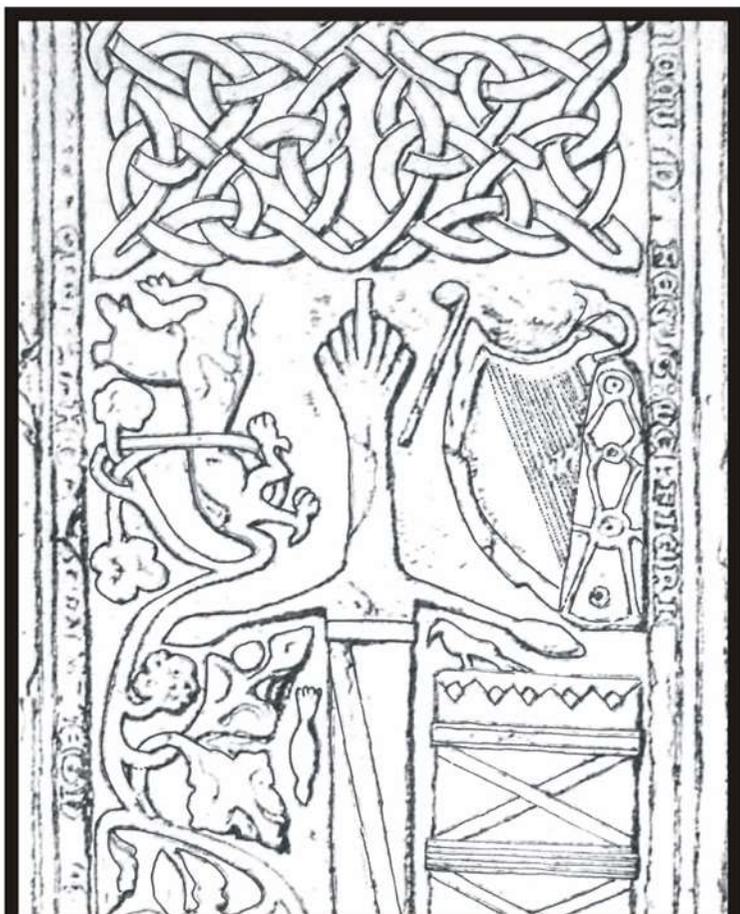


The

KIST 96



ALLANV[S]...FECIT ME FIERI
'ALAN...CAUSED ME TO BE MADE'

The
KIST

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The Natural History and Antiquarian Society of Mid-Argyll

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Editorial

Pete Creech of Heart of Argyll Wildlife Organisation has provided us with an article on the reintroduction of beavers to North Knapdale, which has often been a contentious issue, and gives an insight into why they were introduced and how the whole project is progressing. Rebecca Pine has composed her now traditional poem on this year's summer NHASMA trip to North Uist, during which members managed to spot 80 different bird species and that list is included in this issue.

One thing we also wanted to introduce as a series of articles are the biographies of various artefacts recovered from excavations or are now in the care of Argyll's museums. Inside this issue we have an article on the archaeology of music in Argyll, which stemmed from the recovery of a 'trump' or Jews harp from excavations at Dunollie Castle. We have some insights into two 'Viking' decorative strap ends that have been found on Colonsay, provided by Caroline Paterson.

We also have the first part of the tragic story of a prolonged period of devastation and killings that affected Argyll during the Scottish civil wars between 1644 and 1647. This is a tale of caution that is still relevant to our own day when resentments over land, religion and family boil over into something much uglier and disturbing leading to atrocity and counter atrocity with, as far as I can tell, no real winners with a land devastated and countless lives lost. – *Roddy Regan*

Please email any articles you wish to be considered for publication in the Kist to Roddy Regan at rodny@kilmartin.org.

Knapdale Beavers: Nine years on

Pete Creech

Following a torturous licensing process beavers were introduced into Knapdale in 2009. I was privileged to be involved in the first guided walks, initiated by the Dalriada Project, at the Trial's inception. Initially a purely scientific trial, I think those involved were a little taken aback by the level of public interest displayed towards this busy rodent, the first mammal to be legally reintroduced to Scotland and the UK. Under the EU's Habitats Directive, the Scottish Government was obligated to consider reintroductions of extinct native species, quite apart from any moral responsibility to reinstate an animal we'd caused to become extinct.

That level of interest has never diminished, as beavers have refused to be dropped from the headlines ever since they arrived. Hailed as both devil and angel, their fortunes have afforded a fascinating insight into the processes and trials of reintroduction programmes and the wider implications and opportunities of 'rewilding' our native ecosystems. Their march seems inexorable, there have been over 157 reintroductions into 25 European countries, with trials now also up and running in three English locations and one planned for Wales.

Extinction was a real possibility for the Eurasian Beaver (*Castor fiber* as distinct from *Castor canadensis*, the other, North American beaver species). Hunted for its meat, fur and castoreum there were as few as 1,200 individuals in 8 relict populations throughout Europe by 1900. The fur, as well as being made into coats, was the prime constituent of a superior form of felt used for hat making. A move to silk in hat production helped stem the loss but in Canada over 100,000 animals per year are still trapped for their fur. The castoreum, used by beavers to scent mark their

territory is employed as a tincture in perfume production, and in the USA, as a food flavouring additive in products such as ice cream!

France was the first European country to protect its beavers. At the beginning of the 20th century the country's last population, a few dozen, was protected in Bouches du Rhône, la Gard and le Vaucluse in 1909. Since then, with further assistance they have spread throughout the country and recently reached the Belgian border.

Why are beavers deemed to be so important that huge amounts of time and effort have been dedicated to ensure their survival and repopulation of their former range? Often referred to as ecosystem engineers or a 'keystone species', they have hugely significant impacts on woodland and riparian habitats.

Their activities; digging canal systems, damming water courses, and coppicing tree and shrub species create diverse wetlands. In turn these wetlands can bring enormous benefits to other species, such as otters, water voles, birds, amphibians, invertebrates (especially dragonflies) and breeding fish. The 'beaver pond' at the Dubh Loch is an excellent example. Flooded when the beavers dammed the outflow into Loch Coille Bharr, the first casualty was the trail around the loch (and those who enjoyed this exceptionally pretty walk).



However, there have been manifest benefits since. The trail was reinstated and enhanced with a viewing platform across the extended loch

and a pontoon that took walkers below the dam. Many of the flooded tree species subsequently died resulting in a large area of dead standing timber, a resource that has often been in short supply in our tidy world. Lichens, fungi, bryophytes and a vast array of different kinds of invertebrates, hole-nesting birds and mammals all depend on deadwood. The view to be enjoyed from the viewing platform is one that has not been seen in this country for over 400 years. The water level is now dropping, as the beavers moved on over four years ago. We will now be treated to the subsequent process of succession through wet meadow to riparian woodland.

Beaver benefits tend to depend on the type of water system they inhabit. On river systems their dams help ameliorate downstream flooding and reduce siltation (two of the trials taking place in England are assessing their flood prevention abilities). In arable areas the still water produced behind a dam has the effect of dropping out chemical runoff, particularly in regard to nitrates and phosphates.

So what have beavers done for us in Mid Argyll? Well, the flooding and devastation predicted by the doomsayers never happened. At the consultations held at the end of the Trial the polar opposites remained, whilst for the majority of those interviewed beavers had dropped out of their mind-set. It's difficult to remain opposed to something that simply hasn't occurred. The beavers have created dams elsewhere in Knapdale and I believe a small one at Loch Barnluasgan has been removed to protect this very popular trail (although it has subsequently reappeared). Barnluasgan is, in our opinion, a fine example of how a reintroduced species can get along with a diverse range of human interests. Walkers, dog-owners, runners, cyclists, naturalists, anglers and wild swimmers all

use and enjoy this beautiful loch, as do the beavers, who now provide another fascinating point of interest in this diverse temperate woodland.



Was the Trial a success? At the end of 2014 there were a similar number of beavers in Knapdale as to the number released in 2009. They had settled, bred and raised young; some adults and young had died but they had

proved they could live and breed here. Accordingly, in 2016 all beavers in Scotland were afforded by the Scottish Government the status of a native species (beavers are devolved!). Hopefully this year the species will receive the legal protection promised in line with the European Habitats Directive. Not before time, as the Tayside population continues to be persecuted. Here they have been criticised for flooding farmland, eating crops and felling woodland. Our farming techniques have certainly changed over the last 400 years, particularly in regard to riparian areas. Where once there would have been flood meadows and summer pasture we now find crops that need protecting from floodwater. The raised banks are an attraction to beavers looking to create a lodge who burrow into the banks. However, these issues come at a time when we are questioning the wisdom of our current hydrological management. Dredging, straightening and canalising our rivers has been instrumental in causing devastating floods over the past few years. The value of meandering

rivers, natural obstructions, flood meadows and riparian woodland in slowing and absorbing water is once again coming to the fore. It's also a little ironic that an animal that encourages vigorous regrowth through its coppicing activities is being blamed for a lack of trees when the UK has far less forest cover than other European countries where beavers have always been present.

Meanwhile in Knapdale a further release began last autumn. Somewhere in the region of 20 plus animals will be released over the next three years. The purpose is to bolster the gene pool (the original animals are Norwegian, the newcomers will be mainly of German origin) and to give any kits dispersing a chance of meeting a mate and



establishing a territory. Beavers have only one litter per year (between 1-3 kits in Knapdale) and the youngsters will stay with their parents for up to three years. Beavers are very territorial and young animals will strike out on their own to find an unoccupied territory. The four families that constituted the original trial animals would be unlikely to ever establish a sustainable and genetically viable population. They are however doing their best! The redoubtable pairing of Bjorna and Millie are currently raising three kits at Loch Barnluasgan.

Nine years on, a new economic study of the tourism benefits brought by beavers would be a good subject for graduate research. Of the 4,000 or so people that have visited the Heart of Argyll Wildlife Centre over the past two seasons, beavers have been of primary interest for at least 75% of the folk who step through the door. One of our recent Facebook posts, featuring a video of one of the Knapdale beavers, has just been viewed by over 5,000 people. Our last three beaver walks, held over the past two weeks, attracted a total of 66 paying participants. I've lost count of the number of walks over the past nine years, but the thrill of spotting a beaver and the excitement of those taking part in the walk has yet to diminish!



20% of Argyll's economy relies upon tourism and wildlife tourism in Mid Argyll is under-developed. Beavers provide another reason to visit this area and to stay here for longer. Small scale tourism businesses, accommodation providers, attractions, pubs, shops, restaurants, garages, wildlife tours etc. form part of our local

economy. A greater proportion of the money spent with these businesses tends to remain within that local economy, thus further enhancing its impact. Since the beavers' arrival the media has beat a steady and sustained path to Knapdale to follow their story and as a consequence showcase this wonderfully biodiverse area, so often overshadowed by

other areas of Scotland. If this interest can be managed sensitively the environmental and ecological benefits can produce economic ones as well.

Beavers undoubtedly have a part to play in shaping Scotland's ecological future. Loch Barnluasgan is accessible, popular and a positive example of beavers and humans sharing the same space. However, a visit to one of the more remote hill lochs can be a magical experience. A landscape that is engineered to the beavers' requirements without compromise to human needs is very special. Here the animals are far wavier. The first you might know of their presence is likely to be the startlingly loud sound of a tail slap; they've detected you before you've seen them! A beautifully constructed lodge, a dam retaining a vast quantity of water, trees felled, brashed, processed and stored or destined for construction. A small oasis of wildness, a step back in time.

NHASMA Summer Holiday 2018 –

North Uist

The Ants and the Aquarians

Rebecca Pine

The Ants and the Aquarians went to Uig
and over the sea to Skye
They took some Apps and plenty of maps
in case all the gismos ran dry.
They sailed away on a big black ship
(it was one of the Cal-Mac's newest)
in search of the land where the bong trees grow
and they ended up in North Uist

They dined that night at Lochmaddy hotel
with the length of the day behind.
The wait for the Haddock was good for the soul
and the Eton Mess for the mind.
They woke next morn at the crack of dawn
but they rose at the back of ten
to straddle the machair and fences four
to the ocean and back again.

Then after a falling, Benbecula calling!
To the best of the medics they spoke
And the chief of them said "It's apparent that Fred
suffered bruising, but nothing is broke!"

By now it was reckoned a boat trip beckoned
and they looked for a 'dig' en route,
but they stopped by a pit, and that wasn't it,
but everyone followed suit.

They all made their way to Grimsey Bay
and boarded the 'Lady Ann'
where they sailed away at the middle of the day
and that's when their joys began.
The gannets flipped and the divers dipped
and the seals looked on and lay,
but the eagles soared for the folk aboard
and that was the prize of the day.

They next went on a Nature Trail
around the Balranald loop
where they learned of the machair management
and how to make Gugha soup!
They noted the Bunting while out they were hunting
for 'catchers in the rye'
and the crakes and the lapwings nesting low
and the black headed gulls on high.

On Berneray Isle they spent a good while
and lunched at the height of the day,
across to the sands over rich machair lands
looking westwards to Boreray.
They dined that night in the late sunlight

List of Birds Spotted

North Uist, 2nd-9th June 2018



Red Necked Phalarope – Benbecula, June 2018

Arctic Skua

Blackbird

Black Guillemot

Buzzard

Chaffinch

Collared Dove

Common Sandpiper

Cormorant

Corn Bunting

Corncrake

Crow

Cuckoo

Curlew

Diver – Great Northern

Diver – Black-throated

Diver – Red-throated

Dunlin

Eider

Fulmar

Gannet

Goldfinch

Golden Eagle

Grasshopper Warbler

Greenshank

Greylag Geese	Rock Dove
Guillemot	Ruff (displaying males)
Gull – Black-headed	Sand Martin
Gull - Common	Sanderling
Gull – Greater Black-backed	Sea Eagle
Gull - Herring	Shag
Gull – Lesser Black-backed	Shelduck
Hen Harrier	Short-eared Owl
Heron	Shoveler
Kestrel	Skylark
Kittiwake	Snipe
Lapwing	Song Thrush
Linnet	Sparrow
Mallard	Starling
Meadow Pipit	Stonechat
Merlin	Swallow
Moorhen	Swan – Mute
Oystercatcher	Swan - Whooper
Pied Wagtail	Starling
Pochard	Teal
Puffin	Tern – Arctic
Raven	Tern - Little
Razorbill	Tawny Owl
Red-necked Phalarope (see photo above)	Tufted Duck
Redshank	Wheatear
Redstart	Wigeon
Ringed Plover	Woodpigeon
Robin	Wren

Musical Instruments and Archaeology in Argyll (*or 'Keils is alive with the sound of music'*)

Roddy Regan

If I ever try to conjure up the sounds of music in medieval Scotland, I tend to think of the castle halls of the great magnates, with sounds of the pipes or the harp, perhaps with some fiddle music accompanying them.

It is only just recently due to an excavation we undertook at Dunollie Castle that I have actually got round to looking at the archaeological and historical evidence for music in Argyll. We shall return to Dunollie later but I wondered whether my medieval musical mindscape had any validity.

Of course, once started, the evidence started to flood in from various sources, but using several more authoritative sources (see notes below), I have tried to summarise what is a far more expansive and intriguing story than I can perhaps relate here.

Stringed instruments, including lyres, lutes and harps have an ancient history and quite recently what is thought to be the wooden bridge for a seven or eight-stringed instrument has been uncovered during excavations at *Uamha an Ard Achadh* (High Pasture Cave), on Skye. This could perhaps date as early as the fourth-century BC and if so is the oldest evidence of the use of such an instrument discovered in Western Europe.

In Argyll what may be part of a wrest plank for a stringed instrument was recovered from the excavation of a midden associated Dùn an Fheurain

near Oban, which might date as early as c. 100AD although, given its unstratified nature, could date to a later period. ¹

It seems very likely that stringed instruments, such as harps and lyres (or lutes) were no doubt played at an early date in Scotland prior to the medieval period although we don't yet know when these types of instruments first made their appearance. It is also notoriously difficult to equate mentions of instruments in early manuscripts, which are often written in Latin, with classification of types we now use. For example, early manuscripts often referred the *cruitt*, a generic term used to describe any plucked stringed instrument, which could be a harp or a lyre or indeed some hybrid in between. ²



St Martins cross



St Orans cross



It is not until the 8th century AD that we have references or depictions of the instruments or mention of the musicians that played them. Two 8th century crosses on Iona, St Martin's and St Oran's, depict harpers or lyre players, the former also depicting a triple pipe player, the musicians an illusion to the lyre playing King David. What is likely a harp player is also depicted on the opening page of

the Gospel of St John within the Book of Kells which was likely partially, if not wholly, produced on Iona in the late 8th or early 9th century. ³

The chief function of the harpist or lyre player was to accompany the most important compositions of the master poet (*file*). Two 8th century Irish law texts on social status, the *Uraicecht Becc* and the *Críth Gablach*, indicate that the harp player was given prominence amongst musicians, placing the harpist alongside, but of a lower status than the master poet and they were expected to accompany compositions and recitals of the poets.

The representations of the harps on the Iona examples, however, show instruments that appear to be oval in shape as opposed to the triangular shape we associate with traditional highland harp, or *Clàrsach* as it became known in the Gaelic west. It has been argued the word *Clàrsach* incorporates the Gaelic word for board or plank, *clàr*, this likely reference to the amount of wood used in fashioning the instrument, literally the 'planked one', with *Clàrsair* (plural-*clàrsairean*) being the harpist.⁴ That triangular harps were in use in Scotland by the 9th century is attested to by carvings from north east Scotland at Duplinn, Monifeith and Nigg.



Duplinn Cross Harpist



Monifeith Cross Harpist

What is likely a *Clàrsair* playing a triangular harp is depicted on a 10th century cross at Ardchattan along with pipe and horn players, again these accompanying King David.

Early historical references and depictions of harps and harp players are connected to religious houses such as Iona, as it was they who produced the scholarly classes, including musicians, who attached themselves to the households of noblemen in Ireland and the west of Scotland, including Argyll. As we move into the later medieval period, their skills were eventually transferred to the professional classes that made up an important element in the retinues of great lords who retained their own poets, historians and musicians, including harpers.

In 12th century Giraldus Cambrenis (Gerald of Wales) wrote that the Scots used three instruments, the harp (*cithara*) the lyre (*tympanum*) and the pipes (*chorus*) he also adds while describing the harp that '*they use strings of brass instead of leather*' and that '*Scotland at the present day, in the opinion of many persons, is not only equal to Ireland, her teacher, in musical skill, but excels her; so that they now look to that country as the fountain head of this science*'.⁵

The earliest specific mention of the *Clàrsach* in both Scots and Scottish Gaelic contexts are in documents that date to the 15th century. A poem dating to between 1415-1440 found in the Book of the Dean of Lismore mentions a *Clàrsach* requested by Gill-Crist Bruilineach, one of the MacBheatnaich (becoming Macberty or Galbraith) harping family who had lands in Mull and Gigha and who may have been *clàrsairean* to the MacNeills of Gigha.⁶

The MacBheatnaich family is one of several Argyll families who provided professional musicians that were attached to the lordly households of

Argyll, including the MacGille-Sheanaich (MacShennog or Shannons) family of Kintyre who became hereditary harpers to the MacDonald Lords of the Isles.⁷ Other *Clàrsach* playing families included the MacVicars (to the Earls of Argyll), the MacEwans and the MacKellars of Glen Shira.

Some of these musical families, such as the MacGille-Sheanaichs were also associated with families that produced hereditary poets, in their case the MacMhuirichs who were similarly attached to the MacDonald Lords of the Isles. Some poets of course may have also played their own music to accompany their recitals and their families may have produced harp players as demand for their services increased.

By the 16th century it is possible that the Gaelic west or the Gàidhealtachd was producing some of the best regarded harpers. Reflecting Giraldus Cambrenis' earlier observation of the 12th century, John Major, writing in 1521, states that *'For musical instruments and vocal music the Wild Scots use the harp whose strings are of brass and not animal gut'* and *'who are in that art pre-eminent'*.⁸



Later, in 1597 John Monipenie tells us of that the Highlanders *'delight much in musike, but cheifly harps and clairschoes of their owne fashion'*.⁹

There is a grave-slab in Keils chapel, North Knapdale (shown left), that depicts a harp, or *Clàrsach*, in its decoration. Details of the harp, which is now badly eroded, were fortuitously recorded by Captain T.P White in the late 19th century.¹⁰

The stone bears an inscription, although only part of this is legible and commemorates a father and his son, Alan (who likely commissioned the grave slab). At the upper left of the harp is a tool that has been interpreted as a tuning peg.



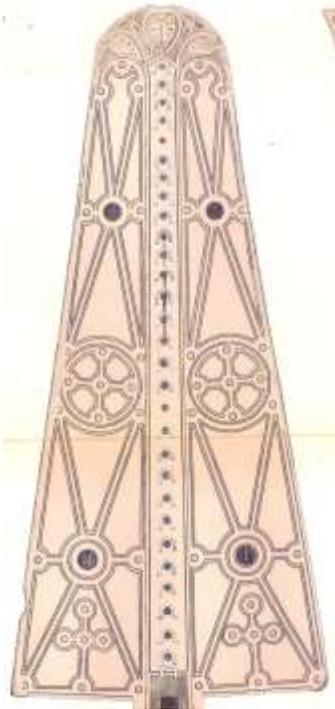
Detail of the harp and possible tuning peg



The grave slab as drawn by T P White

This has led to the suggestion that Alan and perhaps his father were members of a family of harpists or perhaps harp makers and possibly members of the MacBheatnaich family attached to the MacNeill or MacMillan families who controlled land in North Knapdale.

The design of the Keils harp is strongly reminiscent of that on the Queen Mary Harp, now in the National Museum of Scotland. The Queen Mary Harp is also decorated with a pattern of leaves on the upper part of the soundboard and fore-pillar which is characteristic of decoration that also commonly appears on West Highland grave slabs.



Queen Mary Harp decoration¹¹



The Queen Mary Harp



Detail of foliage decoration



Foliage decoration at Kilmory Knap

The Queen Mary harp is believed to be of West Highland provenance and dates to the fifteenth century. Two other examples of harps dating to the 15th century to early 16th century are the Lamont Harp (also in the National Museum of Scotland) and the Trinity College Harp and these may also be of similar West Highland production.¹²



The Lamont Harp

As yet we have no firm evidence of where these magnificent instruments were produced although it has been suggested the harps may have been created in Argyll at the important craft centre based around Keils and Kilmory Knap, in North Knapdale. This hypothesis is based on the concentration and number of craft related gravestones found in both chapels. Certainly, whoever carved the Keils harp was aware of what these instruments looked like and was familiar with their design.¹³

The importance of harp music as part of lordly entertainment and aggrandisement is suggested by the recovery of a harp pin and a copper coil, which is almost certainly a harp string, from Castle Sween. Four bone harp pins have also been recovered from excavations at Finlaggan, while three bone tuning pegs, probably for a harp, were found at Achanduin Castle on Lismore.¹⁴

As mentioned above in the *Uraicecht Becc*, the only entertainer with an honourable position was the *crúitt* or harp player which indicates that there was social hierarchy that gave prominence to string over wind instruments and as such the *Clàrsair* was afforded an elevated social standing to other musicians.

Despite this the sounds of wind instruments such as flutes, horns and bagpipes were undoubtedly also heard in the halls of medieval Argyll and some of these like the harp and lyre were no doubt played at an early period in Scotland.



There are the above mentioned images of a triple pipe players on the late 8th century St Martin's Cross in Iona and on the 10th century cross slab at Ardchattan, the latter also depicting a trumpet or horn player. Also in Argyll we also have a carved depiction of a pipe or horn player, shown left, which has been inserted into the wall at Dundereve castle, this likely dating from the mid-16th century.

The introduction of the great pipes '*phìob mhòr* that we associate with highland music today may have been a later introduction into the formal surroundings of the chieftain's household, as these were primarily seen as an instruments of war. The earliest record we have of Highlanders being led by a piper into battle, is from the siege of Haddington in 1548 and in this case these were men from Argyll¹⁵. However, pipe playing likely gained prestige in the later medieval period, with the piper ultimately becoming an important member of the chieftain's household. As well as creating their own compositions, pipers likely adopted pre-existing tunes and techniques created by the *clàrsairean*. This may have led to rivalry between the *Clàrsair* and the piper in any particular household, although may have been limited by both adopting specialist musical niches, the *clàrsairean* accompanying the poet and the bagpiper adopting a martial role in noble households. Again, traditional musical families likely produced pipers, with some founding piping dynasties such the Rankins who were pipers for the MacLeans of Duart, other Argyll piping families being the MacKintyres, the MacGregors and the Campbells. As with the harper the piper had an attendant or *gille* carrying and looking after his instrument.

The playing of fiddle (*fidheall*) music may have been an even later introduction than the pipes within the rarified surroundings of the clan elites and it is unlikely that they ever achieved anything like a similar social standing to the poet, *Clàrsair* or piper. However, some rivalry existed as can be seen in the disparaging remark made by a piper towards a fiddle player's efforts '*mas ceol fidleireachd tha gu leor siud dheth* '- 'if fiddling is music, that is enough of it'.¹⁶ Initially the fiddle may have been seen as an instrument of the commons, but like the pipers, fiddle players would have adopted previous traditions and modes of playing.

Other instruments were of course played, such as drums, flutes and bells, while the Campbells of Auchinbreck retained the hereditary trumpet players the MacIlvernocks (later Graemes) of Oib, North Knapdale, their instruments used to announce local courts and pronouncements. However, there is little historical mention of these instruments or evidence for them in the archaeological record.

We can now return to Dunollie Castle, where recently found within a box that included other items, such as glass and bone, was a mouth harp or a Jews harp (pictured right). The bottle glass and the bones within the box have a remarkable similarity to the assemblage we found while re-



digging a previously excavated trench in the castle courtyard in 2017-2018, pictured below with an appropriate piper.

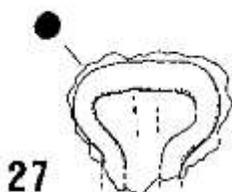
I am convinced the material came from this earlier unrecorded excavation and if so was discarded sometime in the 17th or early 18th century.

Why these instruments, that were common across Europe in the medieval to late medieval period, came to be known as Jews harps is unclear although it appears to have no association with Jewish culture. These instruments have

also been referred to as jaws harps, juice harps, Gewgaws or guimbards¹⁷. In Scotland and Northern Ireland, however, they were simply known as trumps, being a small instrument which is held against the teeth or lips, and plucked with the fingers. These are usually mentioned accompanying dancing.

If you are aware of the sound they make then it is not one that I would normally associate with traditional Scottish or Irish music, and I mostly associate it with the sound of American folk music. However, given that much of American folk music has its roots in Irish and Scottish culture, then its common use here, in the past, is perhaps no surprise.

As far as I am aware, including the Dunollie trump, five examples have been discovered during excavation work and this makes it the most common type of instrument within the archaeological record in Argyll.



Castle Sween trump



Achanduin trump



Finlaggan Trump

Trumps have been recovered from excavations mentioned above at Castle Sween, Achanduin Castle and Finlaggan, while one was also recovered from a 17-18th century building at Glenshellach near Oban. So while the humble trump may have been an instrument that entertained the common people, its sound must also have been heard in the halls of the great and the good and it is a sound that we perhaps need to reinstate back into Argyll's important musical past.

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3. The Book of Kells, TCD MS 58, folio 292r (detail) © Trinity College
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5. Wright, T 1905 The Historical Works of Giraldus Cambrensis, London, 127.
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9. Bannerman, J 1991 The Clàrsach and Clàrsair, Scottish Studies, 30, 1-17.
10. White T.P 1875 Archaeological Sketches of Knapdale and Gigha.
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12. The 'Lamont Harp' is carved from the wood of a hornbeam tree. In the early 16th century, the Clàrsach passed as a marriage dowry from the Lamont family to the Robertsons of Lude in Perthshire. It was preserved by this family for several generations before passing to John Stewart of Dalguise.

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The Seeds of the Red Roots of Dunoon: Part 1

The Editor

In 1661 Mr John Stewart, Minister of Rothsay and John Glas, former provost of Rothsay, were taken by the beadle of Dunoon parish church to see the remains of a tree where all the '*Gentlemen of the name of Lamount were hanged*'. This tree was reported to have never come into leaf since the hanging had taken place in 1645 and it was now being cut down. These prominent citizens went on to report that '*both of us see a ridd matter inclineing a little to orience colour comeing out of the heart of the root of the said tree and runeing over which matter did congeale*'.¹

This story demonstrates the lore that had built up around the historical fact of the massacre of the Lamonts, one of the worst single atrocities that were undertaken during the wars of the Three Kingdoms in Argyll.



Another was the related massacre that took place almost a year later following the siege of Dunaverty Castle in Kintyre, where most of the garrison was killed after they had surrendered.

The massacre is commemorated in Dunoon by a memorial which was erected in 1906 on Tom A Mhoid Road, which names 33 individuals (mostly Lamonts) of the 200 people who may have '*perished near this spot*'.

The Lamont memorial in Dunoon

Some contemporary accounts and later historians have, perhaps understandably, laid the blame for the massacres at the door of particular individuals involved, however, while perhaps these atrocities may have been prevented by the intervention of prominent individuals at the time, the seeds of the killings lay in older inter-clan rivalries, these exacerbated by the religious and political turmoil that engulfed Argyll, as with much of Britain and Ireland, during the wars of the Three Kingdoms between 1639-1651, although it is the events of the Scottish Civil war, which lasted between 1644-47, that mainly concern us here.

The events leading up to the civil wars within the countries involved and the causes for them are complex, encompassing several political and religious strands and these can be explored through more comprehensive written histories, some of which are listed in the notes below.

The conflict was fought on many different levels although it is often portrayed as one between the Irish and Highlanders (and often Catholic) on one side and the Presbyterian Lowlanders on the other. While these prejudices and cultural divisions were present in Scotland at the period, they were perhaps less pronounced within and between the Argyll clans and families who fought on either side during the conflict.² Perhaps the most important factor determining the allegiance of the various clans was neither national politics nor religion, but family interests, which could be advanced in unsettled times. This may have particularly been the case amongst those that felt aggrieved by Clan Campbell expansion beyond their traditional territories into land that had previously been seen as the patrimony of other Highland families.

Civil war almost inevitably spread to Scotland after Scottish Covenanter intervention in both the conflicts that had previously broken out in Ireland and England. In Scotland the war was principally fought between the

Scottish Royalists, supporters of Charles I and led by James Graham Earl of Montrose, and the Covenanters who had controlled Scotland since 1639 and were allied with the English Parliamentarians. One of the principal leaders of the Covenanters was of course Archibald Campbell, Lord Lorne, then Earl of Argyll, who was elevated to Marquess in 1641 before serious hostilities broke out.



Archibald Campbell, Lord Lorne

In 1638 King Charles I had attempted to impose an Episcopalian version of the Book of Common Prayer upon a reluctant Scots nation. Resistance to this spread throughout the country and on 28th February 1638, a Bond or

National Covenant was established that sought to preserve the existing Protestant religion, although it also sought to safeguard the King's authority in Scotland, and the signing of the Covenant was met with popular enthusiasm across the country. The conflicting and changing loyalties that existed during this time is perhaps seen in the character of Montrose himself who had initially joined the party of resistance to the King's religious reforms, being one of the first signatories, and for a time one of the most ardent champions, of the Covenant before changing sides when the Covenanters came into direct conflict with the Charles I.

Prior to the outbreak of the Scottish civil war in 1644 these regional and national politics were being played out amongst many of Argyll's landed families exacerbating already existing tensions between some of the clans which helped established what side they might take in the coming conflict.

As mentioned above, powerful individuals on both sides were prepared to use the cover of the wider conflict to further their own aims. In Argyll, Randal MacDonnell, the Earl of Antrim, who, with perhaps some justification, still saw the lands of Clan Donald south, including Kintyre and Islay, as part of his patrimony. Countering any such moves on Antrim's part, were of course, the Campbells led by Archibald Campbell, who became Earl of Argyll in 1638, on the death of his staunchly Catholic father.

Before becoming Earl, King Charles had grown increasingly wary of the then Lord Lorne, particularly after his support for, and the signing of, the Bond or National Covenant in February 1638, despite appointing him his Commissioner in Scotland. This growing distrust was exploited by Antrim, who pointed out to the King that none of Clan Donald had signed the Covenant. Argyll, however, was aware of Antrim's political maneuvers denouncing Clan Donald as '*...who has evir takin Adwantage in trowblesome tymes to execute thair Rebellionis...'*.

Despite a plan in 1638 by Antrim and the King to invade Argyll from Ireland and a general arming throughout Scotland, including Argyll, few actual blows were physically exchanged, but by early 1639 war could not be avoided in Scotland.

Argyll's complaint about the exploitative nature of Clan Donald could perhaps more appropriately be laid against the Campbells themselves, who undoubtedly used the First and Second Bishops' wars of 1639-1640 to increase Campbell influence in Argyll and the Isles, particularly at the expense of the MacDonalds.

For example, in April 1639, the Earl of Argyll was given a commission to raise a regiment of foot partly in response to the threat of a possible invasion of Argyll from Ireland led by Antrim. He raised some 900 men despite initial reluctance by some Campbell leaders, including the powerful Glenorchy, to join the Covenanting cause. The Campbell response also included fortifying Kintyre, building a camp at Lochhead (Campbeltown), while the Earl also seized Brodick castle. The Campbells then proceed to move against the Clan Donald gentry in Kintyre, including Alexander MacDonald of Largie, detaining some and enforcing punitive fines on others while also purging MacDonalds from Islay and Jura. Argyll also landed on Arran and forced the inhabitants to sign the Covenant.

Countering these Campbell actions were Commissions issued by King Charles to the Earl of Antrim and to MacDonald of Sleat, who became the King's Lieutenants in the Highlands and Islands, while Antrim, on the forfeiture of Argyll, was granted Kintyre.

While events in Argyll can be seen primarily as a MacDonald versus Campbell conflict, other families could not avoid becoming involved, particularly those that also had grievances against the Campbells after that

Clan had aggressively extended their influence in other areas such as Cowal, Appin, Badenoch and Lochaber.

By April some Campbell troops had been sent north east to Aberdeen while in May Argyll and his regiment had joined General Leslie to counter the King's advances over the Scottish border. Here the Highlanders attracted some comment and were described as '*...well-timbered men, tall and active*' wearing '*...blue woolen waistcoats...and bonnets...a mantle of plaid cast over their left shoulder...a pair of dirks ... some carry only a sword and targe, the greater part bow and arrow...and had bagpipes*'

This animosity towards Clan Campbell can perhaps be seen in a '*Bond of Loyalty to the King*' drawn up against the Earl of Argyll in 1639 which involved Clan Ranald, McLeod of Dunvagan, MacLean of Duart, MacKenzie of Seaforth, MacDonald of Sleat, the Stewarts of Bute and Ardgowan, and the Lamonts.

The Lamonts, who were primarily based in Cowal, were headed by James Lamont of Inveryne, who is also intricately involved in our story. The reason we know about the pact is that James Lamont, worried to not further offend his powerful neighbour Argyll, made a full account in what became known as '*Lamont's Declaration*'. In this, James Lamont outlined that in the expected coming conflict, families under the Royalist banner would invade Lorne, Kintyre and '*Tarbette*', dividing the Earls jurisdictions among the chiefs.³

In June 1639 the Campbells mustered their troops in Islay and moved against a Coll Ciotach MacDonald and his kin in Colonsay, imprisoning him along with two of his sons, Angus and Gillspic. However, two other sons, Alistair and Ranald, fled, which had serious repercussions for the Campbells, as Alistair MacColla later became a Lieutenant General in

Montrose's army. In our story he is also referred to as Sir Alistair or Alexander MacDonald (after he had been knighted 1645) in official correspondence, but also the more familiar Colkitto, adopting the nickname of his father.

The Treaty of Berwick on the 18th of June brought an end to this 'First Bishop's war' with Argyll disbanding most of his regiment.

Trouble however continued to break out and on the 12th of June 1640 Argyll received a commission from the Estates to pursue the Earl of Atholl, Lord Ogilvie and the Macphersons. Six days later the Campbells had mustered their troops at Inveraray (accounts of the numbers differ but possibly between 4-5000 men) and from here mounted raids on the MacDonalds of Keppoch and by July Campbell forces had raided Badenoch, Mar and the Braes of Airlie, this accompanied by extensive plundering, particularly the destruction of lands belonging to the Ogilvies and the Robertsons of Rannoch. By August the 2nd Bishop's War had broken out, and in October 1640 the Campbells sent a force to quell trouble being caused by the MacDonalds of Lochaber and Glengary and the Robertsons of Struan.

Antrim continued to plot the return of his Scottish patrimony and was possibly the instigator of a raid on Islay in November 1640 led by Alistair MacColla who may have been trying to capture hostages to exchange for his still imprisoned father and brothers. After being repulsed from Islay MacColla returned to Ireland, becoming involved in the Irish rebellion which had broken out in late 1641.

For a brief time, Argyll and the King were reconciled, the Earl being elevated to the title of Marquess in November 1641. However, things in

Argyll continued to simmer, as momentous events elsewhere were leading to civil war in Scotland.

As mentioned above, rebellion had broken out in Ireland in October 1641 and on the 18th March 1642 the Marquess of Argyll was given a Royal Commission to raise a regiment under the command of Sir Duncan Campbell of Auchinbreck. The regiment would form part of a Scottish army of some 10,000 troops, under General Hector Munro, that was to be shipped to Ireland to help suppress the rebellion and protect English and Scottish settlers. Contributing to the animosity on both sides were stories of atrocities, real and imagined, that had been conducted by both sides during the campaign in Ireland.

On receiving his commission one of Argyll's main objectives was Rathlin Island, which was being used as a base for Clan Donald south and potentially used to mount further attacks on Argyll and the Hebrides. Argyll's commission specifically stated that all rebels occupying the island were to be expelled or killed. In May Auchinbreck landed on the Island with around 1,100 Campbell clansmen, who possibly faced between 200–300, men principally of Clan Donald. The Campbells then proceeded to annihilate their opponents at a place that bears the name *Lag an Bhriste Mhór* (Hollow of the Great Defeat), which is overlooked by a hill named *Cnoc na Sgreadailaine* (The Hill of Screaming) where apparently the MacDonald women watched their men being massacred. Tradition also has it that those still left alive after the battle, along with women and children, were thrown to their deaths from the cliffs at the southwest of the island cliffs at a place since called '*Sloc na Cailleach*' (Chasm of the Old Women).⁴

The course was thus set for a series of events involving atrocity and counter atrocity.

From Rathlin, companies of Argyll's regiment were sent to Ulster and proceeded to raid Antrim, staying in the north of Ireland until recalled to Scotland in 1644.

There are conflicting reports that sometime in September 1642 Alistair MacColla may have been offered a deal by General Leslie to join with Argyll's regiment in Ireland, in exchange for his father and brother's freedom. However, this story is mixed with what is undoubtedly local embellished tradition. One story tells of how MacColla, along with Leslie, met with Argyll in Scotland, but on objections from the Campbell gentry the Earl told MacColla *'Chan éil e freagrach dhomh-sa oifig a thabhairt dhuit aig an am seo'* (It is not convenient for me to give you a commission at the present time). Upset by this, MacColla left to make his way back to Ireland but when again offered the commission he responded *'Fuich! Fuich! Mar fhiach facal Iarla Earra-Gháidheal anns á cheart am seo fhéin, chan éil e ro choltach gur fhiach e a rithis'*. (Fie! Fie! Unless the Earl of Argyll's word is worth something at present, it is not likely that it will be worth anything hereafter). Another story has MacColla actually accepting a position in Auchinbreck's regiment; this however was only a Campbell ruse with Argyll sending a message to Auchinbreck to have him killed. However, this message was intercepted by MacColla himself after the courier mistook him for Auchinbreck. MacColla managed to escape but not before he sent a message to Auchinbreck saying, *'Cha dean mise ort-sa 'san mar a bha thusa a los a dhéanamh orm-sa. Bha thusa a los mise a mharbhadh. Cha mharbh mise thusa aig an ám seo, ach fan ás mo rathad 'na dhéidh seo'* (I will not do to you at present what you intended to do to me. You intended to kill me. I will not kill you now, but keep out of my way after this).

On 22 August 1642, King Charles I raised his standard at Nottingham and the English Civil War began. By early 1643 battle lines in Scotland were becoming more clearly drawn when in March 1643 it was the turn of the Marquess of Huntly to raise the Royal Standard in the north before he took the city of Aberdeen for the Royalists.

On 20th March Argyll was recalled from England, receiving a Commission as Commander-in-Chief of the Covenanting forces which were to be raised to suppress the threat from Royalist forces in Scotland.

Four days later, on 24th March, Sir James Lamont was given a Commission to proceed against Argyll, while the Earls of Antrim and Seaforth became the King's Lieutenant Generals and Justiciars *'with power to invade the countrie and bounds of Archibald, marquis of Argyll ane principall and most ungratefull promoter of these odious practizes against ws'*.⁵

By 17th April, Argyll had raised some 5,000 men (1,000 of these from his own clan) who assembled at Dunottar with a smaller force sent from Ireland, before the Covenanter force proceeded to Aberdeen, arriving there on 2nd May.⁶

In May Antrim was captured by Scottish soldiers off the Irish coast and found to have been carrying letters outlining plans to link up with Catholic noblemen in Scotland, while *'Colekittochs sones should waken our isles; that McClaine and Gorrum and other clanes disaffected to the Campbells should go to armes...so that in a trice we should become a field of blood...'*⁷.

Up until late 1643 the Marquess of Argyll along with other Campbell members and their levies had been involved in several campaigns outside of the county, but as far as we know and apart from a few raids, Argyll itself had been spared the worst effects of wider hostilities that had broken out elsewhere.

This changed in November 1643 when Alastair MacColla made his reappearance on Scottish soil, conducting another raid on the Western Isles, leading raids on Campbell controlled territories in Mull, Islay and Jura. MacColla also recaptured Colonsay with 300 Irish, and eventually set up base on Rathlin Island which was retaken from the Campbell's.

On the 24th November, and extended on the 16th June, the Marquess of Argyll, as Lieutenant in the Western Highlands, was commissioned to deal with this invasion, with the right to raise a levy, appoint officers and provide them with arms, victuals and ammunition, while expenses incurred would be reimbursed from the public purse.

In January 1644, the King had commissioned Antrim to raise 10,000 men to counter the Scots army in England while 2,000 were promised for the invasion of Scotland. Letters had also been sent to all the Highland Chiefs who possibly had a grudge against the Campbells to join the King's party.

By this time Montrose had decidedly left the Covenanter cause after the Scottish Parliament had signed the Solemn League and Covenant which pledged support for the English Parliamentarians. Montrose was with the King's camp in England when on the 1st February he was commissioned by Charles I to become his Lieutenant in Scotland while he was also created a Marquess. After a few weeks Montrose left for the north with a small band of followers. Antrim had been appointed General in the Highlands and Isles and, in that capacity, had made plans with Montrose. ⁸



The Marquess of Montrose

In early 1644 Montrose wrote to Argyll urging him to submit to the King, although his letter is also accompanied by a threat;

'My Lord, ... I beseech you, therefore, to return to your allegiance, and submit yourself, and what belongs unto you, as to the grace and protection of your good King; ... But if you shall still continue obstinate, I call God to witness that through your own stubbornness I shall be compelled to endeavour to reduce you by force. So I rest Your friend, if you please, Montrose.' ⁹

In 1644 Argyll had raised a further 1000 Argyll men effectively to oppose the threat posed by the Royalist Huntly in the north east and moved to campaign in Aberdeen, Elgin and Strathbogie.

In mid-May Campbell of Ardkinglass (Auchinbreck's Deputy Lieutenant) reported that he had chased the Alistairs MacColla's men from Mull and Islay, before regaining Campbell control of Rathlin, in doing so he tells how he executed or killed over one hundred of the opposition '*...I took them and causit cut off[f] above ane hundreth and fifteine of then and took some prisoners...*'

On 28th June, Argyll reported to the Privy Council that all the rebels in the north-east, except for thirteen who had escaped to the '*Outer Isles*', had been killed or captured and for a while the Covenanting forces in Argyll breathed a sigh of relief.

However, this relief was only temporary as the storm was approaching in the form of Alistair MacColla. MacColla, with a force of around 1800 troops, had been sent by the Marquess of Antrim and the Supreme Council of Confederate Ireland to invade Scotland. It was the start of a long and bitter campaign.

(to be continued)

Further Reading

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Notes

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6. Willcock, J 1903 The Great Marquess, life and times of Archibald 8th Earl, and 1st (and only) Marquess of Argyll (1607-1661) 156–9.
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A Pair of Viking Age Strap Fittings from Colonsay

Caroline Paterson

In March 2018 Craig Stanfield and I organised a visit with Sharon Webb of the Kilmartin Museum to look at two Viking-age strap-ends found in recent years on Colonsay, but housed at Kilmartin Museum. Both had previously been published, but as we are currently preparing a Scottish corpus of Hiberno-Scandinavian strap-fittings, our intention is to examine as many examples as possible first hand.

Craig and I had met a couple of years previously when he was about to embark on his Master's dissertation on Viking-age boss and roundel strap-fittings, several of which I had published and a topic I was still following with interest. Following his dissertation (which was awarded the First Marquis of Montrose Award for Scottish Studies), we decided to collaborate on a joint paper to disseminate some of our ideas surrounding the group, which has grown in number in recent years thanks in part to excavation and metal detecting. Last summer we delivered a joint paper to the International Insular Art Conference in Glasgow, and we are currently collating a corpus of the Scottish finds thanks to a Gunning Jubilee Award (Society of Antiquaries of Scotland) which is enabling us to examine and record finds first hand - the visit to Kilmartin was our first port of call.

Sharon Webb kindly brought the two finds into the Marion Campbell Library for us to study and we spent many happy hours at Martin Murphy's wonderful table (duly covered with a protective cloth) examining them. We could see straight away that our visit was going to be fruitful, for with the aid of raking torch light previously unrecorded ornament was

immediately apparent on the Cnoc nan Gall strap-end, confirming beyond doubt its identification with our group. Material can look very different *in the flesh* from published images, sometimes on account of the scale of reproduction and sometimes because a schematic illustration doesn't always convey the *look and feel* of an object. There is always more to be discovered from meticulous observation, and never more so than when in the company of a colleague.

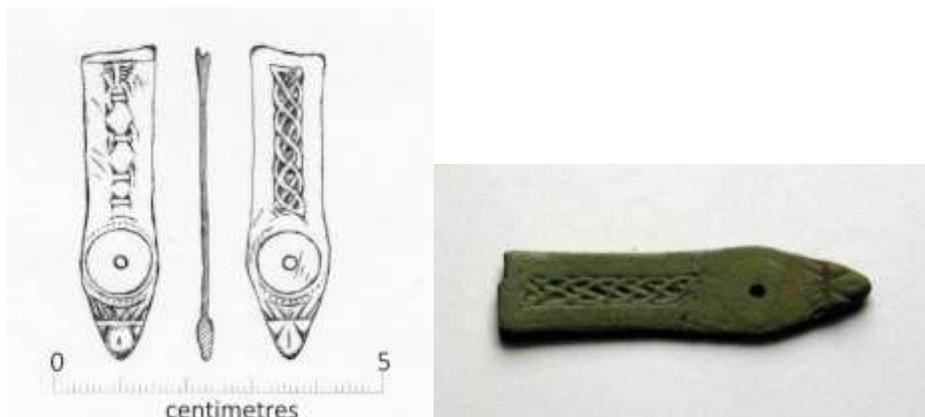


The Cnoc nan Gall strap-fitting

The Cnoc nan Gall strap fitting was recovered during the rescue excavation of a Viking grave near Machrins, Colonsay discovered in 2010 (Becket and Batey 2013). The dunes in this area have revealed several Viking graves over the years, beginning with the discovery in 1891 of a boat burial with

a well-equipped warrior together with his horse, which is comparable in status to the better known Kiloran Bay burial, now back on display in the National Museum of Scotland. The burial which included “our” strap-end was that of a middle-aged man who appears to have been wrapped in a coarse linen shroud secured with a fine ringed pin. Although we would have expected the strap-end to have formed the terminal to a leather waist belt, there is no clear evidence for such a strap, and its associated organics may have been a wrapping of some description, suggesting that it may have been buried as a keepsake rather than a functional clothing accessory. When initially published minimal decoration was recorded in the illustration, just enough to pique our interest, but Craig and I could see so much more detail in the raking light of our torch, which we recorded in a new illustration. This has allowed us to confirm that this cast tag belongs to our corpus of Hiberno-Scandinavian strap-fittings, of which it is a finely engraved, if small exemplar. Typical for the series is the decoration on both faces, the slightly bulbous zoomorphic terminal (with drilled eyes), hatched borders, triangular sub-divisions at the attachment end, the two strand interlace decorating one of the main panels and faintly linked lozenges on the other. The prominent drilled dot surrounded by at least two concentric rings at the widest point just behind the animal head terminal on one face is a vestige of the concentric rings which surrounded boss-capped rivets and subsequently perforations on earlier fittings belonging to this series, a fine exponent being the late eighth/ninth century Kiloran Bay bridle fittings. This feature suggests that the tag may be rather late in the series, most probably belonging to the tenth century, which agrees with the radio-carbon dating for the burial (Becket in Becket and Batey 2013, 313).

The other find we had come to study is a metal detected find from “a ploughed field near Kiloran Bay, further north on the Island of Colonsay.



Kiloran strap-fitting

I had already seen this strap-end when I worked briefly at the National Museum as it came through the Treasure Trove system (Paterson 2001, fig.11.3). As with the Cnoc nan Gall find, this strap-end is also decorated on both faces and has a distinctive, slightly bulbous zoomorphic terminal, though with stylised slit-like facial features in this instance. As is more typical for the cast strap-end series the Kiloran tag then expands to accommodate a central perforation surrounded by incised concentric circles – displaying a more obvious link to the boss-capped rivets of its forerunners. Its main body is decorated with a finely engraved four-strand plait on one face, and “lozenge and slash” with additional side loops on the other. Despite damage having removed its attachment end, a lightly incised triangle with internal hatchings on one face is a familiar motif from the attachment ends of other tags in the series, including a remarkably close parallel from Christchurch Place, Dublin (Lang 1988, Fig. 118), where such strap-ends may have been manufactured with evidence of

metalworking. Although as a metal detected find the immediate context of the Colonsay find is unknown, its proximity to the famous Kiloran Bay boat burial, raises the possibility that it may once have fastened the belt of someone buried in pagan fashion, though it could equally have been a casual loss.

I have used both the terms Viking-age and Hiberno-Scandinavian in describing the two strap-ends above. This is because they both belong to the period of intense Viking activity in the Irish Sea region in the ninth and tenth centuries, with the excavated Cnoc nan Gall find coming from a certain Viking burial, and the same being a possibility for the metal detected find from near Kiloran Bay. Yet the form and ornament of these strap-ends indicates that they are the work of Insular craftsmen, possibly under Norse patronage in Dublin, but working firmly within the Insular tradition. They demonstrate that although most probably worn by people of Scandinavian ancestry, as indicated at Cnoc nan Gall by the pagan burial ritual – not to mention the place-name ‘hill of the foreigners’ - these individuals had clearly acquired these fittings, by *fair means or foul*, through contact with native Gaels, most probably in Ireland.

Our thanks to Sharon Webb for allowing us to study these finds, and to the Jubilee Gunning Award for enabling this visit.

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Kilmartin Museum Events

Autumn/Winter 2018



Further details can be found on Kilmartin Museum's website www.kilmartin.org, or phone 01546 510278. More events are being planned for the next few months, please keep an eye on our website and Facebook page for all the latest information.

Curry & Quiz Evening

Saturday November 10th, 7pm onwards @ Kilmartin Museum Café
Tickets £12pp. All proceeds to the Museum Redevelopment Project.
For further information contact Ruth: redvelopment@kilmartin.org

Fairtrade and Christmas Market

Saturday and Sunday November 17th and 18th, 11am-4pm @ Kilmartin Museum Shop and Café
Christmas gifts and goodies for all tastes and budgets!

Mug Decorating Workshop with Mary Stewart

Monday December 3rd, 10am-12noon @ Kilmartin Museum Café
£15pp, phone 01546 510278 to book. All materials provided, price includes a hot drink and spiced biscuit for all participants

Eilidh Cameron Photography Exhibition

Tuesday December 4th, 7pm @ Kilmartin Museum Shop and Café
Evening exhibition, free entry, followed by a sale of some of Eilidh's stunning photography in the Museum Shop on December 5th.

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Winter 2018-19 Programme

All meetings will be held in the Lochgilphead Community Centre at 7.00pm

25 October 2018

AGM followed by **'Wildlife of Orkney'**, presentation by ornithologist **David Wood**

29 November 2018

Our Place in Time: delivering Scotland's historic environment strategy on the National Forest Estate with **Matt Ritchie** (FCS Archaeologist)

13 December 2018 Details still to be confirmed

31 January 2019

'Stories from the Argyll Papers' with **Alison Diamond**, Archivist for Argyll Estates

28 February 2019

'Cottage life in 18th century Scotland' with **Fi Martynoga**: an environmental activist, journalist, museum researcher, and a renowned figure in Scottish nature, history, sustainability and food circles. Bemoaning the evils of the modern diet, Fi was challenged to prove her claim that people in Scotland ate better 200 years ago than they do now. Find out about her experiences as she immersed herself in the 1790s lifestyle of her rural ancestors.

28 March 2019 Details still to be confirmed.

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