

DICRANUM SCOTTIANUM - SCOTT'S FORK MOSS



DRYOPETERIS AEMULA - HAY-SCENTED BUCKLER



THE BEAVER TRIAL

THE

K I S T 9 2

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Editorial

We are now publishing Kist in a new format. It is available to members as a downloadable PDF and has been uploaded onto our website.

This saves the Society in terms of postage and printing costs (those who do not have access to email are still receiving printed copies).

We are pleased to report on the results of the Beaver Trial in Knapdale and the latest summer island expedition, as well as an amazing Bronze Age find on the Isle of Coll. Coincidentally another Bronze Age hoard has just been found near Cairndow beside Loch Fyne: in this case three intact axe heads. Stuart Campbell from the Treasure Trove Unit described them thus:

'We do have similar objects in collections elsewhere, but few are as old as these appear to be. They are typical of the very earliest metal tools within the British Isles, and date back to between 2,000 and 2,300 BC, the early Bronze Age.'

The Coll Hoard

Trevor Cowie

Gifts to the Gods? Bronze Age weapons on Coll

During the summer of 2014, Coll fisherman Kenny MacIntyre contacted the Scottish Treasure Trove Unit to report some finds he had just made on the island. He spoke to Dr. Natasha Ferguson who, along with the rest of the Treasure Trove team, is based in the National Museum in Edinburgh (in general the first port of call for finders wishing to report any new archaeological discoveries in Scotland).

When not out on his boat, Kenny enjoys a spot of metal detecting and he emailed to report the discovery of what he suspected were Bronze Age weapons. As he had noted signals indicating the possibility of further finds, he very responsibly decided to refrain from any further detecting and to seek professional advice (as it happened, the area of the findspot lies in land owned by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds on Coll; although Kenny had sought and innocently been given permission to investigate the fields in question, metal detecting is in fact not permitted anywhere on RSPB land except as part of an agreed research project).

A preliminary site assessment was carried out in September 2014, under the direction of Natasha Ferguson, assisted by the writer, by Jill Harden, the RSPB's Reserves Archaeologist, and by Kenny himself. As well as locating several more artefacts, the fieldwork allowed us to pinpoint the locations of the discoveries and to begin to appreciate the findspot within its landscape setting.

At a meeting of the Scottish Archaeological Finds Allocation Panel held last August, this important Argyll find was allocated to Kilmartin Museum. It is the first sizeable discovery of Bronze Age metalwork from the region for many years. All told, a total of 13 pieces of bronze metalwork have been recovered. These consist of parts of at least two swords, at least five

spearheads (mostly just represented by fragments), and a fragment of what appears to have been a socketed knife.

If these numbers seem a little vague, it is because the objects are awaiting conservation and their surfaces remain obscured by deposits of sandy soil and surface corrosion. Once they have been conserved, it will be possible to examine them in greater detail. For example, at the moment we strongly suspect that several of the fragments of sword represent the broken-up parts of a single sword: once conserved, we will be able to match up the broken edges with greater confidence. We will also be able to look for the tell-tale signs of wear and damage which may shed light on whether the sword had seen use before it finally came to be broken into pieces and cast into the boggy pool or lochan in which it was then to lie undisturbed for thousands of years. Or when the conservator comes to work on the handle of the sword, we suspect that this will reveal the remains of the bronze rivets that would once have held the grip in place. This would have been formed of organic material such as wood, bone, horn or antler: while it is likely that these will have largely decayed, careful cleaning may just reveal sufficient traces to permit identification.



Selection of Artefacts

In the case of the spearhead fragments we can already more certain that the individual weapons are represented only by single fragments. At least five spearheads are present; they would all have had sockets to take a wooden shaft and their blades would all have been of an elongated leaf-shaped form. However, they clearly varied in size, ranging from what would have been a small, dart-like spearhead probably designed for throwing, to a portion of a much larger socketed spearhead more suitable for close combat. In one or two cases, there may still be fragments of wood preserved in the sockets: this may permit us to identify the wood species used and, if we are lucky, to obtain samples for radiocarbon dating. However, even at this stage, we can already say that the types of weapons present are all typical of the Late Bronze Age and date broadly to the period from around 1000 to 800 BC.

How and why did this range of weapons end up in the ground around three thousand years ago? Although the picture may change in the light of study of the artefacts and further fieldwork, our current view is that the location would once have been boggy, or possibly a small loch with standing water. It appears likely that the weapons had been purposely broken and cast into the waters as part of a ceremony, perhaps as offerings or gifts to the gods. Who knows, perhaps they were accompanied by prayers for better weather ... or for good fishing?



Fieldwork in progress

Editor's note

Trevor Cowie has now retired. He worked for the Scottish History & Archaeological Department National Museums Scotland.

Thanks to Kilmartin Museum for allowing us to reprint the article, which first appeared in its newsletter.

Beaver Trial in Knapdale

Oly Hemmings

Eurasian beavers (*Castor fiber*) were present in Britain until the 16th Century, when they became extinct due to over exploitation by humans. Discussions about restoring native species and reintroducing beavers began in Scotland in the 1990s, following successful beaver reintroductions in 24 other European countries. The decision was made to re-introduce beavers to Scotland on a trial basis to establish their local environmental and social impacts after such a long absence. From May 2009, four family groups of beavers imported from Norway were released into Knapdale Forest in Argyll and the monitoring work of the Scottish Beaver Trial began.

The Scottish Beaver Trial (SBT) is a partnership project involving the Scottish Wildlife Trust, the Royal Zoological Society of Scotland (RZSS), and the host partners; Forestry Commission Scotland (FCS). The aims of SBT were to study the ecology and biology of the released beavers; to monitor the effects of their activities; to study their impact on tourism; and to explore any environmental education opportunities. Data collected over the trial period was intended for use by the Scottish Government to inform decisions about potential future reintroductions across the country. This scientific trial began in 2009 and ran for five years, with data collected by SBT staff as well as 13 independent organisations. This data was submitted to the independent monitoring partner, Scottish Natural Heritage (SNH) in 2014 (full reports can be found on the SNH website www.snh.gov.uk).

Why carry out a trial reintroduction?

Beavers can significantly change their local environment and as such reintroductions can be seen as controversial, as they may have an effect on land and land management practices. That said, they can also have many beneficial effects and can be considered as 'ecosystem engineers'. By modifying their surroundings through coppicing, feeding and in some cases

damming, beavers create ponds and wetlands which attract a diverse range of other species, providing food and even improving water quality.

All of the Knapdale beaver families that were released went through a period of quarantine following their trapping in Norway. Every individual was fitted with a microchip and ear tags for identification, for regular monitoring including health screening through the course of the trial period. During the monitoring period, some beavers were fitted with radio and GPS tags, enabling staff to record their movements and identify areas that they most frequently inhabited for feeding etc. within their territories.

It was discovered that the beavers were active for 9 – 12 hours a day, and travelled around 2 kilometres on average per night. A combination of

methods including visual ‘watches’, tracking and the use of camera traps were used to monitor the beavers. Some of the camera trap footage can be seen on the SBT website

(www.scottishbeavers.org.uk) and Facebook page.

Perhaps the greatest impact that the Knapdale

beavers have had to the landscape over the trial period has been the building of the dam by Loch Coille-Bharr and the subsequent flooding of the Dubh Loch. One of the four beaver families, consisting of one male and two females, began to dam the small drainage ditch which flowed from the Dubh Loch into Loch Coille-Bharr shortly after their release. Once completed, the dam stretched for 18 metres in length and created a pond 1.5 metres higher on the Dubh Loch side. The flooding increased the



Dubh Loch Dam

Photo : Scottish Beaver Trial

original surface area of the Dubh Loch by approximately 10 times, and flooded part of the path which formed a circular walk around Loch Coille-Bharr. The FCS reinstated the path along a 'knap' or hill between the two lochs, diverting around the flooded area, which also incorporates a 'floating pontoon' running alongside the dam to allow visitors to view the dam from both sides.

The shallow, still waters of the flooded Dubh Loch, which is only part of the 13km² surface area of new freshwater habitat that has been created by the beavers in the trial area, is home to a wide range of flora and fauna species. Water lilies have moved over from the main Dubh Loch and many other marginal and water plants are now in abundance. The flooded area is flourishing with aquatic species and proved to be a 'profitable' place to take classes of school children pond dipping. Reports from the University of Stirling state that the significant rise in the water level of Dubh Loch has caused a reduction in some vegetation, lost through submersion and herbivory by the beavers, but this has been largely replaced by the rapid colonisation of newly flooded areas. The overall number and diversity of species has increased, and there have been significant increases in the number of water boatmen, water beetles, and (non-biting!) midge species found in the flooded areas.

Observations by the SBT team over the period of the trial indicates that many other species, such as newts, ducks, dragonflies and damselflies, have taken advantage of this new habitat which was previously forest floor. Bats are taking advantage of the flying insect life and are feeding over the water surface in the evenings, and herons are a regular presence on the high side of the dam which may imply that the fish populations are healthy too – the monitoring of the fish species in the trial area carried out by the Argyll Fisheries Trust found that brown trout were spawning both above and below the beaver dam.

The flooding of the area immediately surrounding Dubh Loch has led to the death of some trees due to their roots becoming submerged. Some

species such as willow are more tolerant of the wetter ground around the margins, but birch and alder have not fared so well. However, these dead trees have created a habitat beneficial to many insects that thrive in standing dead wood. In turn, this has attracted other wildlife that feeds off these insects, as well as woodpeckers which use hollow dead trees as sounding posts, and the bracket fungus which can be seen all around this area.

Walking around the trial area, it is very evident that beavers are present. Felled trees and 'beaver chips' can be seen around the loch sides. Feeding stations at the water's edge are obvious due to sticks stripped of their bark and abandoned. Some previously wooded areas are now cleared of trees, accessed by canals dug by the beavers in order to reach further into the woodland. The James Hutton Institute that monitored the woodlands and trees during the trial found that the beavers are feeding in a margin of up to 10 -20 metres from the water's edge, with 8.6% of trees around the lochs being affected in some way by beavers. The main tree species affected are birch, rowan, willow and alder. All of these broadleaf species regenerate from the stump and are in effect being coppiced by the beavers. The fresh new shoots in the spring provide a food source for other species. However, this is also resulting in the over browsing by deer who can access the new lower shoots and leaves growing from the stumps, and this is having a subsequent effect on the survival of the trees felled by beavers. Scottish Natural Heritage monitored areas of Atlantic Hazelwood which fall within Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and are a vulnerable lichen habitat present around some of the loch in Knapdale. There are some concerns about the rate of regrowth of coppiced hazel and deer over-browsing having an effect on some of the lichen species.

Standing looking out from the viewing platform on Dubh Loch provides a view that has not been witnessed by people in Scotland for over 400 years. It's amazing to have the opportunity to look upon a scene which has been absent for many previous generations.

Globally, beavers have been exploited by humans for centuries, providing resources such as meat, clothing and castoreum – oil secreted from their glands that was used for perfume making. Evidence of beavers has been found in archaeological dig sites of early human settlements in Britain. Perhaps people chose to settle close to places where beavers were present for many reasons: beaver meat was a valuable source of protein and fat, and their pelts large and warm for making clothing (beavers have the densest and therefore warmest fur of all British mammals). There would be a constant supply of fresh water where beavers live, and a good place to find fish. Maybe people wanting to start a fire would have collected beaver chips and sticks to save using their own energy to cut down a tree (axes have been found which have been made from beaver teeth too). It is quite possible that living where beavers have coppiced trees which are re-growing would provide a good spot to hunt for larger mammals. Latterly, beaver fur was used to manufacture top hats, and it was only a change in fashion that saved the beaver from extinction in other parts of the world.

Since the creation of the post of Scottish Beaver Trial Education Ranger in 2012, there have been over 740 evening guided walks for the general public which have been run twice per week over the Easter and Summer school holiday periods. To date they have continued to be well attended and have attracted visitors from over 26 different countries, as well as interested and enthusiastic locals. The majority of holiday makers who attended guided walks expressed that a visit to Knapdale and the Scottish Beaver Trial with the hope of seeing beavers (or at least some beaver feeding signs and the habitat the beavers have created) had been a major factor in the decision to come and spend their holiday here.

This year, since the scientific part of the trial has come to an end, we are in a holding period where minimal monitoring has taken place. We are now awaiting the decision from the Scottish Environment Minister about the future of beavers in Scotland. The beaver families still seem to be happy living in Knapdale, and are continuing with life as usual. A couple of

families have successfully bred again this year: the Loch Buic family have produced two kits, and the Loch Coille-Bharr family have at least one.

For the SBT team and many local people, we hope that the beavers of Knapdale will continue to thrive for generations to come and that the legacy of this ground breaking project will be the long term return of 'nature's engineer' to this part of the west coast. Only time will tell, so watch this space for news on their future.



Adult Linnhe
Photo - Steve Gardener

Editor's note

This article, by the Education Ranger at the time, Oly Hemmings, was written in September 2015. The decision from the Environment Minister is still awaited.

Request for information on early 'run-of-the-river' Hydro-schemes in Argyll

David Jardine

During the last decade or so a quiet revolution has been taking place in Argyll and elsewhere in the Highlands. A large number of 'run-of the river' hydro-electric projects have been constructed in line with the Scottish Government's drive for renewable 'green' energy, spurred on by attractive prices provided by the 'feed-in tariffs'.

Such 'run of the river' projects have ranged in size from around 20kW to over 2MW and involve taking water out of a stream at high elevation and running it through the penstock to a small turbine house downstream before returning the water to the burn / river. Unlike many of the large 'hydro' projects (Wood, 2004) they do not usually involve the storage of water, but rely on the run-off of water from the uplands, although some are built below lochs thus improving their capacity.

However modern this may seem it is not 'a first'. During the pioneering days of the late 19th and early 20th century, similar structures were built to bring the first electricity to Argyll. In fact some of the modern projects have been built on, or are proposed for, sites where these innovative schemes were originally built, such as that being championed on the River Avich by the Dalavich Improvement Group on Loch Awe-side. Remains of the early projects are sometimes still visible, including in some places, the original turbines. These are much smaller than those now being installed and would probably only



Ruined Turbine House, Aros Park,
Tobermory, Mull, complete with early

have been suitable for lighting. It is interesting to see that some of the early turbine manufacturers, such as at Aros Park, Tobermory Mull, which was built by Gilkes, are still active in the industry. Gilbert Gilkes, from Kendal, Cumbria, who specialise in small hydro, have been involved in building five schemes in Argyll during the last three years.

In addition to the two early schemes mentioned above, details of others have been found in Glen Creran, at Ardinglas in Cowal and Armaddy, near Kilninver. If you know of any other sites of early hydro schemes in Argyll, I'd be delighted to hear about them.

Reference

Wood E (2004) *The Hydro Boys: Pioneers of Renewable Energy*. Luath Press.

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Hay Maryon & Co Ltd (Engineers London)
turbine in ruined generation building by the
River Avich, Dalavich, Loch Awe.

Ferry Wood

Ed Tyler

A few months ago Carina and I acquired a wood, part of the Ardpatrik and Dunmore SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). It's called Ferry Wood: a 40 acre wooded knoll rising up above a raised beach near Ardpatrik Point at the north entrance to West Loch Tarbert. The site includes a coastal meadow and small section of coast. A ferry used run between here and Dunskeig, crossing the entrance to the West Loch: hence its name.

Along with the wood come many conditions from Scottish Natural Heritage aimed at conserving its status as an Atlantic oakwood.

It is part of the West Coast Important Plant Area recognized by Plantlife Scotland for its exceptional mix of oceanic bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) and lichens. A typical woodland ravine in Argyll can support up to 200 species making it as diverse as the richest tropical rainforest! Indeed, the woodlands of the extreme west are often described as Temperate Rainforest, being almost constantly damp and frost-free.

Mid-Argyll has several woods in what is designated the 'core area' of the IPA (Taynish and Knapdale Forest are two examples). Ferry Wood is also in this area. My main aim in managing the wood is education and awareness-raising. It would be great to see restoration happening in the wooded 'zones of opportunity' around the core area, so that the rare plants can once more thrive there.

SNH officer Stan Phillips has already identified some of the rare bryophytes: *Dicranum Scottianum* (Scott's fork moss), *Plagiochila spinulosa* (Prickly featherwort) and *Scapania gracilis* (Western earwort). Growing on the branches of hazel is the lichen *Lobaria Pulmonaria* (Lungwort). There are many lovely ferns growing in the wood, including *Dryopeteris aemula* (hay-scented buckler).

Another management aim is to eradicate *Rhododendron x superponticum*. The 'super' indicates just how successful it is at colonizing the understory of the Atlantic woods, shading out the rare bryophytes and lichens. Grants have been made for the past 20 years to support the removal of it from Forest Wood. Much progress has been made but it still dominates an area of 5 acres. During the Autumn we are bringing in the Lever and Mulch Partnership from Morvern. They will focus on the dense stand of flowering shrubs, leaving local volunteers to continue to pull up the seedlings and young plants scattered throughout the site.

In mid-September I looked over the wood with a stalker. He zoned in fast, spotting a couple of sika deer scrapes where the adult males had been pawing the ground and throwing their necks around (however, these were not full-blown wallows). There were also badger tracks, visible as impressions in the grass from a low-bellied animal that connected with the setts. Beside them were numerous disturbed patches where they had been rooting around. Once, during a summer visit, we came across holes containing the remains of wasps' nests: in one case a bit of papier mache was still to be seen, with a few dazed-looking wasps still loyal to their old, now-destroyed home.

We know there are otters coming up into the wood: they will use the same tracks as the badgers. Red squirrels were plentiful until a couple of years ago but mysteriously have disappeared. I disturbed a Sparrow hawk recently in the heart of the wood.

Tree regeneration is happening: there are plenty seedlings of oak, rowan, hazel, holly and birch. However, these are being held in check by the grazing activities of both sheep and deer. The older oak trees are a mix of coppiced and un-coppiced specimens. If you would like to visit the wood, please get in contact and you can meet me there. There are plenty of rhododendron seedlings to pull up!

NHASMA Summer Expedition 2016

Portpatrick

John Dymont

Most of our previous summer outing weeks have tended to feature a Scottish island or island group, either in the Hebrides or Northern Isles. However the availability of island accommodation meeting the exacting preferences of our ageing members as well as being located in areas full of wildlife and antiquarian interest is limited. Nevertheless, once again our organising triumvirate committee arranged another fascinating week, this time close to the southernmost point of the Scottish mainland, namely the Portpatrick on the Mull of Galloway. One party took the overland route via Glasgow and the M77, while others, recalling the fascination of previous island voyages, took ferry crossings over Arran to Ardrossan.

The Portpatrick venue was the self-catering guesthouse "The Knowe", overlooking the harbour. This boasts some 8 bedrooms, 6 bathrooms together with lounge, large kitchen diner, excellent cooking facilities, outside patios etc. Some main meals were excellently self catered by cordon bleu members, the rest in local hotels, which all agreed were of a high standard. The week's programme included visits to two prominent Neolithic sites, two splendid gardens, a medieval castle, a 'natural fishpond', a red kite sanctuary and a section of the Southern Upland Way.

Portpatrick is situated roughly half way down the west coast of the peninsula known as 'The Rhinns of Galloway', and has a small, well sheltered harbour suited for visiting yachts and small fishing boats, and also accommodating the Portpatrick lifeboat station.

The consensus option for starting the week was to visit the Mull itself. Spectacular cliff scenery and views surround the locality. The whole immediate area is an RSPB sanctuary and many species of nesting seabirds were seen. Ample car parking, the lighthouse and museum, RSPB fixed camera(s), a viewing telescope, a well-resourced cafe and waymarked

walks (together with good weather!) made for a comfortable and interesting day. Notable was the violent swirling of the sea around the point itself, indicating the presence of strong currents. A local anecdote relates how a pair of missing divers were eventually rescued over a mile from where they had originally been dropped from their dive boat. Also noticed by some was a 'whale' likeness in the small walled garden adjoining the lighthouse. It was constructed from interlaced fronds of willow apparently growing and in leaf.

Logan Fish Pond

A number of members also visited the nearby Logan Natural Sea Life Fishpond, the UK's oldest and most unique natural marine aquarium. Set deep in rocks on the shore and dating back to 1800 as a sea-fish larder for the local Laird, the Logan Fishpond was partially created from an incredible Ice-Age blowhole - a natural fissure through the slanted slate rock with a shallow pool at the end which was shaped wider, rounder and deeper by Lt Colonel Andrew McDouall the Laird of Logan who wanted a 'fish preserve'. The pond used to be refreshed via natural tides but now the tidal flow is controlled with a modern valve.

Visitors can hand feed some of the resident fish species - e.g. large cod, dog fish, manta ray etc in this natural outdoor sea life aquarium.



Logan Fish Pond

Dunskey Castle

The walk to the castle takes one approximately $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile to the south along a cliff walk. Part of the way is along an old railway cutting. The castle stands on a prominent point looking out over the sea to the west. It has medieval origins, having been sacked in 1489. The present structure was built around 1510, added to in the 1620s but was abandoned by 1700. A notice advises no access to the inside of the ruin; however as a section of the fencing had been removed some members were able to make a thorough exploration of the substantial 3 storey structure.



Dunskey Castle

Dunskey Garden

Despite its name this garden is some distance from the castle and certainly these days seems to have no connection with it. The garden consists of a densely planted and relatively compact walled garden, about 40 m². The emphasis in the walled area is on azaleas and shrubs generally with a multitude of primulas and other border plants, including a mecanopsis

corner. There are associated greenhouses, and a maze. These border on an extensive woodland walk area containing 2 freshwater lochs.

The restored working glasshouses are excellent examples of 19th century garden architecture. Originally built by prominent hothouse designers Mackenzie & Moncur, who included Queen Victoria and the Prince of Wales among their clients, the glasshouses are now filled with exotic plants, shrubs such as the tropical looking Passiflora, and fruit such as grapes, peaches and nectarines.

Cairnholy Chamberd Cairns

A trip eastward in the direction of Castle Douglas was paused for refreshment at the Belted Galloway cafe in Newton Stewart. From there some tricky navigation took us to the important Neolithic site of Cairnholy, near Creetown. In fact it is two sites, separated by a short walk.

The two cairns of Cairn Holy are an impressive survival, particularly Cairnholy I with its concave façade of tall pillar stones. Their landscape position is equally impressive, situated on a hill offering fine views over Wigtown Bay. Both were built in the 4th millennium BC. They are known as



Cairnholy I



Cairnholy II

Clyde Cairns, a type of tomb characteristic of southwest Scotland. Both tombs are now open to the sky – their covering stones were robbed long ago to build field dykes.

Cairnholy I is the more elaborate of the two, while Cairnholy II is said to be the tomb of the mythical Scottish king Galdus.

Red Kites

We progressed on to the Red Kite feeding station at Bellymack hill farm, near Lauriston. The kites were fed daily at 2.00 pm. From the visitor centre we witnessed an amazing mêlée of over 100 birds wheeling and swooping, snatching portions in flight. The project appeared to be outstandingly

successful in its objective of ensuring a stable population of red kites in the area, from which, being territorial in nature they would tend to migrate to more distant areas.



This has already happened, as there are now populations of these birds in other parts of the UK.

Glenwhan Gardens

Glenwhan Garden has been described as one of the most beautiful gardens in Scotland, situated at 300 feet, overlooking Luce Bay and the Mull of Galloway, with views to the Isle of Man. These gardens were created from rough moorland by Tessa Knott over a 35 year period. The result is a stunningly attractive 12 acres of flowers, shrubs, two lakes with a shelter belt of trees surrounded in turn by a large acreage of moorland with a laid out "wild flower walk" and the remainder of the original hundred acre plus farmland. The winding paths, well placed seats, and varied sculptures, focusing around small lakes, add to the tranquil atmosphere.



Glenwhan Gardens

Torhouse Stones

On a tour of the Wigton area, a stop was made at the Torhouse Stones Neolithic site, just three miles out of Wigtown.

The stone circle consists of nineteen granite boulders set on a slightly raised platform. The stones have a height ranging from about 0.6 metres to 1.5 metres and are arranged in a circle with a diameter of about 22 metres. The larger stones, over 1 metre high, are on the southeast side.

Three upright boulders stand in a line near the centre of the circle. The direction of the line



of the three central stones is northeast to southwest.

Two stones stand 40 metres to the south-southeast of the stone circle, one large and the other small, and there is a stone row of three stones 130 metres to the east. There are also surviving remains of several burial cairns, and history records others long removed to build field dykes.

The stone circle has not yet been archaeologically excavated, but probably dates to the Neolithic period or the Bronze Age. The Torhouse Stones are in the care of Historic Scotland.

Wigtown

Wigtown boasts at least twelve bookshops and is considered the 'book centre' of this part of Scotland. Most are specialised to some extent, and several have cafes. Many books were examined and some purchases were made. Some members visited a local bird hide on the estuary, but in the event there was a disappointing showing of birds.

Whithorn Priory

Whithorn is an ancient town containing Whithorn Priory, the history of which originates as far back as the 4th century AD, the immediate post Roman era. Even a concise history would be too complex to consider here. It is claimed to be the destination of Robert the Bruce's final pilgrimage toward the end of his life. The museum contains some interesting relics.



St Ninian's Chapel

This chapel on Whithorn Island is thought to have been built around 1300 to replace an earlier narrower one. It is thought to have been a venue for the early pilgrims landing here on their way to the shrine of St Ninian at the Priory.



The Southern Upland Way

The Southern Upland Way (Britain's first official coast to coast long distance foot-path) starts at Portpatrick. It heads north along the coast for short way before turning inland towards Stranraer. A few members ventured onto this part and it proved very scenic walking, if a bit strenuous in places. One passes several beaches before the lighthouse at Blackhead. There are chains as handrails on the steep parts.



PORTPADDY

Rebecca Pine

We've stayed on many an island, of which you've read my note;
and travelled on many a tideway, on many a ferry boat,
and many a form of transport, not all of which might float
but one that's always passed us by, is Paddy McGinty's goat!

And so our lords and mistresses, directed us this year
to head towards Port Paddy, with all our hunting gear;
and some came via Arran Isle, and some Ardrossan Pier -
but bell or book, or hook or crook, it seems we all got here.

We've cased the Mull of Galloway (to use a turn of speech)
through herds of big black milking cows, with one young brown calf each.
The birds were nesting on the face, of cliffs from peak to beach -
and Ann would hug the Lighthouse, but she hadn't got the reach!

We took the steps to Dunskey Castle, cliff-tops and beyond.
Some walked to Dunskey Gardens; some rode to Logan pond.
Some walked for many a country mile, too weary to abscond,
but finished up with good lamb shanks (of which I'm rather fond!)

Then - panic in the Breakfast Room! (short-lived it must be said)
for someone lost their Kia keys - and that, of course, was Fred!
But Moisie is well versed in panic, and in the runes well-read;
she found them in his other trousers, lying on his bed!

By way of Newton Stewart and Cairn Holy's chambered tombs
we saw the Red Kites feeding, like a flock of witches brooms,
with cameras and telescopes, binoculars and zooms -
but all too soon our turn to fly - and old Port Paddy looms.

On Tuesday morn a smirr of rain, to freshen up the day.
A local walk, a little lunch, and soon we're on our way
to Glenwham hillside Gardens, looking downwards to Luce Bay
where shrubs were newly watered and the colours bright and gay.

Another day, another way, another country mile
to Torhouse round-stone circle, we went in Indian file.
To Wigtown and to Whithorn and the Priory a-while,
and last, not least, St. Ninian's chapel on the Whithorn Isle!

We've cased the Rhinns of Galloway, in places quite remote.
To all life's little ills and spills we've sought the antidote
in stones and trees and birds and bees, and many a beast of note -
but the only thing we didn't find was Paddy McGinty's goat!

Book Review by Ed Tyler

A Third Summer in Kintyre

Angus Martin

Angus' third book about his Kintyre wanderings is similar to the previous two in many ways, though do I note a more autobiographical dimension? There are many photographs from the author's collection, of him and his family, and of encounters with the various characters. As well as his usual cycling and walking trips, we learn about his work as a poet as well as an historian.

Aside from Angus himself, the central character of the book is arguably its backdrop: the mysterious Mull of Kintyre with its imposing cliffs and secret, hidden glens. It feels like the end of the earth. You can see to Northern Ireland, the Ayrshire coast and Arran, but the perspectives are odd: not the ones you are used to seeing from tourist brochures. The remote Mull – one huge headland - looks across to the remote north-east corner of Northern Ireland.

It's a place where folk go on explorations to remote corners. Angus sees two curachs (a kind of canoe made of tarred canvas stretched over a wooden frame), which had travelled across from the Antrim coast. I read this with an 'Ah!' of recognition, for I, too, had seen the similar curachs on the Kerry coast of the west of Ireland (from where this type of boat originates) back in the late 70's.

There is an intensity, too, in some of his writing: as when he describes his grief over the death of his dog Benjie (faithful companion on his walks) or his encounter with a sheep who'd had an eye pecked out by a hooded crow. There are also more relaxed encounters with the natural world, including brambling and various botanical excursions to Largiebaan, whose lime-rich cliffs contain many rare species, some of which were recorded by Angus in a recent article in Kist.

Angus has a keen eye for a good story, and these stories are often illustrated to great effect, as with 'the Crucifixion and Che Guevara', when Archibald MacKinnon's painting in a cave on Davaar Island was defaced.

I have in my book collection an anthology of poems by Seamus Heaney and Ted Hughes called "The Rattle Bag". It's a rag-bagful of stuff with anonymous ballads colliding with famous works. Angus' three 'summer' books are a fascinating bagful of stories encompassing reflection, anecdote, autobiography, reportage, journalism, poetry, excursion, vignette, social history and much more.

Angus Martin

*A Third Summer
in Kintyre*

