

NEWSLETTER July 2016

Projects and Funding

Since the last newsletter there have been a few developments.

Rosemarkie Caves Project

Simon Gunn has been successful in getting a further £2000 from the Black Isle Ward Discretionary fund, which will be used mainly for further carbon dating. This means that the dig on 3-11 September will go ahead as planned.

Tarradale Through Time (TTT)

Eric Grant and his TTT group applied to the SSE Sustainable Development Fund for funding for a three year project which comprises a series of targeted excavations covering the different archaeological time periods present at Tarradale. A persuasive application (my opinion) was submitted but was not successful. Apparently the fund was 10x oversubscribed. Eric now intends to develop the plans further and submit an application for funding to the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF). This is a significant initiative for NOSAS - one of the reasons we changed to become SCIO was to underpin larger funding applications of this type.

Scottish Rock Art Project

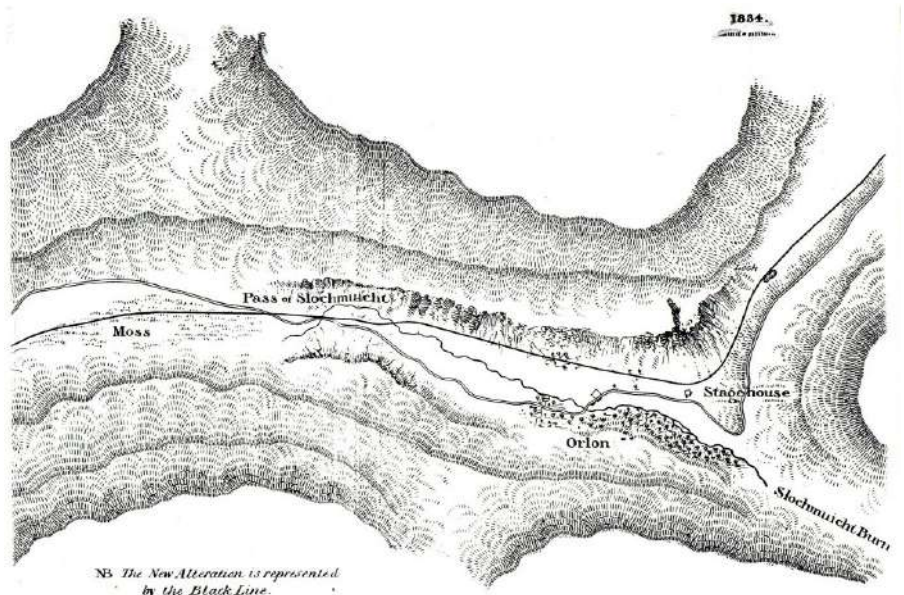
This five year project aims to systematically record the rock art across Scotland. Funding has been secured from the Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC) by Tertia Barnett (of Edinburgh University). NOSAS has a specific role in the project pilot phase undertaking field work and testing the methods to be used. I hope that the project will get going later this year and that many members will take part.

Alan Thompson

NOSAS walk: the Military Roads from Slochd to Sluggan – Friday 4th Dec 2015

Slochd Pass accommodates several routes both old and new; four roads and a railway jostle for position through the narrow defile. We are all familiar with the current A9 and the old A9, a Telford or "Parliamentary" road, constructed in 1834. The walk followed sections of the two earlier roads.

The Military Road of 1803 (shown, right, on the plan of the proposed line of the 1834 road) was built by James Donaldson in order to avoid some of the steeper sections of the original Wade military road. The road descends into the glen from Slochd Cottages (Stagehouse on this map) and crosses the Allt Slochd Muick at "Donaldsons Bridge" GR NH 843241. This bridge survived intact until the 1960s and has now been replaced by a wooden structure.



A further bridge 200m to the north which crosses a side burn has also fallen recently. Of this 1803 road Elizabeth Grant of Rothiemurchus in *Memoirs of a Highland Lady Volume 1* (p346) wrote in 1814 "A new road has been engineered along the sides of this "pass of the wild boars", Slochd Mor, thought a wonder of skill when viewed beside the narrow precipitous pathway tracked out by General Wade, up and down which one could scarcely be made to believe a carriage, with people sitting in it, had ever attempted to pass. My mother had always walked those two or three miles, or the greater part of them, the new route not having been completed till some years after..."

General Wade's Military Road constructed in 1728-29 is joined after 1 km at one of its better preserved sections. To the north the faint remains of an earlier road can be seen taking a direct line over a hill, while to the south the line of the road has been interrupted by the later railway constructed in 1897. The Wade Bridge at Ortunan was reconstructed relatively recently and that at Insharn built of dressed stone may not be the original. From Insharn southwards the Wade road is part of the National Cycle route. The first 1.5 km have seen severe estate use and nothing remains of the original road; however after the junction with the track to Inverlaidnan it improves and a possible five-mile marker stone is seen at NH 8553 2181 Canmore ID 139468: "This stone, on the S side of the track, is possibly that mentioned (Salmond 1938) at the top of the ascent as being one of those marking a 5 mile stretch. However, that marker stone is more likely to be the one visible 118m further W."

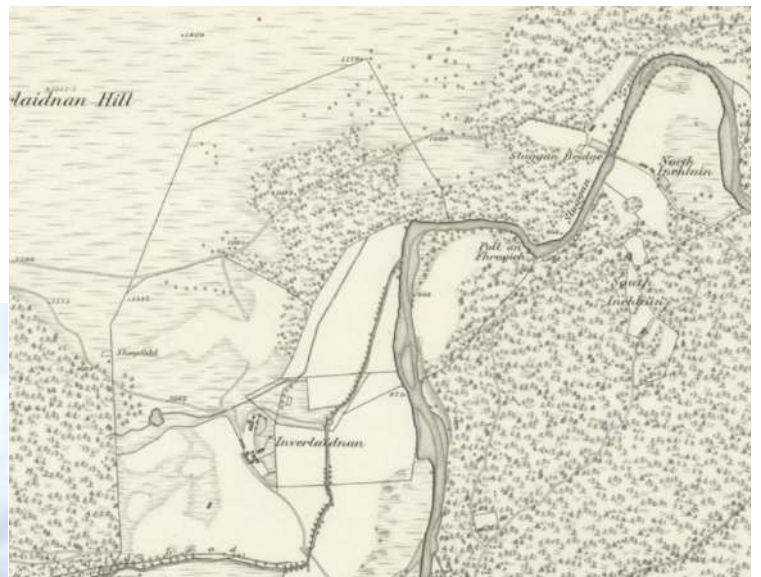


<https://canmore.org.uk/site/139468/inverlaidnan-hill-stone>

Inverlaidnan has a number of interesting archaeological sites: the old laird's house, a horse gang, an unrecorded township and a possible hut circle.

Inverlaidnan Old House

This Scheduled site comprises the upstanding ruins of an 18th-century laird's house built almost certainly by John Grant of Dalrachney sometime between 1717 and his death in 1736. He was succeeded by his son, Alexander, but the house was extensively damaged by fire in 1739. It was rebuilt by 1746 and Bonnie Prince Charlie is thought to have stayed there one February night.



Inverlaidnan House

The Grants continued to occupy the house for some time thereafter, but by 1851, the roof of 'the old house of Inverlaidnan' had fallen in. The remains of the house at Inverlaidnan today consist principally of the W and N walls, which stand to full height, and the E and N corners of the S elevation.

The outbuildings survive as turf-covered footings and the enclosure as a substantial bank, in parts spread to 3m across, and ditched along its W side. The laird's house was originally rectangular in plan, of two storeys and garret, and aligned N-S with subsidiary buildings to its E. The house measures about 16m N-S by 11.5m E-W over walls about 0.9m thick. The original entrance was located probably midway along the E elevation; at a later date a doorway was inserted at the N end of this same elevation. Each floor would have been two rooms deep with a stairway located centrally along the W elevation. Windows were positioned between the flues at attic level on the end gables and two small fireplaces would have provided warmth to each of the four principal rooms on the first floor. The large W-facing first floor windows had inner relieving arches behind their lintels. The house and outbuildings stood in the centre of a walled enclosure which measures approximately 65m N-S by 40m E-W over all. One of the outbuildings probably housed the kitchen. Evidence of some re-building survives, in particular at the NW corner.

Quote from HES Scheduled Monument record, *"This laird's house is of national importance as a good example of the layout and architecture of a type of monument about which little is presently known. Its importance is enhanced by its potential, together with the contemporary documentary sources available, to improve our understanding of the social structure and culture of landed families in the 18th century. Given its early abandonment and lack of later disturbance, the monument also has high archaeological potential"*.

Note that permission to approach the house may be sought from Seafield Estate 01542 840777. The building is in an unstable condition; most of its features can be seen from outside so it is not recommended that one enters it.

Continuing along the Wade road there is a **cairn and cist**; this site is almost certainly the one noted in 1875 as being at *"Inverladnin House"* and recorded on Canmore; ID 14962, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/14962/inverladnin-house> . More recently Ann Wakeling has recorded it <http://her.highland.gov.uk/SingleResult.aspx?uid=MHG25012> . Close by is a site comprising several stone built "plinths": these are thought to be supports for a temporary sawmill and possibly date to the early 1900s. As the Wade road descends towards Sluggan Bridge an alternative line taking an easier gradient is seen in the heather to the north.

Sluggan Bridge NH 870220 Canmore ID 14972, <https://canmore.org.uk/site/14972/sluggan-bridge> carries the road across the River Dulnain. The Roy map of c1750 has a ford here and Bishop Forbes when he travelled north in 1762 describes fording the river. The original bridge at this site was erected in 1764 with two arches and a central pier; this pier was demolished and the bridge washed away in the flood of 1768; it was replaced a year later by the present single soaring arch "the builder being resolved that the same accident should never happen again" (*Sir Eneas MacIntosh, 23rd Chief of the Clan*). The bridge is reported by Sir Thomas Dick Lauder as being destroyed in the flood of 1829 but it clearly still stands. A settlement on the north bank of the river at the junction with the Grantown road (Roy 1750) may have been an inn.



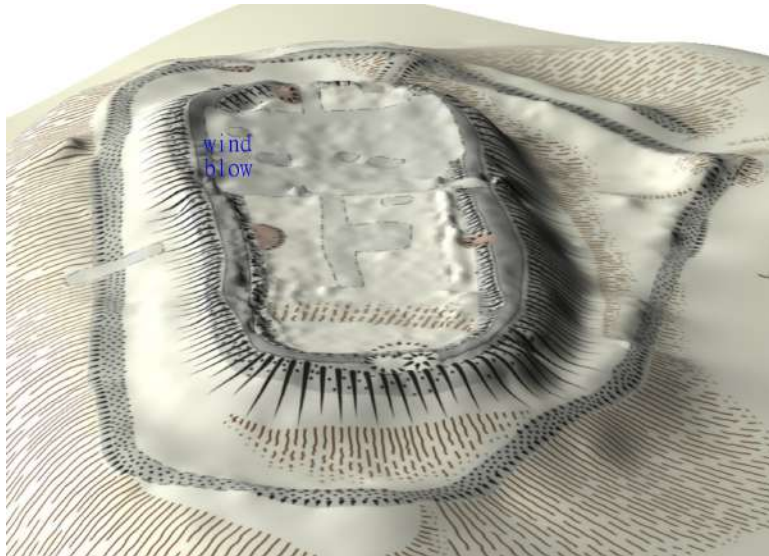
Sluggan Bridge

Meryl Marshall

Meryl Marshall

Craig Phadrig excavation by Mary Peteranna (AOC) and Steven Birch (WCAS) on behalf of Forestry Commission Scotland

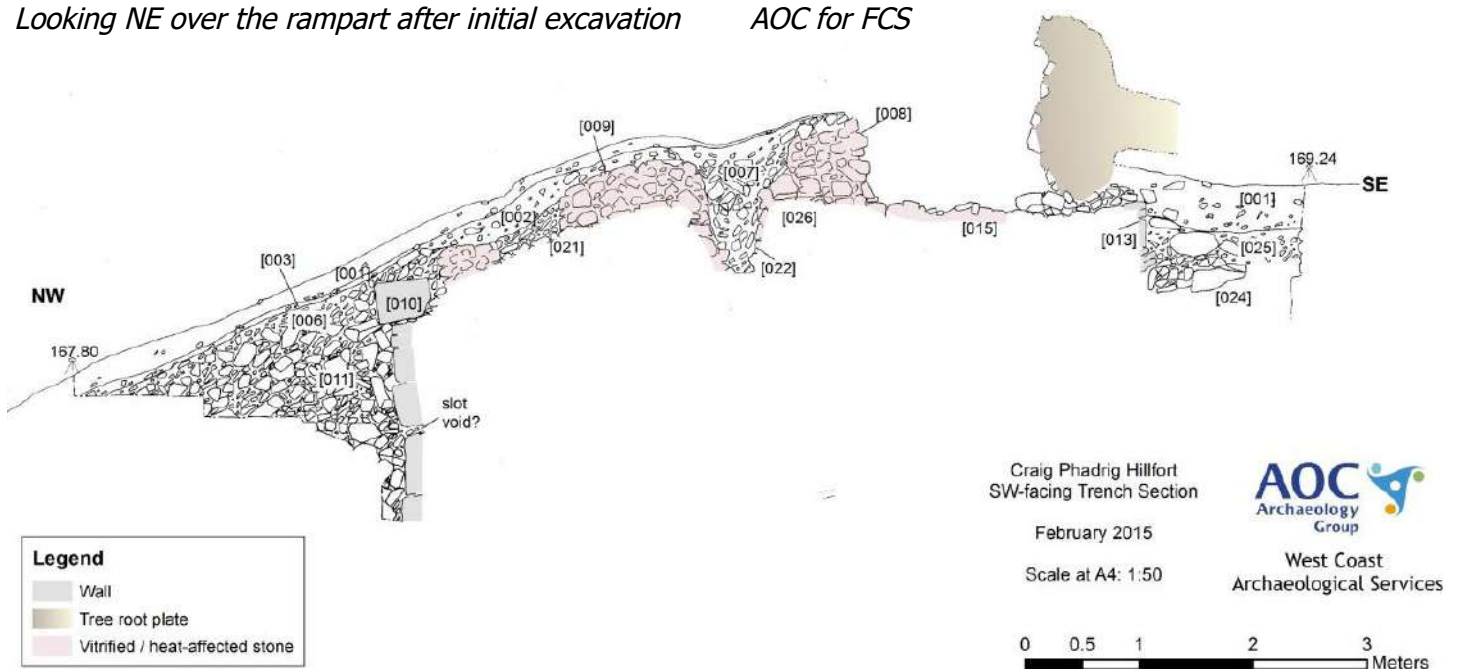
In January 2015, severe winter storms caused significant damage to the Craig Phadrig hillfort after two windblown trees falling to the interior of the fort exposed a section of the inner rampart.



Louise Baker, Enda O'Flaherty, Rubicon Heritage for FCS

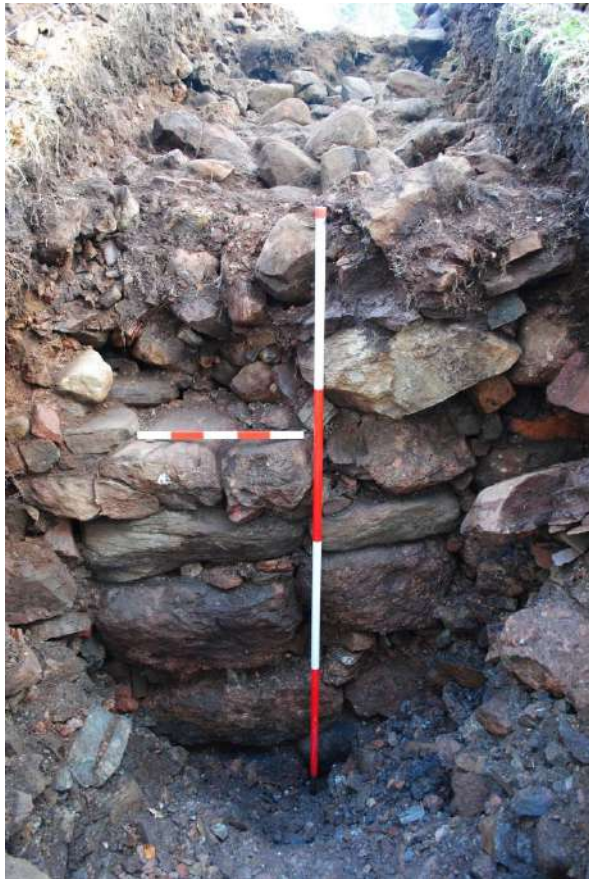


Looking NE over the rampart after initial excavation AOC for FCS

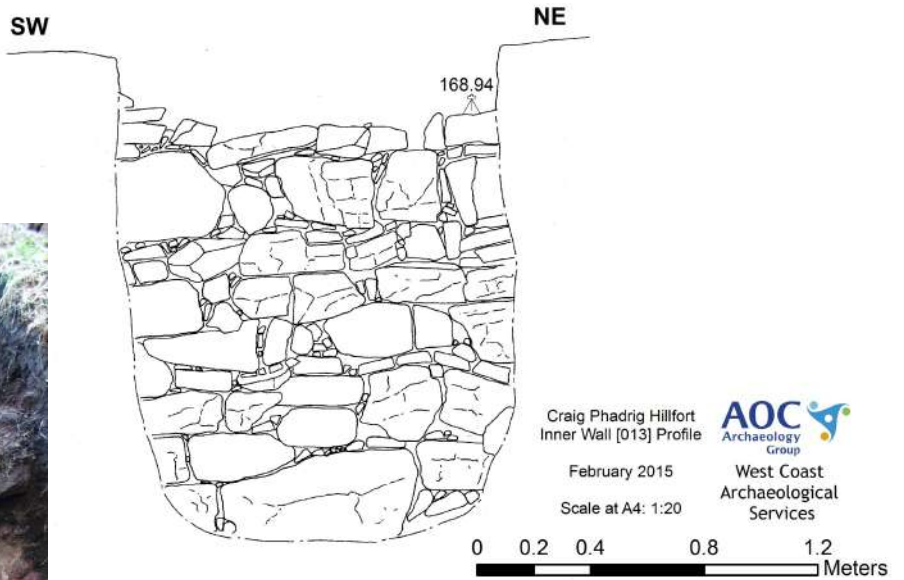


Section of the view above after excavation, showing the 6.5 m thick inner rampart, the possible beam slot in the outer wall and the palisade ditch [022] near the centre

The drawing at the right shows the inner vertical face [013] at the right hand side of the photo and drawing on the previous page.



Outer wall face [010], post-excavation facing SE
AOC for FCS



The photo on the left, facing SE, shows the nearly 2 m high outer wall face [010] at the left hand side of the photo and drawing on the previous page.

Sources

Alison McCaig (2014) *Craig Phadrig, Inverness: Survey and Review*, RCAHMS and FCS

Louise Baker and Enda O'Flaherty (2014) *Archaeological Measured Survey of Craig Phadrig*, Rubicon Heritage for FCS

Mary Peteranna (2015) *Craig Phadrig Hillfort*, AOC for FCS



SW section of the trench: post-hole [033] is visible behind the left 1m scale pole; the upper rampart bank [008] is visible to the right with the inner kerb of stones [029] on the left side; facing SW
AOC for FCS

The photo left looks along the rampart in the opposite direction, facing SW, showing the fire-reddened rock core and skin of larger outer stones forming part of a smaller, later rampart built on the remains of the vitrified main rampart.

Islay week 23-30 April 2016

We had a great week on Islay thanks to Jonie and Sheila. Here are a few pictures as a reminder of what you saw - or what you missed.



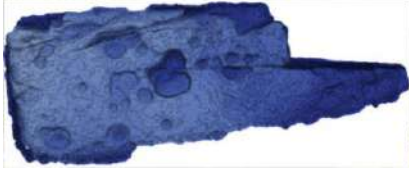
There was great joy at discovering another shieling



James was sworn in as 'Lord of the Isles'



The wild North coast



The inevitable photogrammetry. The sun was too bright creating hard shadows and the group here are not trying to lift the stone, but providing shade



Adder! Fully vindicating Jonie's comprehensive Risk Assessment



Hazel took a commanding position (more usually occupied by seagulls)



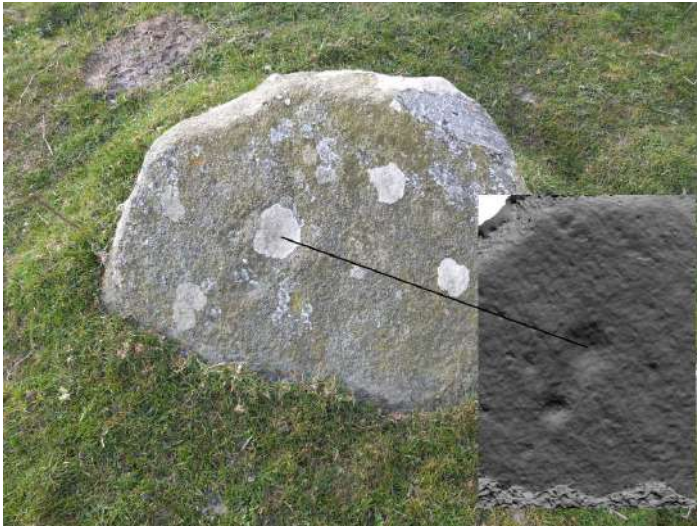
Dun Nosebridge! Surely a monument as large and impressive as this deserves a better name



There was geology as well (Bonahaven dolomite)



Dunivaig castle, described by VisitScotland as "the atmospheric ruins of this former naval base where Earl Somerled, the 'King of the Isles', once launched his galleys"



There aren't many rock art sites recorded on Islay. John discovered a new one at Mulreesh with two linked cups



Jonie and Richard towed their boat all the way to Islay in the hope of an expedition to one of the smaller islands. Sadly the weather was very windy and they did not put to sea - a wise move judging by the evidence



The rightly famous Kildalton Cross - alone justifying the visit

Alan Thompson
Pictures Alan Thompson, John Wombell, Anne Cockroft