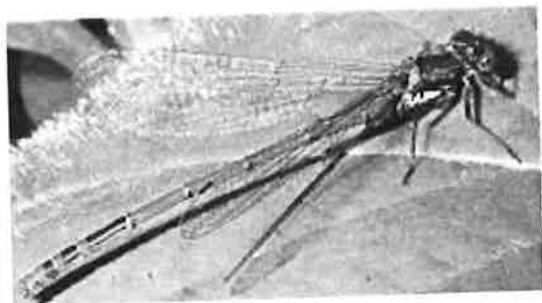
discovered in Mid Argyll some 25 years ago but since then has been found in a large number of sites and is expanding its range in Mid Argyll and Scotland as a whole. This species is a pioneer species and moves into new sites. It is commonly found colonising garden ponds. It tends to fly later in the season than the Common one and has been seen in November. Normally the Southern Hawker lays its eggs in pools but also in cracks in rocks or between paving slabs. One of the stranger places it uses in Mid Argyll is brackish pools along the coast.

Later in the summer two smaller dragonflies the Common Darter and the Black Darter are often seen. The former is red and found round lochs whilst the latter favours the boggy margins around lochs. They are both quite common and are often seen basking on stones. The females of both species are sandy coloured.

Mid Argyll is also home to several uncommon and rare species. If you are around the Knapdale lochs in late May or June you might see a small blue-black dragonfly, the Hairy Dragonfly. It is hairy but the hairs are only seen if you catch one. There are only a few other sites in the west of Scotland.

Some of the open hill lochs around Loch Awe have the Brilliant Emerald which has a beautiful metallic green body. It sounds easy to identify but it flies fast and is elusive. Also depending on the light it can appear darker. The larvae live at the edge of the lochs under overhangs and are very difficult to find. The species is found in only a few other sites in the highlands and bizarrely also from the south east of England.

A closely related species is the Northern Emerald which is dark green to black and is very difficult to distinguish from

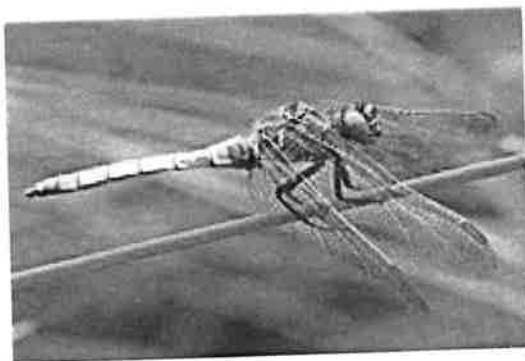


Large Red Damselfly

the Brilliant Emerald on the wing and even in photographs. However it does occupy a completely different habitat. It uses Sphagnum pools and runnels, often without any obvious water, for breeding. These sites can occur almost anywhere but the species is not

widespread and its distribution is disjointed across Scotland. However it is commoner than the Brilliant Emerald and is found in Mid Argyll from near sea level to the higher hills.

Both the Emerald species occur in low numbers and thus adults are rarely seen. However you have more chance of seeing the Keeled Skimmer where the male has a lovely powder blue abdomen and is easily recognisable even if just briefly glimpsed. This species uses small runnels and ditches, often near the coast or on bogs, to breed. They can be quite common in the right situation. It has a restricted



Keeled Skimmer

distribution in Scotland, mainly along the west coast.

Trying to survey dragonflies just on adult sightings is very difficult in Mid Argyll (and for anywhere in Scotland) as they need warm sunny conditions to be active. It is easier to search for larvae in the appropriate places using the appropriate equipment, a colander. A net is not suitable as it becomes clogged up with mud and vegetation. Searching a colander full of gunge is the most efficient way to find larvae which can be identified to species with a bit of practice. The other way is to search for the exuviae, left behind when the adult emerges. Again with some practice the species can be identified. If it is not windy or heavy rain then the exuviae can persist, hanging on the vegetation for several weeks. However it is a matter of getting one's eye in to spot them.

Taking a slightly wider view the UK and Scottish lists of dragonflies have increased over the last few years. More continental species are turning up as chance visitors whilst other species have colonised England and Scotland and bred



Golden-ringed Dragonfly



Hairy Dragonfly

becoming new additions. This is likely due to climate change and warmer seasons. So far in Argyll there are no new colonists but there are ones in Dumfries and Galloway and south-east Scotland.

Just like butterflies the colourful damselflies and dragonflies of Mid Argyll add to our enjoyment of the area. They perhaps have the added benefit of being predators catching many insects during the summer including plenty of midges we hope.

### Latin Names Of Species

Large Red Damselfly  
Common Blue Damselfly  
Azure Damselfly  
Blue-tailed Damselfly  
Emerald Damselfly  
Beautiful Demoiselle  
Four-spotted Chaser  
Golden-ringed Dragonfly  
Common Hawker  
Southern Hawker  
Common Darter  
Black Darter  
Hairy Dragonfly  
Brilliant Emerald  
Northern Emerald  
Keeled Skimmer

*Pyrrhosoma nymphula*  
*Enallagma cyathigerum*  
*Coenagrion puella*  
*Ischnura elegans*  
*Lestes sponsa*  
*Calopteryx virgo*  
*Libellula quadrimaculata*  
*Cordulegaster boltonii*  
*Aeshna juncea*  
*A. cyanea*  
*Sympetrum striolatum*  
*S. danae*  
*Brachytron pratense*  
*Somatchlora metallica*  
*S. arctica*  
*Orthetrum coerulescens*

## ROLL CALL OF PREVIOUS EDITORS

ED TYLER

### **Marion Campbell of Kilberry**

In the light of seeking a new editor, it is worthwhile pausing a moment to consider the roll call of previous editors. Kist was begun under the aegis of Marion Campbell, a towering figure in the Scottish Antiquarian scene, champion of Gaelic culture and writer of many books including an experimental novel. As inheritor of the Kilberry estate she was a true native. In later years she became an indefatigable discoverer and recorder of local archaeological sites. It seemed natural that, in the wake of being instrumental in helping set up NHASMA, she should get an editorial sub-committee together and start a magazine.

### **F.S.M.**

Given the amount of work that Marion had to occupy her, it is not surprising that by edition no. 4 there was a new editor: F.S.Mackenna. From the outset Kist established its unique 'look' with black-and-white line drawings on its covers. From the 3rd edition onwards the design incorporated hand-drawn lettering for 'The Kist' with its edition number.

The letters 'F.S.M.' start to appear on these distinct covers from edition 4. The retired doctor had an obvious talent for drawing and design, as his covers attest. For upwards of 40 editions he honed his designs, using pointillist dot techniques and blocking for both subtle and dramatic effects. Even

edition 52 – by which time Adeline Clark had taken over as editor – features his distinctive Dunmore School cover.

When he retired from his editorship in 1991, Marion Campbell wrote in Kist 42: 'The fame of Kist, and with it the reputation of our Society, is now worldwide thanks to the exertions of Dr. Mackenna. That he found time for this, among his work for the RNLI, his lectures on English porcelain (on which he is an international authority) and the single-handed creation of a spectacular garden, is matter for astonishment, especially when we remember that he had 'retired' after a distinguished career in medicine...(he has) decided to 'retire' again, to enlarge his rhodedendron collection and to produce, we hope, many more of his magnificent landscape paintings.'

### **Adeline Clark**

Adeline Clark took over as editor. She described Dr. Mackenna as 'nonpareil' among editors. Though 'apprehensive' about taking on the task, she rapidly put her editorial stamp on ensuing issues, ensuring that each had a wide range of contributions covering history, archaeology, landscape and natural history. Her own specialism was archaeology, and continued the tradition of the editor being a Fellow of the Scottish Society of Antiquaries. She combined the role of editor with that of Hon. Secretary for Membership and Publications.

When I, in my turn, started my steep learning curve as prospective editor, I encountered a firm, no-nonsense woman who had a strong sense of what Kist was about. She hoped that my knowledge as an amateur ecologist would be put to good use in the form of more articles on natural history,

which she felt had been neglected somewhat during her editorship. This taught me that each edition of Kist should be well-balanced between history and natural history. Adeline was an excellent teacher, giving me the confidence to take on the role. She explained to me that Kist was all about its contributors: that the editor's job is to cultivate them by talent-spotting and ongoing support and encouragement.

I still have in my possession a gift that she passed on to me: Dr. Mackenna's folder with A4 transparent pockets into which each typeset page of Kist was inserted. It was this folder that was sent off to the printers.

Whoever follows in my footsteps will be the possessor of a tradition stretching back to 1971, when the Society was still young. If you are interested in exploring the idea of taking on the role of editor, please phone me on 01583 421275 or email me on [tyleward@gmail.com](mailto:tyleward@gmail.com). You will be taking on a vital role at a time of change for the Society as a whole, when all of us – members and committee alike – need to look ahead as well as keep to our roots.

## EXCAVATIONS IN KILMARTIN GLEN:

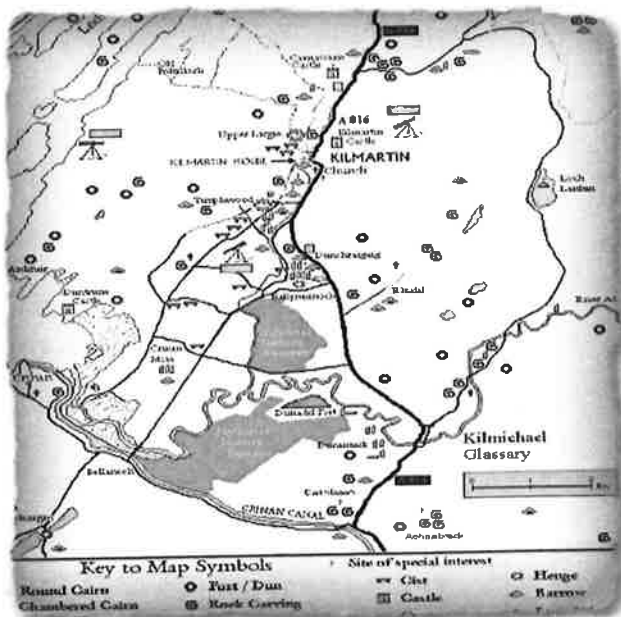
YOUR CHANCE TO TAKE PART.

**Roddy Regan wishes to alert members to an interesting project:**

Between 7th and 21st June as part of the Dig It programme we will be leading archaeological excavations in the north of the Kilmartin Glen which will afford the opportunity come along and volunteer in the investigations.

Beyond the excavations we will also be exploring the wider landscape with a series of guided walks and activities that concentrate on some of the Glens lesser known but equally important monuments.

People will have to book by contacting me, but as yet we are not taking bookings until the wider publicity is ready to go out, so keep an eye on the Museums website or the posters we will put up.



# THE ROYAL CASTLE OF TARBERT

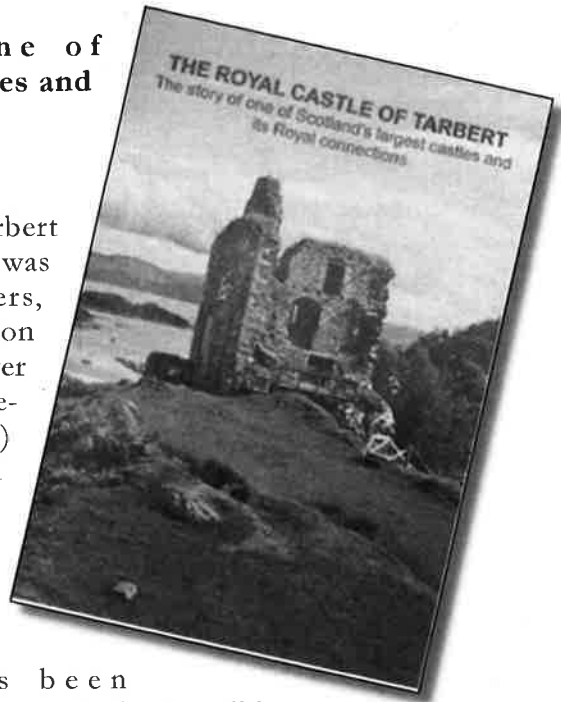
ROBERT MACPHAIL

## Editor's Book Review 1:

**The story of one of Scotland's largest castles and its Royal connections.**

When I first came to Tarbert in 2001 the castle site was hidden behind conifers, sloe thickets, rhodendron and brambles. The Tower House (the only above-ground structure left) was lost behind ivy, and one of the drum towers had a huge sycamore growing out of it.

Fast forward to 2014 and the site has been transformed, thanks to hundreds (possibly thousands) of hours of volunteer work and substantial grant funding, all coordinated by one man: Robert McPhail. Now, Robert, in response to many suggestions from friends and visitors, has produced a 40-page booklet which charts the development of the site from the 13th to 18th centuries.



He sets the scene with a map showing Tarbert's strategic position at an isthmus linking the Firth of Clyde to the Inner Hebrides, including Islay, once the focus of power of the Lords of the Isles. It was also the land gateway to the fertile lands of the Kintyre peninsula.

The booklet contains an interesting section on its fate during the 19th when it became a Romantic ruin even sketched by the great J M W Turner (paintings by two lesser known artists are included in the illustrations).

Other illustrations include excellent colour photographs showing the tower house's restoration, an artist's impression of the Tower House when occupied, three plans of the castle as it evolved and pictures of the site as a whole.

Robert is a man who has lived and breathed for the restoration of Tarbert Castle. Thanks to him and his hard-working team of volunteers, it has been rediscovered by the folk of Tarbert, who picnic and wander over its sheep-nibbled lawns, and by increasing numbers of tourists who admire the massive tower house structure. Hopefully they will pause in the village and purchase the booklet, which is available from:

*The Loch Fyne Gallery, Harbour Street, Tarbert*

*Ian Y. MacIntyre's Shop, High Stre Tarbert*

*Robert McPhail, Tel: 01880 820653*  
*email: sonamarg@btinternet.com*

Price £5 each

# THREE BOOKLETS ON PLACE NAMES OF KINTYRE PARISHES

ANGUS MARTIN

## Editors Book Review 2:

### 2014, Kintyre Antiquarian and Natural History Society

Three new booklets on place names in Kintyre have just been published. Angus's first one, for Southend and Campbeltown, was reviewed here in 2009.

The area covered by the new booklets covers the three parishes of Killean and Kilchenzie, Kilcalmonell and Saddell and Skipness. As Angus says in his introduction, the idea of compiling the many Gaelic and Norse names so as to help us better understand our local landscape was first proposed by the Antiquarian Society in 1921. Booklets on Southend, Campbeltown, Gigha and Cara followed before the project was shelved. Angus used the booklets on Southend and Campbeltown as a basis for the 2009 publication.



He also had access to Society archive 'To Duncan Colville's maps, Ordnance Survey records, books, articles, newspaper cuttings and the oral tradition of his time I added old parish registers, census returns, local newspapers going back to 1851, surviving oral tradition and a host of documentary and published materials.'

Settlement entries include details of past occupants: an addition which enriches these entries. I looked with excitement for where I live: North Beachmore, and discovered that in 1860 Edward McGeachy was fatally thrown from his cart while taking home some pigs he had purchased at Barr. I also found the settlement's alternative name – Gaigan – and learned that it derives from 'cleft' or 'fissure', a reference to the burns on either side that have cut deep valleys into the glacial till.

I hope this example shows the depths to which Angus has gone in uncovering the history that lies behind Kintyre's place names, and I warmly recommend you buy yourselves copies of all three booklets which are available from:

*The Old Bookshelf in Cross Street Campbeltown*

*Elizabeth Marrison, Glunimore,  
Fort Argyll, Campbeltown, PA28 6SN*

They are priced £5 each, inclusive of postage and packaging, and cheques to be made payable to 'Kintyre Antiquarian & Natural History Society'.

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... Cover Design - Phillip Fox-Denham ...

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