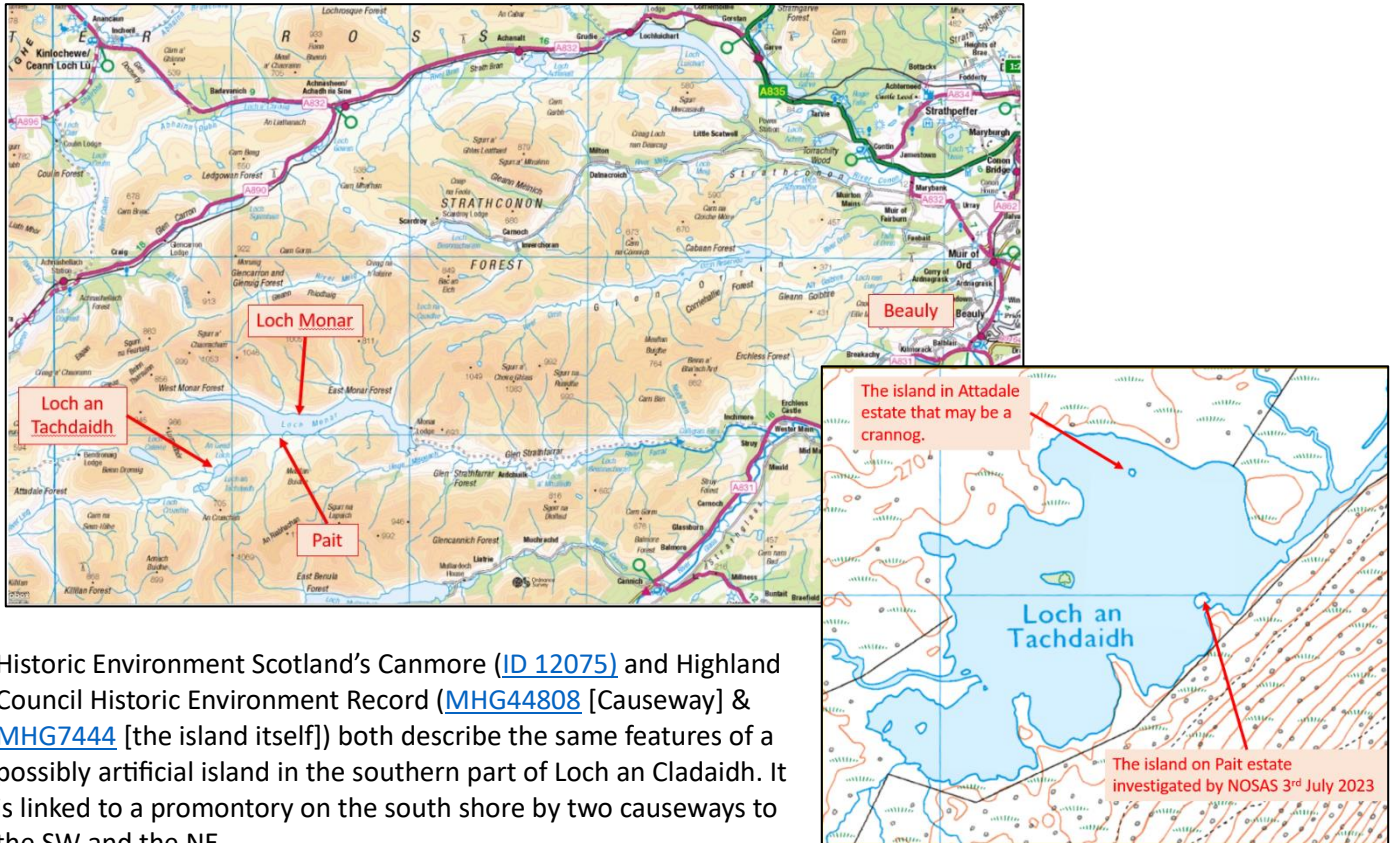


Loch an Tachdaidh

This loch is in a remote situation far from any normal vehicular access. It is split roughly horizontally between Attadale and Pait estates. Approach routes to the loch are from Pait on Loch Monar to the NE, Attadale towards the head of Loch Carron in the W, and Killilan via Strath Duilleach and the Iron Lodge to the SW. There are three islands on the loch, two of which are of interest.



Historic Environment Scotland’s Canmore ([ID 12075](#)) and Highland Council Historic Environment Record ([MHG44808](#) [Causeway] & [MHG7444](#) [the island itself]) both describe the same features of a possibly artificial island in the southern part of Loch an Cladaidh. It is linked to a promontory on the south shore by two causeways to the SW and the NE.

There are two main historical references to this possible crannog:

Odo Blundell’s 1913 paper: *Further Notes on the Artificial Islands in the Highland Area. PSAS, vol XLVII, p 281:*
The Gead Loch: *In this loch, which is just across the boundary between Ross-shire and Inverness-shire, Rev. D. Mackay, Marydale, Strathglass, is confident that there are two entirely artificial islands, one of them with an evident causeway to the shore.*

Ordnance Survey visit by (NKB) 24th October 1966:
There are no crannogs on An Gead Loch, but at NH 0955 3797 about 15.0m from the S shore of Loch an Tachdaidh, there is a natural island 40.0 by 26.0m and 2.0m high, connected to the mainland by a well-defined causeway 3.5m. wide and protruding about 0.2m above the surface. There are no structures on the island.

The island towards the SE shore of the loch is centred at NH 09580 37988, with two causeways:

- SW Causeway – N end: NH 09572 37970, S end: NH 09585 37958
- NE Causeway – N end: NH 09595 37987, S end: NH 09612 37978

The smaller island at the N end of the loch is centred on NH 09426 38270.

FO Blundell recorded local knowledge of two crannogs in 1913 in An Gead Loch, which lies just to the north-east of Loch an Tachdaich, separated from it by a short river. However, all three lochs here are called “The Gead Lochs”. There are no crannogs in An Gead Loch itself, so it is fair to assume that the islands in Loch an Tachdaidh are the ones to which Blundell refers. The 1966 OS survey report states that the island 15m from the south-east shore is natural but the causeway to it is man made.

NOSAS Visit to Loch an Tachdaidh on 3rd July 2023 undertaken by Roland Spencer-Jones (RSJ), Steve North, Glenn Wilks, & Richard Guest (RG)

- Weather: persistent moderate rain, light wind, mild.
- Transport provided by Nick Jones (NJ), owner of Pait estate – landing craft from Monar Lodge (at upper end Strathfarrar) to Pait Lodge; Argo Cat transport from Pait Lodge to Loch an Tachdaidh.

The shore of the loch was about 100m from the track down steep boggy ground, so RG left dive gear at the track, suited up, and took snorkel gear down to the loch for an initial assessment.

The loch level was high following two weeks of frequent rain. Two causeways connect the crannog to the south-east shore (records only refer to one causeway) but both were under water for most of their length, to a depth of about 0.5m at the deepest. The surface of the crannog is covered by deep spongy vegetation overlying peat, with no stone visible except around the waterline. The causeways appear to be of artificial construction, consisting of mainly regular sized stones of a size which could be manhandled.



Looking NW across Loch an Tachdaidh from the Argo Cat track. Note the proximal island - a possible crannog - and the two distal islands.



Richard Guest ready to dive round the island to assess the loch floor



Richard Guest inspecting the loch floor to the N of the island

Snorkelling around the island, the surrounding water was found to be very shallow, no more than 1m deep. The loch bed for the most part consisted of small stones – pebbles – in a silty matrix, with occasional larger stones. The exception was around the west to north-west sector where the bed consists of very large boulders, possibly bedrock. The water was so shallow that scuba gear was not required.

The island consisted of stones of a fairly regular size, easily manhandled, similar to the causeway and it is possible to see a definite boundary between the pebbly loch bed and the stone pile of the island. This would tend to support the theory that part of the island, at least, is of artificial construction. However, this distinction is lost in the west to north-west sector where some of the large boulders break surface. Here the stones on the shore are also of a larger size, too heavy for an individual to lift but not so large they could not be manoeuvred into place using levers. Some of the larger stones on the water's edge in this sector seemed to follow a line, as though they had been deliberately placed. This sector is less convincingly man-made than the rest.

No artifacts or timber were seen under water or on the island.

In conclusion, it is possible that a small natural island existed at the west corner of the current island, maybe only a few boulders above the surface. A relatively small amount of imported stone would be necessary to enhance this to form a crannog in the very shallow water. The peat may have built up since the crannog went out of use but the very presence of peat on the surface does cast doubt on whether this is an artificial construction. It was speculated that the dual causeways may have formed a pond to store fish caught elsewhere.



*RSJ being rowed across to the possible crannog by the landowner,
NJ. RG inspecting the loch floor in the background*



The small island in the N part of the loch. A possible crannog

NJ rowed R S-J over to the small round island near the N shore. This may be the other possible crannog mentioned by Blundell's correspondent in 1913. On the surface it appears to be artificial and would be worthy of further underwater exploration. This is to be arranged for Spring 2024.

Richard Guest
Roland Spencer-Jones
23rd July 2023