
**THE NEWSLETTER OF THE NORTH OF SCOTLAND ARCHAEOLOGICAL SOCIETY
JULY 2017**

DATES FOR THE DIARY

Date - 2017		Time	Place
5 July	Clachtoll Project Formal Launch	17:00	Stoer Hall
10 July	Clachtoll Excavation 3 months	09:00	Clachtoll Broch, Assynt
15 July	Findhorn Dunes Project		
15 July	Clachan Church to Dundonnell	10:00	Braemore junction NH209777
29 July	Achavanich Beaker Burial Project		Lybster
14/25 August	Dun Deardail Excavation		Near Fort William
25 August	Valhalla Conference	09:30	Inverness Town House
9-10 Sept	The Old Red: Hugh Miller Conference		Victoria Hall, Cromarty
14-17 September	Our Past Conference Archaeology Institute	12.00	U. of the H. & Islands
30 September to 15 October	Highland Archaeological Festival		
4-5 November	Moray Society Archaeological Conference		Elgin
2018			
23-25 March	20 Years of Archaeology in the Highlands: a NOSAS Celebration		Highland Council Chambers, Inverness

Full details of the above are on the NOSAS calendar.

<http://www.nosas.co.uk/calendar.asp>

also check out

www.highlandarchaeologyfestival.org.uk

www.archhighland.org.uk

www.elginmuseum.org.uk for Moral Society Lecture Series Winter 2017/8

A Reminder - NOSAS Library

NOSAS has its own library, a growing collection of books housed at Dingwall Library. It's a reference collection for everyone, but NOSAS members can borrow books.

I am at present doing a stock take, so I would be grateful if you have a NOSAS book out, could you please email me with the details and your name.

How does the NOSAS Library work?

You must first become a member of Highland Library system. This is free – you'll need to bring an address ID and a picture ID to a branch of the library. If you want to borrow a book, the Dingwall Library staff will need to check that you are an up-to-date member (note that you can't borrow books in another person's name, such as your spouse). If you come in person, Dingwall Library staff will check the list held behind the desk. If you want to borrow from another library, ask the librarian to email Dingwall Library with the details of your name, your library membership number, and the book(s) you want to borrow, clearly stating you are a NOSAS member. Dingwall staff will check the list, if you are a current member, they will then put the books on the van for delivery to your local library (this may take over a week depending on when the library gets its deliveries). The books will be issued as normal library books, for 3 weeks. They will accrue fines if they are overdue unless you are over 60 (15p per day per book).

If you are a NOSAS member, but live outside the Highland Council area, contact Susan Kruse on cruachan.hts@googlemail.com and I'll arrange delivery. However, in this case there will be a postal charge both ways.

If a book is lost, you will be expected to replace it with a similar one.

What does the library hold?

We have a growing collection, and are always open to suggestions for new purchases or offers of donations. Once the stock take is complete, a full list will be published on the website. Recent purchases and donations include Martin Carver's report on Portmahomack, the We Digs project report, *Beyond Stonehenge: Essays on the Bronze age in honour of Colin Burgess*, *Stone Axe Studies III*, *Carving a Future for British Rock Art*, and of course the most recent NOSAS surveys. All the NOSAS items are on the [online catalogue](#). If you wish to look at the NOSAS books alone, go to Advanced Search, and choose NOSAS Collection from the Collection drop down box.

Questions?

Contact Susan on cruachan.hts@googlemail.com

Susan Kruse

Update on Clachtoll Broch Excavation

Everything is now on the verge of starting. AOC staff begin arriving over the weekend to get the site ready, the Project is being launched on **Wednesday, 5th July at Stoer Hall at 19.00 hours** and 'proper' work should begin 10th July.

Many thanks to those of you have already let me have specific dates or given a more general indication of when you might want to take part.

I'm in the process of handing all that information over to Charlotte at AOC Charlotte.Douglas@aocarchaeology.com who will be co-ordinating volunteer involvement from now on. So, if you need to change the dates or want to book yourself in for specific dates and haven't yet done so, please could you contact Charlotte directly from now on. More general queries about staying in the area can still come to me for now, though that too may change once we have the Broch Liaison Officers appointed in the near future.

Gordon Sleight

SHIEL BRIDGE WINTER WALK

The last of the winter walks was led by Anne Coombs on 22nd April. Nine members made the journey to the site of the Battle of Glenshiel (1719) where we looked at what remains of the Jacobite lines on the hill above the car park at NG995132. At the top of a knoll below the Sgurr nan Spainteach (which memorialises the role played by Spanish soldiers in support of the Jacobites) we looked at a puzzling wall which enclosed an area on three sides and there was much discussion as to what this feature represented. Was it contemporary with the battle and if so, what was its purpose? It was clear that the Jacobite positions on the hills above the road at the narrowest point in the glen provided a good place for an ambush and this strategy might have worked had they been able to bring up their artillery which was at Eilean Donan Castle. However, in the event the Jacobite forces had only muskets while the government troops had four mortars, a comparatively new weapon which must have contributed to the confusion and been very effective in persuading the Jacobites to flee the scene. The puzzling structure didn't seem to fit in with the process of the battle, nor was it well situated as a position for the heavy guns which never arrived. There's a good account of the battle with some plans of the action showing the government and Jacobite positions at http://www.battlefieldsofbritain.co.uk/battle_glenshiel_1719.html

What is it?



Anne was keen to record the shieling sites which could be identified among these battlefield remains, so after a coffee/lunch break we split into three groups of three to cover the sites which she had already identified. As can be seen from the photos it's very rough ground and doesn't look today as if there would be much good grazing for cattle, but perhaps the ground would improve from the natural fertilisation provided by the animals over several seasons. The boards with the plans were passed on to Meryl and we had yet another coffee/late lunch break back at the cars. The car park was part of the old road which crossed the burn by a Caulfeild Bridge and Duncan was keen to look at another bridge a little way down the road to Shiel Bridge. Here there was a section of road and bridge built by Telford which was still in use till the present road was built in the 1980s. Some of us could remember the long and tortuous journey to Skye via this road and bridge. Alongside was the ghost of the old military road and the bridge which crossed the river a little to the west of the Telford Bridge



Caulfeild Bridge



Telford Bridge

We then moved on to Cill Fhearchair, an early Christian site, at Shiel Bridge. This is a large circle with a standing (or leaning) stone by the roadside and what looks like a small cairn in the interior. Alongside this were two other large circular features, though some of us struggled to see them on the ground.

Cill Fhearchair

After a very enjoyable day covering a range of period from the mediaeval to the C19, we repaired to the Cluanie Inn where we enjoyed a very welcome afternoon tea.



Marion Ruscoe

ARCHAEOLOGY SCOTLAND SUMMER SCHOOL

19-22 May 2017 at Garve Hotel

Archaeology Scotland runs an annual weekend in a different area of Scotland each year and this year it was based in Garve. I have been to several of the weekends and have always enjoyed being taken around new areas and seeing other people's prize archaeology.

This year it was different. Firstly, it was our archaeology and a chance to show off our best and favourite bits to the rest of the members of Archaeology Scotland. Secondly three of us got to see behind the scenes.

I usually arrive with everyone else on a Friday afternoon and register and everything smoothly follows from that point until Monday morning when I head home or do the extra visit then go home. This time Alan Thompson, Anne Cockcroft and I were contacted by the organisers Geoff Waters and Alison Reid in early August 2016. Having decided to base the 2017 trip in Garve they asked if NOSAS would like to assist by suggesting sites to visit. After some consideration and email communication we developed a short list for Geoff and Alison to consider. They came north for the first of several visits and we joined them and took them around the various sites. It was already very clear that arranging the weekend was not a simple process. Alison with her clip board timed everything to the minute and Geoff was very hot on what was known about the sites and whether the owners were happy to have Archaeology Scotland visiting. Then there was the question of access; around 80 people come on the weekend ranging from the young and very fit to the less young (90 years old) and (only slightly) less fit. The coaches had to be able to deliver us as close as possible to the site and be able to turn around to get us out again. Bridge bearing weight had to be thought about and the width of some of the access roads among other things. All Alison's domain. And then there were the loo stops, that essential which we take for granted and often forget to include in the recy. Permissions had to be sought and speakers booked.

In May 75 people arrived and took part in another successful weekend; mostly with only a passing thought to the efforts going on in the background. This is all credit to Geoff and Alison's immense hard work to ensure everything goes ahead with no hitches.

So where did we go and what did we see and hear? Well, on Friday night we had an inspiring talk from Alan on the work he has done over the past few years with his drone and photogrammetry. He had lots of complementary comments and enthusiasm from the audience.



Marion standing on tree stump explaining about the Fort.

Starting promptly at 9.00 on Saturday we set off in 2 coaches for David's Fort where we met Marion Ruscoe in the rain. Marion explained the extent of her research and her possible conclusions especially in the light of the 2016 excursion to Sir John de Graham's castle near Stirling which bears many similarities to David's fort.

We went on to Mulchaich and Old Urquhart church before a break for our packed lunches at Fortrose.



In the afternoon, we went to Ormond Castle where Strat Halliday discussed the probability of the site being an Iron Age fort before it was a medieval castle. The afternoon then took an unexpected turn when the local Andrew de Moray Society paraded up to the top of the castle to commemorate the part taken by Andrew in the Wars of Independence.

Strat Halliday explaining the about Carn Glas.

Despite the rain we also visited Carn Glas and Conon henge before returning to the hotel. The day finished with a lively presentation by Eve Boyle on Guisachan House on behalf of Simon Green.

Sunday dawned brighter and we travelled west to Kiltarlity and Tomnacross; as described by Geoff "moot hill or possible motte and reputedly the site of the 'Seat of Judgement' and the 'Hanging Tree'." The extensive and interesting prehistoric landscape of Buntait followed, then Corrimony cairn and the amazing and very fine cruck barn which survives under a corrugated iron roof.



Our next stop was the steading and dairy of Guisachan.



Fine dairy ware.

This range of buildings is the epitome of the development of Highland estates of the 1850s. The dairy is another extraordinary survival of the past with its terrazzo floor, stained glass windows and fine dairy ware.

Some of the range of steadings has been converted into holiday lets but there are still examples of stable furnishings of the period in parts of the buildings. Our final stop of the day was Ercless motte/burial ground which NOSAS visited last year. The evening presentation was by Dr Gordon Noble on his project on the Northern Picts.

The whole weekend was constantly informed by the expertise of the participants. Strat Halliday and Eve Boyle have been contributors to NOSAS events on several occasions but many of the members are well known through their publications and presentations on archaeology in Scotland. Overall, an excellent weekend with thought provoking discussions. All the sites are well known to NOSAS members who, over recent years, will have visited them all as a group or independently. What made the weekend so valuable was the generous sharing of knowledge and information by experts who have visited comparable sites throughout the British Isles.

The optional walk on Monday morning was up Knock Farrel with both Eve and Strat entertaining us with more knowledge about Iron Age forts and vitrification.



Vitrification Knock Farrel, Strathpeffer.

Next year the Summer School will be in the Scottish Borders, 18-21 May.

Ann Coombs

NOSAS walk the old “Fish Road” from Aultguish Inn to Little Garve Bridge 25th June 2017

This outing was by way of a “reccy”, the intention was to prospect the route with a view to including it in the proposed publication “Old Routes in the Highlands” - part of the NOSAS 20 year celebrations. What we know as the “Fish road” was constructed between 1792 and 1797 to provide a land link for the newly established settlement of Ullapool to the “outside” world; it was funded by the British Fisheries Society. The road is known as the “Fish road” but whether or not fish were transported along it is debatable, however, in 1794 the Old Statistical Account of Loch Broom Parish reports:

“There is an excellent road betwixt Ullapool and the town of Dingwall and it is now nearly finished, where lately nothing could be carried but in creels on horseback, carts and carriages can now travel with the greatest of ease”.

Brief History

A route between Contin and Ullapool has almost certainly been in existence since prehistoric times. In the 17th and 18th century the route was one of the drove routes from the west to the markets in the east and south. ARB Haldane, in “The Drove Roads of Scotland” has:

“Pennant in 1772 noted that in the Loch Broom district the sale of black cattle to drovers from as far south as Craven in Yorkshire was the chief support of the people. For these the only practicable route to the south was by Strath Garve to Muir of Ord”
p108, “to Poolewe or to points on the nearby coast came the cattle of Lewis.....many of these landed at Aultbea and Gruinard went up the valley of the Gruinard Riverand so by hill tracks to join either the road from Ullapool to Dingwall or that from Achnasheen to Garve.... From Braemore the beasts were driven east to Garve and Dingwall but two deviations from the main road were used by the drovers.....one of these turned due south from the main road near Altguish and crossed the forest of Corriemoillie to Garve so shortening the distance and keeping the beasts on the soft ground where grazing was available. The other short cut left the Ullapool Garve road near Inchbae Lodge and crossing the saddle between Ben Wyvis and Little Wyvis re-joined the road to Dingwall at Achterneed.”

The settlement of Ullapool was established by the British Fisheries Society between 1788 and 1790. The necessity of a road linking Ullapool with the east coast had been recognised for many years. Captain John Forbes in his Report (*on Coigach*) for the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates 1755 says:

“The roads to and through this country (Coigach) may be reckoned amongst the worst in the Highlands of Scotland, being mountainous rocky and full of stones, and no bridges upon the rivers, so that nothing but necessity makes strangers resort here and for the great part of the year it is almost inaccessible the making of a road from Loch Broom to Dingwall would contribute greatly towards the civilizing of this country by reason

of intercourse and trade that could be carried on twixt the east and west coasts which is at present impracticable”.

John Knox travelling in the Highlands in 1786 on behalf of the British Fisheries Society found no roads in Sutherland, Caithness and Ross-shire (*failing apparently to notice the short-lived road from Contin to Poolewe!*). His criticisms were not without results, for a few years later the British Fisheries Society decided, with Parliaments support, to undertake the construction of a road from Contin to the fishing village of Ullapool. The road was surveyed by George Brown of Elgin about 1790 and the estimated cost was little short of £8,000 which the government considered excessive. Kenneth Mackenzie of Torridon offered to undertake the work, influenced as he later wrote by “the avidity for labour and the necessities of the poor” and in the Spring of 1792 a contract to make 40 miles of road, at fourpence to eightpence a yard according to the nature of the ground and a large number of bridges was entered into. This road was completed in 1797 at a total cost of £4,582.....But Mackenzies road fell quickly into disrepair..... only 12 years later Telford and his colleagues were faced with a demand for renewal (*New Ways through the Glens” ARB Haldane 1962*)

By 1835 the NSA for the Parish of Loch Broom has:

“About 40 years ago a road was constructed at a great expense from Dingwall to Ullapool But the line chosen was so absurd and the execution so wretched that the road has been for many years back not only useless but dangerous to foot passengers and riders on horseback, and to wheel carriages almost impassable while several of the principal bridges are carried away or threatened with being so. A new road with the requisite bridges would be an immense improvement”.

Tedford’s new road, which took the line of the present road, was completed in 1840.

The Map Evidence

A map (NRS RHP11593) of the “Proposed road from Garve to Ullapool” by George Brown and dated 1790 has the line of the old “Fish Road” traversing the high ground from the approximate location of the Glascarnoch Dam to Corrimoillie and Little Garve Bridge – a dashed line which is probably the line of the drove road runs alongside.



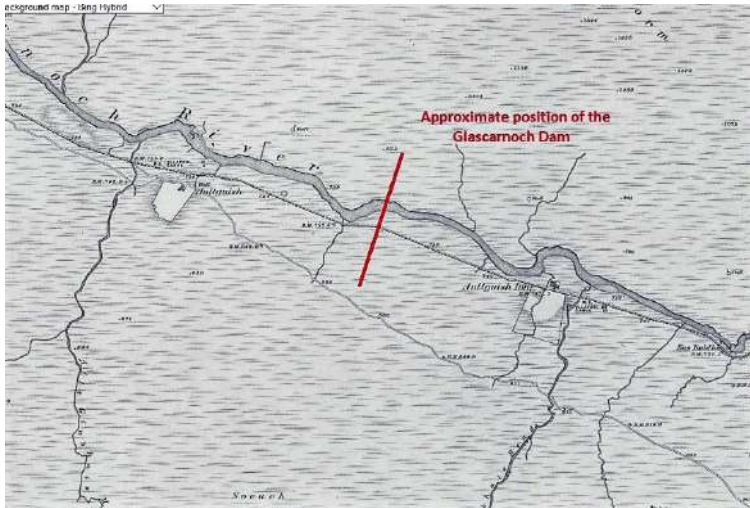
The only road on the **Arrowsmith map of 1807 (left)** and the Thomsons map of 1830 takes the same line as the one on the 1790 map, in addition it has a building on the south side of road in the approximate position of the Glascarnoch Dam.

The First Edition OS survey of 1875 has both the original road and the newer Telford road which takes a line similar to that of the present road along the glen to Garve. Aultguish Inn is in its present position on this map, but there is also a roofed building in the position of the building on the Thomson map. This location has now been flooded by the building of the Glascarnoch Dam but the ruins of a building can be seen at periods of low water. Was this the old Aultguish Inn used by the drovers?

Aultguish Inn 1930s



Exploring the Bridge abutment near Aultguish Inn



FES of 1875, the line of the old “Fish road” can be seen descending to a building now under water

The fertile green pastures of Kirkan with Ben Wyvis in the background



The Route

We set off from Aultguish Inn. There was a good turnout of 18 NOSAS members and visitors on a day which was fair but windy. Some of the route is well-known for being wet and boggy and the first bit lived up to expectations! - it is not a route to be traversed in the winter months! But on our day there were compensations. The wasted abutments of a bridge over the burn south of Aultguish Inn were identified and the pleasant green oasis of Kirkan farmstead was visited. There is documentary evidence of this place being occupied from at least 1790 – a list of 1798 has Alexander Grant, tenant, there and Kenneth MacLennan in his *“Memories of Strathvaich, 1992”*, has James MacTavish, sheep farmer in 1825. MacLennan also tells us that:

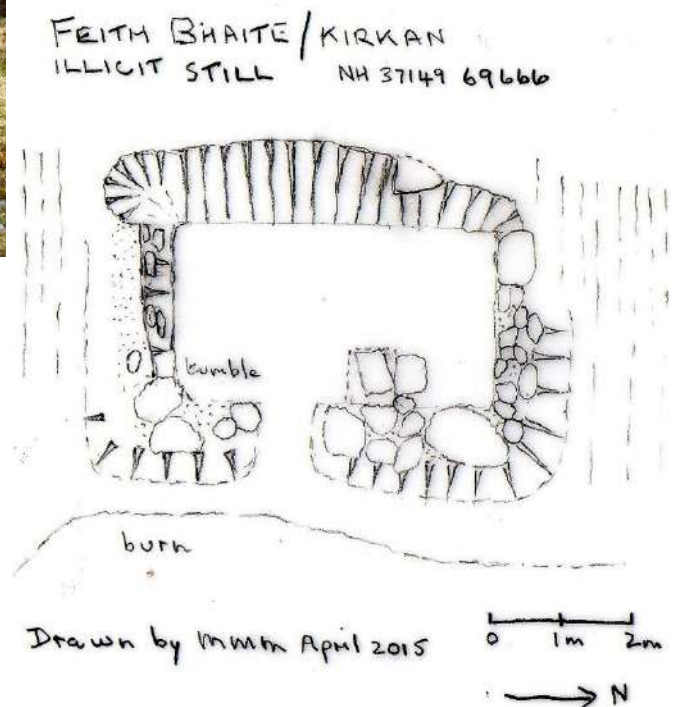
“There is the ruin of an old limekiln above Kirkan House where there is a small outcrop of limestone”

And “The excise officers found one (an illicit still) on Kirkan and destroyed it. At the time, there were men working on the Black Bridge, who spotted the excise officers travelling along the road in a horse and trap. As soon as the officers were out of sight a man ran across country to raise the alarm. As a result, some of the whisky was saved”.

No evidence of the small outcrop of limestone and the limekiln was found apart from the verdant green landscape, and we failed to locate the illicit still bothy which had been recorded in the burn to the east of the settlement at NGR NH 37149 69666. The still bothy had been visited before, but this was rough country and having found ourselves too high up the burn there were few who wished to go back down again! (my apologies to all concerned!)



The illicit still bothy which we failed to find, viewed from the east



We rejoined the road and continued. The next section was pleasant walking over the watershed along the well-defined road. Here, on the higher ground the road was more discernable - it was generally about 3m in width and bounded on one or both sides by occasional boulders, there was however very little evidence of constructed drainage channels. On the lower wetter stretches the road disappeared altogether, but generally the line of it ahead could be easily identified. This was remote wild country with distant views.

Soon we entered a forestry plantation and started the gradual descent on a good track. Sadly, the lower part of this was overgrown and we were obliged to take a detour by Silver Bridge to our cars which were parked at Little Garve bridge.



This fine old bridge was built in the 1760s possibly by Caulfield and is well worth a visit. It was constructed on the Contin to Poolewe road which, like the Ullapool road, was to have only a short life falling victim to Highland weather and lack of maintenance.

The road on the higher ground looking west

Below looking south east, the road continues through the notch on the skyline



Comments

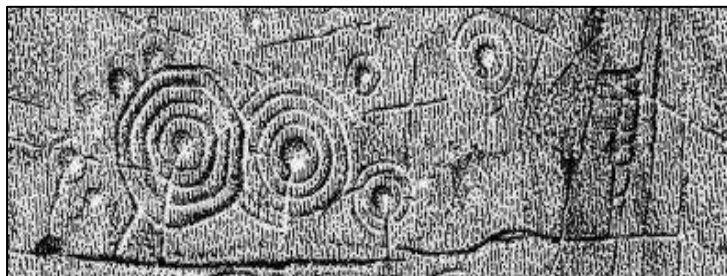
Most people enjoyed the day and even though the road was wet and rough going at times they appreciated the fact that much of it had not been altered in any way from its original form. Although neglected and lacking in maintenance, it was in its original state and had not been re-used as an estate or forest road. Many commented on the wild location and the distant views - the nature and the general ambience of the place. Some thought that the lack of associated archaeology was a drawback but others thought it was made up for by the road itself and the bridges, particularly the one at Little Garve. Many thought the deviation to Kirkan worthwhile.

Perhaps the name “fish road” is a misnomer, so far, no evidence of it being used to transport fish has been found and surely it would have been easier and quicker to send the fish out from Ullapool by boat. The name was possibly adopted simply because the road was paid for by the British Fisheries Society. In actual fact, it was not long before the fish began to desert Loch Broom, the road fell into disrepair and a new road was built by Telford. The old road over the hill however resorted to its original purpose continuing to be used as a drove road for many years.

Bibliography

Report (on Coigach) for the Commissioners of Forfeited Estates – Captain John Forbes 1755
The Drove Roads of Scotland – ARB Haldane, 1997
New Ways through the Glens - ARB Haldane 1962
Memoires of Strathvaich - Kenneth MacLennan, 1992

Meryl Marshall



Scotland's Rock Art Project

Background to the Project and NOSAS involvement

Scotland's Rock Art Project is a five-year project to record and research prehistoric rock art. The scheme is run by Historic Environment Scotland (HES) and funded by the Arts and Humanities Research Council.

The aim of the project is to improve understanding and awareness of Scotland's rock art through research. To research the carvings, we need to first develop a comprehensive, detailed record of where they are and what they look like.

As many of you will already know, NOSAS is a partner in this project. Our specific role in 2017 is to work with Tertia Barnett and her team to pilot and test the recording methods to be used. Beyond that we will be one of a number of Community groups recording rock art across Scotland.

As with all such projects, there is a challenge in ensuring that small groups, working independently in the field, make their records in a sufficiently consistent and comprehensive way that the results are meaningful for analysis by Tertia and her academic partners.

Tertia has extensive experience in recording rock art in England, including in the Northumberland and Durham Rock Art Project (NADRAP). At that time photogrammetry was still somewhat specialised and could only be used selectively, but despite that some great results were obtained demonstrating that rock art is an ideal subject for photogrammetry. The progress of technology since then means that our project will major on the use of photogrammetry – we intend that all panels (each discrete exposure of a piece of rock art is called a panel) should be recorded this way.

Tertia also plans an App for recording, the idea being like that used by the SCAPE Trust/SCHARP project which some of you have used. That will take a little time to specify and program, and so in the meanwhile (for the pilot work) we are using paper forms.

NOSAS Involvement in the Pilot Project

NOSAS has committed to work with Tertia to record enough panels in our local area in 2017 to fully test the methods she is developing. 35 members have indicated an interest and most of these have already become involved. If other members are interested they should contact John Wombell or Alan Thompson.

Progress to date

The project is now underway. We have held two 'familiarisation' afternoons at Clava, plus training sessions with Tertia at Dingwall and Drumore, done some experimenting, and given a lot of useful feedback to the ScRAP team.

Familiarisation Sessions at Clava

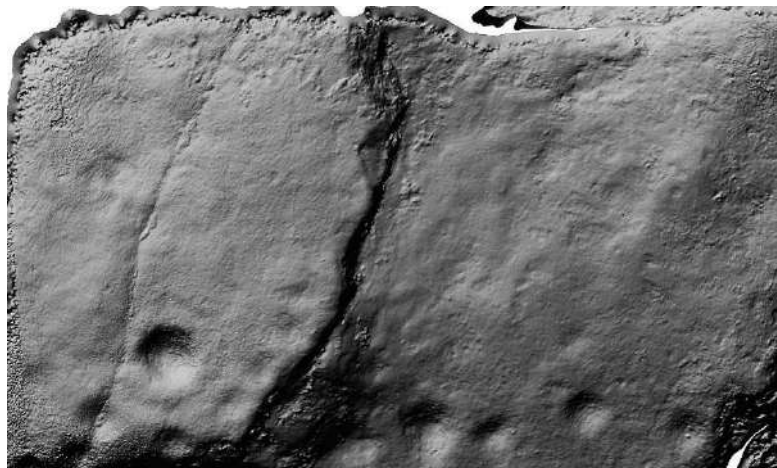
Because of the numbers we held the session twice, once on a weekday and once at the weekend. We chose to visit Clava because of its convenient location, easy parking, and access for a large group. It is of course famous for the Clava Cairns, but in addition there are a series of panels built into the cairns and at nearby locations. We could compare the records with what we could locate, and examine and discuss the panels.



*Discussing how to record this CMS.
Photo Anne Cockroft*

Each group also took a set of images for photogrammetry, which was subsequently processed using Photoscan and presented using MeshLab.

*Shadowed image of CMS. Photo-
grammetry Alan Thompson*



Formal Training Sessions

About 20 members attended the sessions. On the first afternoon Dr Stuart Jeffrey (Research Fellow, School of Simulation and Visualisation, Glasgow School of Art) demonstrated both photogrammetry and RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging). He took us over to the churchyard at Dingwall church and we examined the standing stone with Pictish symbols as well as cup marks.

Stuart then demonstrated how he would take a set of pictures for photogrammetry, and many of us also took sets of pictures using other stones as examples

Stuart setting up RTI equipment. Photo Tertia Barnett



A sharp shower then drove us back inside, and we proceeded to go through the stages of photogrammetry processing using photoscan. When the rain cleared, we went out again but conditions were not suitable for an RTI demonstration, which was disappointing. We went back inside and Stuart set up a simple demonstration of the method, which showed the approach to data capture, and the stages in processing and presenting the results.

At the end of the afternoon, Tertia issued us all with draft recording forms and

other documents to read (it's worth remembering that we are the pilot group and therefore the first to test these out).

On the following day we met in Dingwall, and then went in convoy to Drumore farm as arranged by John. In the morning, we examined a large and very mossy CMS in the garden of Drumore farm and Tertia talked us through the approach to cleaning the stone, and the content and logic of the draft recording form.

Tertia explaining recording methods at the smaller stone in the garden. Photo Alan Thompson

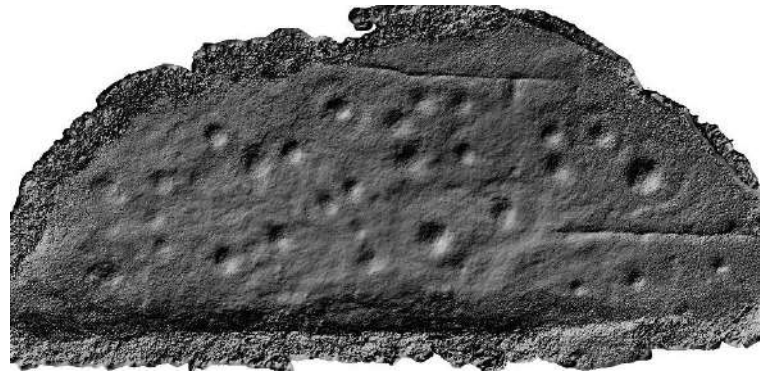


In the afternoon, we went up to an area where there are a number of CMS, we split into groups of about four, and each group had a go at cleaning, completing the form, photography, and taking pictures for photogrammetry. At the end of the afternoon we looked at each CMS in turn with the group which had been recording it.



CMS with coins marking cups – how many rings? Photo Anne Cockcroft

After returning home we processed the results using photostan.



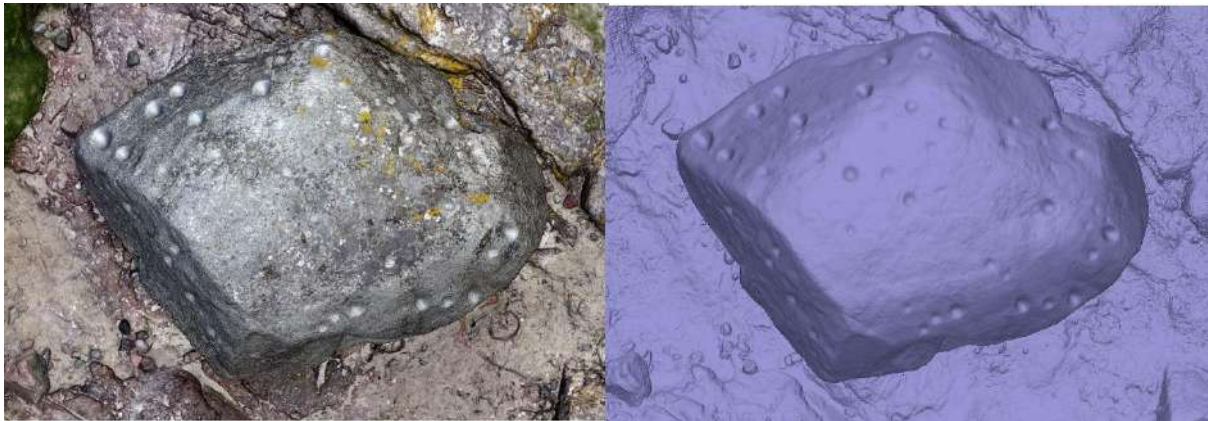
Processed results. Photogrammetry Alan Thompson

As a result, we have been able to give Tertia some substantial feedback about the forms, about the approach to photogrammetry, and processed examples for her to consider.

Visit to Tiree

In early June, a NOSAS group visited Tiree. The record (Canmore) shows a small number of CMS on the island, although the provenance of some is doubtful to say the least. Some of the group used the opportunity to visit the known sites, and to search for new panels, with interesting results.

The most famous CMS on Tiree is the Ringing Stone, a large erratic boulder on the beach which has cup marks on all sides.



[Ringing Stone from above. Photo and Photogrammetry Alan Thompson]

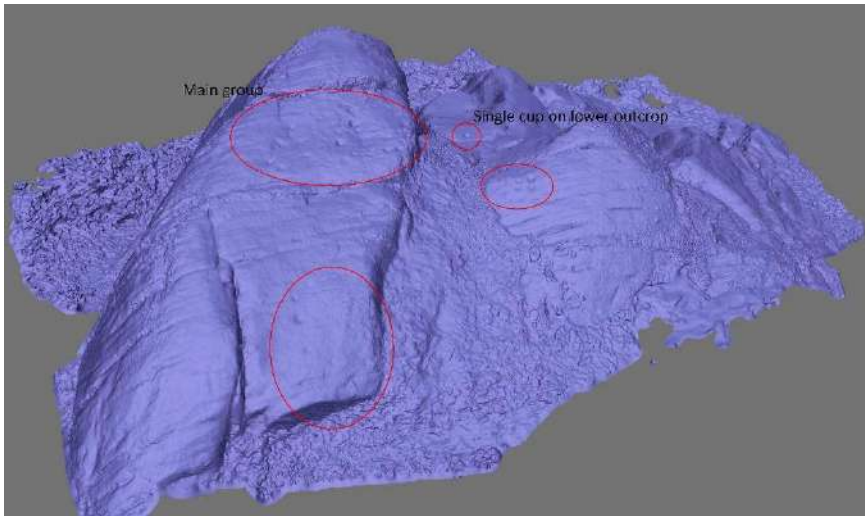
Most cups are easily visible in natural picture. Shaded model for comparison.

This is a unique stone and a challenge for recording! Unlike the Ringing Stone, the bedrock on Tíree is mostly Lewisian Gneiss, an old and very hard rock of variable composition, and not an obvious candidate for rock art. Despite that John Wombell discovered an unrecorded outcrop with many cup marks, some very faint.

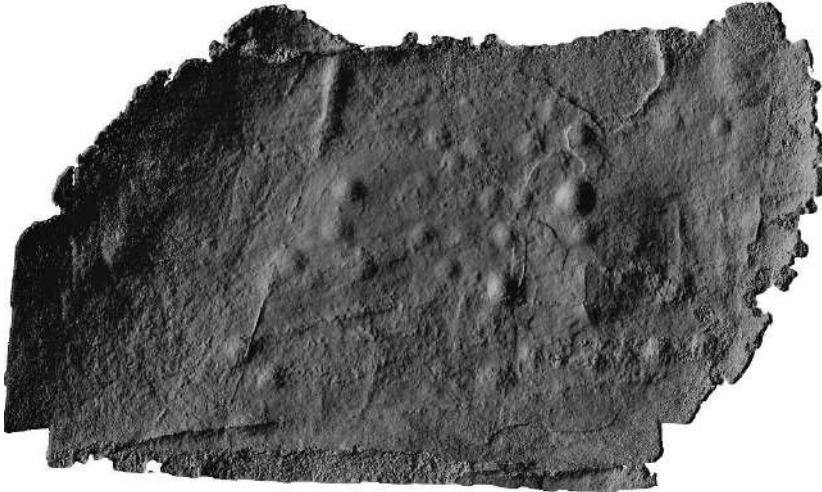
General view of the outcrop from above. Photogrammetry Alan Thompson



Same view processed to show cups.



The Tيرة experience also provided material to feed back to Tertia about how to search for unknown panels (and recorded ones, they not always easy to find), and some opinions on how best to use photogrammetry with larger outcrops.



***Detail of main panel,
shaded. Photogrammetry
Alan Thompson***

At end June

From May, Tertia has been joined by Joana Valdez-Tullett, Post-Doctoral Researcher Scotland's Rock Art Project. We have provided Tertia and Joana with feedback on the draft recording forms, on the guidance notes, and on the use of photogrammetry. They have drafted new and nearly final versions of these:

- ScRAP Recording Form
- Using the ScRAP Recording Form (guidance notes)
- Geology easy steps
- Photography
- Recognising Rock Art
- Preparing the Panel

- Photogrammetry

Tertia has recently placed the contact for the development of the ScRAP website and on-line forms. We have provided a small number of volunteers to work with her on testing the early versions. The App (for mobile use) will be developed later, but the forms will still be useable if preferred.

Tertia has purchased copies six of Agisoft Photoscan for use by NOSAS. These have been allocated to individuals who are now able to use them to experiment with photogrammetry.

I now have a set of equipment for RTI (Reflectance Transformation Imaging), and I am at the early stages of experimenting with it.

Next Steps

Summer and holidays are now on us and there will be something of a pause in the project during July and into August. That should not stop you looking for rock art, experimenting with photogrammetry etc, and if you want copies of any of the latest forms or notes please let me know.

Ideally, we need to get back out in the field and do some serious recording. Once we are fully up and running we expect to be recording in small groups of 2-4. After visiting Drumore however we have decided that we should first concentrate on that area so that we can go in a bigger group and then split up and work on nearby panels. This will help with learning as we can share experiences and problems and is a good way of involving more of the group who were not able to attend the first sessions. I will try to set that up as soon as John and I are both available at the same time.

If you have not so far been involved with the project and would like to be, please let me know.

Alan Thompson

A few disconnected thoughts after the NOSAS trip to Tiree June 2017

Intertidal track ways on the Caolas peninsular

One of the intertidal track ways at Poll a Chrosan, Caolas



This is the first time that I have been aware of such features anywhere in the highlands or on other Scottish islands. The Caolas track ways are all about 2m wide where stones have been shifted left and right through the intertidal boulder spreads and outcrops to avoid lengthy routes around the hags over the soft and fragile swards of the saltings on the high-water mark.

On the east side of Fadamull islet which is connected to the main island by a tombolo (a gravel bar covered at high tide) we found 7 cleared boat landing places most of which were connected to a naturally clear beach where boats could be pulled right up out of the water by a cleared track way that ran parallel to the shore. Otherwise the cleared landing places stopped short of the high tide mark – all rather strange as we don't know what they were for. There are more than a dozen short lengths of seaweed drying walls on the islet but only one possible burning pit. Our thinking meantime is that the cleared landings were used to beach heavily laden small boats stacked to the gunwales with seaweed after which they were unloaded into carts or panniers using the intertidal track way off the sterns of the



boats. Smart thinking as taking heavy wet seaweed off the sides of a small boat and staggering up a rocky beach with it would not have been very efficient. Whether this arrangement was purely associated with burning seaweed to produce kelp (soda ash) or for landing seaweed to be used as manure we don't know. A bit of both maybe? Possibly also associated with the time when the iodine factory was functioning and calling for large supplies of seaweed.

Cleared boat landing places Fadamull islet Caolas



Walls in the intertidal area Lon Fhadamuill, Caolas

Seaweed use as a manure was very important well into the 20th century for many coastal communities. Seaweed provides a readily available source of nitrogen and potassium i.e. it isn't locked up in an insoluble form, but there is next to no phosphorous in seaweed. Seaweed has no lasting manurial effect and must be applied annually. Animal dung is the best

natural source of phosphorous and either the arable land had to be rested and grazed on rotation or dung spread periodically on the land to maintain levels of phosphorous essential for plant growth. Continued cereal cropping using seaweed as the only manure soon results in falling yields.

At several locations around the island we found plenty of drying wall evidence but few or no burning pits nearby. Maybe all traces of the pits had been removed during subsequent land improvement or the seaweed was being taken to a central township location for burning? Other places had pits by the dozen.



<https://canmore.org.uk/collection/367287>

Kelp pit or kiln on Ceann a'Mhara, Tiree (Canmore)

Them holes, them holes



Drilled holes at Milton Harbour, Caolas

The discovery of seven higgledy pig holes drilled with much effort in rock now forming the access road to the quayside at Milton harbour on Caolas kept us amused for quite a while. 6 holes appear to be in pairs with one single. The top of the holes is chamfered and 50mm in diam, whilst the holes themselves are about 40mm diam which is about one and a half inches in imperial. The 1st and 2nd

editions of the OS maps show no harbour construction at Milton and no access track where it is today. There has also been considerable modern building up next to the holes. So, I am wondering whether the holes at one time held iron posts that acted in the same way as bollards for roping boats to? Oversized cleats so to speak. Boats of any size before the quay was built would have sat on the sandy bottom in the natural harbour secured by bow and stern ropes.

Drilled holes at Milton Harbour, Caolas – wider view



Transhumance (seasonal movement of animals and herders to grazing away from the winter towns)

On the main land, we have become familiar with the concept of day shielings, or springtime shielings, no great distance from the winter town, often within waving distance, and summer shielings that could be many miles – 15miles and more are well documented – away in the hills. Also, the concept of summer farms and potato shielings where seasonal cultivation took place within a secure enclosure such as is well illustrated on the Rhue peninsular near Arisaig. Transhumance on the smaller islands appears to have been very different. It was still essential to remove all livestock from the arable fields in the spring to allow cultivation, sowing and planting. So how was this organised on Tiree? This is neatly dealt with on Eigg where on the east side the broad terrace below the high basalt cliffs was



divided into shielings by walls. On the 3 low hills of Tiree with their multi period landscapes, shielings and summer farms appear to be the final phase of people staying on these hills, but it is probably more complicated than that! Transhumance continued on Lewis until the early 20th century. I wonder when it ceased on Tiree and summer grazing of the hills without constant herding took over

Possible shieling hut, Ceann a'Mhara, Tiree

Them geese, them geese.



A pink footed goose (RSPB)

I spoke to the farmer at Balephetrish where we spent 3 days on the most delightful croft camping site before the full team arrived. I was curious as to what he and other farmers had recently sown in newly cultivated fields around the island he told me that at Balephetrish they used to grow cereals and combine them, but they have not been able to do this for some time as just as crops were ripe and ready to combine that is when huge flocks of geese arrive and flatten everything. So, the cultivated fields have been re-seeded with new grass. It will establish this year and be cut for silage next year. Our team spotted several pairs of Pink Footed Geese waddling around with goslings behind them. By the very nature of evolution ever increasing numbers of geese are becoming lazy and choosing to stay on the islands and breed instead of going to Iceland or wherever they should be.

One must wonder what happened in the past before a certain conservation body bought up large tracts of Coll and established self-appointed control over what birds breed and when. What is more important, people and their livelihoods or wild geese? On the subject about geese and wild birds of eatable size generally, one wonders how important a part of the diet they were in the days when anything that moved was caught and killed for food by any means possible.

Oh no – not rock art!



Alan photographing the Ringing Stone

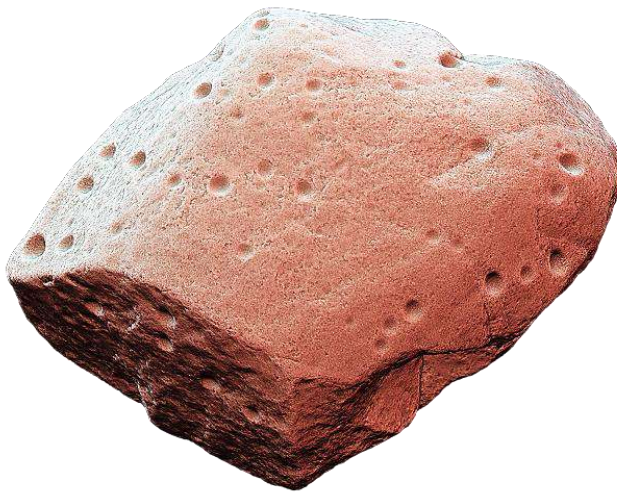
The abstract rock art of Western Atlantic Europe begs nothing but questions and Tíree is no exception. You think you might have found an answer to one question only to raise two new ones. Every square metre of cultivable land on Tíree appears to have been turned over and improved by stone clearance at some period in history, so most traces earlier settlers have been destroyed and erased from view. Then much of the land has been affected by sand blown in from the coast. Coastal remains lie under many meters of sand in places.

The local gneiss rock is exceptionally hard to work as Stevenson discovered when he built the Skerryvore lighthouse. Only the bottom 4 courses of the lighthouse are Tíree gneiss. After that he imported granite.

So, as we understand it for most building work on the island stone gathered as land clearance was used. There is very little or nothing visible of Mesolithic, Neolithic, and Bronze Age occupation on this island. The evidence of these periods comes from exposed scatters of lithics, pottery and fire cracked stones where wind erosion or other disturbance such as ditching has occurred. There are apparently no certain chambered cairns but there

are a few standing stones and stone circles. Standing stones are always dodgy to date as folk continue to erect them to this day. Despite the unusually high proportion of cultivable land on Tiree as Hebridean islands go, there are thousands of rock outcrops dotted about almost everywhere on the island. The carving of cups and other abstract motifs on rock in Britain is firmly rooted in the Neolithic period from about 3,750 BC onwards.

Tiree rock art is famous for the Ringing Stone, a large 6-sided granite erratic carried from Rhum by ice that sits today perched on the storm line at the seaward side of a small shallow tidal bay on the west side of the island about half way between Vault and Balephetrish. The boulder rings when struck with a small cobble and it is carved with about 50 cups of very variable size and shape on five of its six sides including the north facing side which is singularly unusual. Some cups on the sides of the rock are what I have described in the past as being like 'recessed shelves' in other words they are asymmetric and it would be possible to perch something small in the cup. There is nothing else quite like it in Britain. The small interpretation board near the site is very suggestive and quite funny if it wasn't sad in stating that the cups are imprints of breasts! We visited the Ringing Stone as a group the day that Roland guided us around the prime sites in the Vault.



Photogrammetry view of the Ringing Stone (James McComas). See also on Sketchfab.

Otherwise before our trip there were 14 more recorded rock art panels on Tiree. The earliest records began with Beveridge around 1900, then a Mr Mann in 1922 added the rest. Since then various researchers including William Morris in the 1970's and Van Hoek a decade or so later, plus surveyors from RCHAMS and the OS have tried to locate and verify Mann's sites mostly without success. Due to lack of time and us having so much fun doing other things we only gave one full day over to checking and prospecting rock art.

However, Jonie, Richard, Tri and myself went over to Tiree a few days before the rest of the team arrived, to chill out and to reccy for the week ahead. A chance encounter in the island Coop with a relative of Tri resulted in an invitation to their rented cottage, a renovated black house, for morning coffee. This cottage sits atop a prominent rocky knoll in the district of Kilmoluaig and it enjoys panoramic views of most of the southern part of the island. Before we left I went over the fence to take some photos of the black house with its outbuildings and decided on a whim to check the highest of the many smooth outcrops on the knoll no more than 40m from the house. To my pleasure and surprise, I discovered no less than 31 cups in 3 separate groups. Morning coffee quickly became lunch and we stayed on and undertook a preliminary recording. When we went back the following week to take photos for photogrammetry Anne found a cup on another outcrop some 50m away that looked out

over farmland towards Ben Hough and then we found two more groups of small cups on that same outcrop. So, unexpected and by pure chance we have put the next most substantial rock art site after the Ringing Stone on the Tíree map.

After visiting the standing stone and stone circles in the lee of Ben Hough on our last day we split into 4 groups to check out the remaining creditable sites that we so far hadn't visited and to go prospecting. On the day of first discovering the site at Kilmoluaig we realised that it commands 360 degree views of most of the island and we could see numerous other rocky knolls scattered around the island just begging for prospection. So, one team went to check the last two known and creditable rock art sites and to look at possible cups with John Holliday at a site he discovered about 10 years ago. Another team manfully set off to check as much of Ben Hough out as possible and the other two teams went prospecting. The result was several new panels either discovered or confirmed and expanded.

John Holliday's new site was on a knoll famed for being the site of a celebration bonfire when men returned at the end of WW1. The rock still bears the remains of tarry spreads and some fire cracking as it was mostly old Tíree felted house roofs that were burnt. Luckily no damage to any of the cups. We discovered a second new single cup on a separate close to that site and realised that the two panels there lined up with a standing stone some distance away and another prominent rocky knoll and a croft house that John Holliday said was the home of Tíree Glass and that we should take a run over there where we would be made welcome – and so we did.

At Tíree Glass we discovered yet 2 more small groups of cups on two separate knolls and one of them had been the site of another very big tarry fire. I prised a plug of tar out of the main cup. That rock had suffered very considerable fire cracking but again fortunately no damage to the cups. One couldn't invent all this if one tried and there is more for another time! Two of the other teams discovered substantial new groups of cups both being on prominent rocky knolls. Only the Ben Hough team drew a blank, but that this was a positive outcome as it proved a hunch to be wrong.

One conclusion that we came to is that the other 9 'Mr Mann 1922' sites previously not found again or dismissed as natural by previous researchers and surveyors need to be re-visited in the light of our experiences. Cup marks on Tíree gneiss are very difficult to spot due to the weathering characteristics of the gneiss. Old grid references and descriptions are also very vague.



Cup mark at Caolas on a panel to the south of Dun Mor A' Chaolais broch. This is typical of the style throughout the island – one principal cup with a small number of much smaller satellites.

What the size of the Neolithic population on Tiree was I don't think is known and we can know little of the natural resources available during that period. Was the environment stable? One blow out site in a vast area of otherwise stable dunes that John Holliday told us about yielded a lot more flint debitage and the odd tool plus coarse pottery and fire cracked stones. The old ground surface in that bow out was quite flat and level as compared to later short-lived ground surfaces higher up in the blown sand suggesting an extended period of stability. That old ground surface was about 200mm thick and below it the natural sand was stained red from the leaching out of iron from the vegetation and occupation activities on that surface.

We don't know whether the Neolithic occupation on Tiree was transitory or seasonal even, but they did have the time and purpose to mark their landscape with cups carved on rock.

We managed to update more than half of the Coastal Zone Assessment Survey sites for SCAPE on other days. We did not visit many of the chapel sites on this trip and we didn't do much in the interior other than visiting rock art sites.

In summary, we all had a memorable time on the island thanks in no small part to John Holliday giving us so much of his time and local knowledge. Thanks also to Roland for co leading the trip, and for arranging the most enjoyable meal on our last night – and much more.



Many of the NOSAS team with John Holliday at a newly recorded site.

John Wombell

THE ISLAND OF COLL

After the NOSAS trip to Tiree, Jonie and I stopped off at Coll for a few days on the way home.

When we arrived, it was wet. Very, very wet.

We established ourselves at the Garden House Campsite, clean facilities but basic, the only one on the island. The Garden is an 18th century walled garden built for the nearby “New” Breachacha Castle. Whilst tents can enjoy the shelter inside the walls, motorhomes must brave it on the outside due to the low archway which is the only entrance. When the wind abated sufficiently we could hear the corncrakes serenading us.



The following day it eventually cleared up sufficiently for a walk on the beach to view the two Breachacha castles, both of which have been restored and are private residences.

Next day we ventured to the far extreme of the island, Sorisdale in the north-east corner. The Coll roads make those on Tiree look like motorways. They are narrow, rough, steep, and twisty with tiny unsurfaced passing places. We bounced along at 20mph on the better sections but were restricted to 10-15mph quite a lot of the way and opportunities to park were strictly limited. We had read a notice at the campsite which said, “if visiting Sorisdale please park in the area behind the turning area which the crofter has kindly made available.” No chance. There was already a mini in it, filling it up. It was a struggle even to turn around and with no space available we were unable to stay.

Part way back we eventually found somewhere to park near Cornaig Beg and went to investigate Dun Morbhaidh on the north coast. The Dun is very dubious. It appears far too pointed on top for there ever to have been any habitation



and there is no evidence of any structure although allegedly there were some finds in anti-quarian times. Progress around the coast was challenging with difficult fences, steep rocks, and gullies.



We found a potential midden eroding at the coast edge and a row of boulders which could well have been a fish trap between the mainland and an unnamed intertidal island just east of Eilean Bhuigistile.

We continued east to a sand cliff at Sloc na Luinge, which SCAPE had asked us to check. It is eroding rapidly; a GPS check showed it had moved inland at least 30m compared with the high tide line on the OS map but there was no evidence of anthropological material of any description. We checked erosion faces in the dunes further inland but again there was nothing to see but sand.



Returning to the motorhome we drove to the cemetery where there was ample parking and explored a huge dune system. We found the Scape site Killunaig consisting of some embedded stones and a small mound but it appeared more stable than described in the record. The coast here is a sand cliff

but unlike the one we had just come from it does not appear to be eroding significantly.

Another day we headed back to the north coast but this time went to the Hebridean Centre at Ballyhaugh which appears to be some sort of community conference centre. Not open to the public anyway. We parked in their private carpark, there being no alternative.



I climbed to the Rocking Stone, prominently in view on the skyline. I failed to find a path and it was quite a scramble but well worth it. It is an erratic, like Tiree's ringing stone but with no cups and no music. It is however a spectacular position and is chocked well clear of the ground on

three small stones. If it does rock it must need someone stronger than me!

On our last day, we stayed at the west end of the island and walked to Port an t-Saoir where we investigated the dune system, again lots of exposed sand but nothing anthropological. Then we found a cave with two huge chock stones bridging a gully, before heading

over Ben Feall to Bheinn Bheag hill fort in a westerly gale with squally showers. It was wild and chilly but we were rewarded with some slight evidence of structure on top, all grass covered with no exposed stone.





We were glad to drop down to sea level at the beautiful Traigh Feall, then after a rest and a coffee we headed across to the mirror-image beach of Traigh Chrossapol where we viewed a standing stone and a mausoleum.

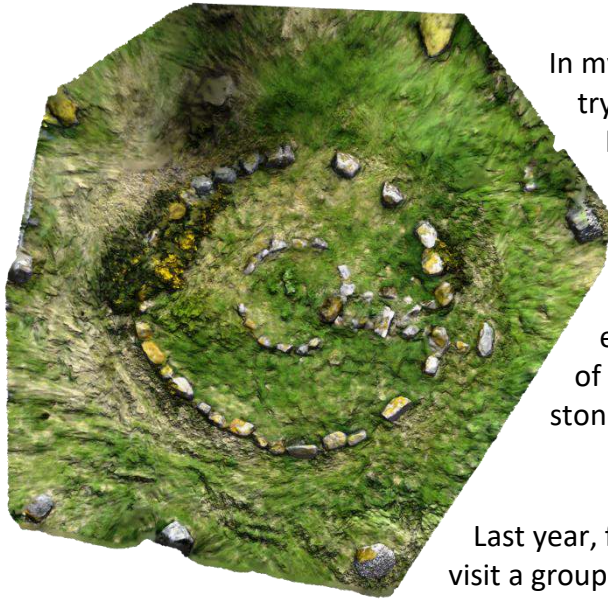
Coll was quite an experience. The infrastructure is poorer than Tiree, the shop is a joke, the landscape rugged and barren with only a fraction of the Machair. There wasn't a spotty rock to be seen anywhere and the archaeology in general was rather sparse. We were told that in Victorian times the ministers positively encouraged children and others to tear down evidence of paganism and this continued to within living memory so it is possible that a great deal has been destroyed in the name of Christianity (who needs the Taliban?) If we ever go back it certainly won't be with the motorhome because parking and indeed just driving was so difficult and the wind precluded much use of the bikes. We enjoyed it despite all that.



Richard and Jonie Guest

Chambered Cairns, Photogrammetry, and the Pole Cam

Below: Photogrammetry view of Cairn Irenan chambered cairn



In my limited experience, I have found that trying to create 3D photogrammetry models of larger features like barrows, cairns and hut circles is not easy with a hand-held camera at ground level. You really need some height to achieve images that the software can easily combine. This seems especially true if the subject consists largely of grassy banks rather than lots of nice clean stone with definite edges.

Torboll in

Photoscan utterly failed to synthesise them into a useable model. I later heard that Anna Welti had had similar experiences trying to create models of hut circles in Wester Ross.

Fast forward a few months and at Buntait, Glen Urquhart I was ready to try an experiment. I borrowed my son's fishing rod and none too professionally lashed my camera to it to achieve some extra height. The subject in question was a barrow and this time at least some of the resulting photos could be combined to make a model. However, the process was decidedly hit and miss as I had to guess what view the camera was taking a metre or so above my head. Also, it was laborious in the extreme, as for each photo I had to bring the camera back down, set the self-timer manually, and then hoist it back up before the shutter clicked. This wouldn't be so bad for taking a couple of pictures, but for dozens it is a real pain!

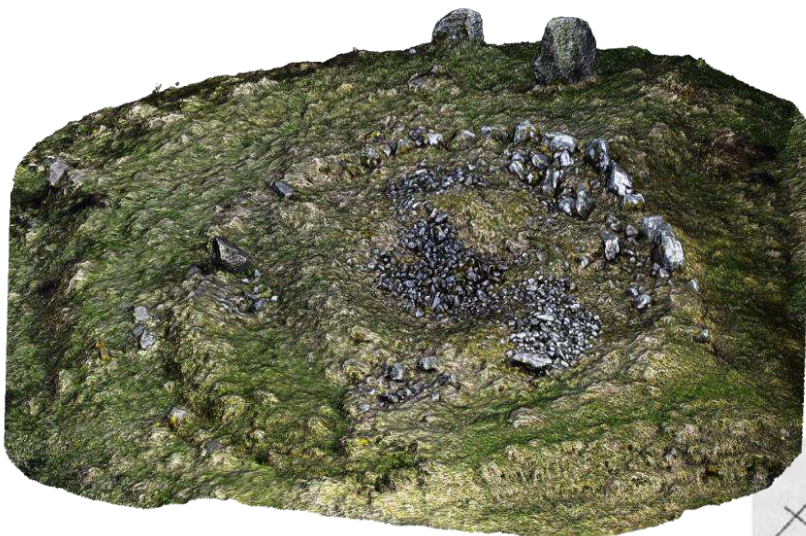
A few days later I returned to Buntait with Alan Thompson and Anne Cockroft. Alan has been my mentor where photogrammetry is concerned and I probably would not be doing it at all if it wasn't for him. As well as flying his drone over the wider landscape at Buntait, Alan was also trying out his newly acquired "polecam" set up (see pic). This consists of a 5-metre



telescopic painter's pole with a special attachment allowing you to connect the screw fitting to a standard camera mount. Crucially the camera has a remote activation facility so that it can be connected wirelessly to a smart phone. Whilst the camera is in the air you can see the camera's view on the phone screen and activate the shutter.

I was an instant convert. The system was superior to my long winded, ad hoc, hit and miss fishing rod method. All the pictures taken on Alan's camera aligned on Photoscan without any problem. It wasn't long before I had acquired my own polecam setup which works on much the same basis Alan's, albeit with a different camera and wireless adaptor (I won't bore you with the technical particulars here, but if anyone is really interested they can ask me).

So, to try out the new toy! My first idea was Carn Daley, an extremely denuded Clava type chambered cairn near Drumnadrochit. Some may remember visiting this on the Garbeg winter walk a few years back. In its pomp, it may have resembled Corrimony a few miles up the glen - you can see Alan's polecam model of Corrimony [here](#). After some initial technical hitches with the wireless connection all went well and I was reasonably pleased with the resulting model. I think you can see vestiges of the original form more easily here than you can on the ground. The full 3D model can be viewed on Sketchfab - <https://sketchfab.com/models/e029d99db1f6430caba21946b397756f>



Two photogrammetry views of Carn Daley. The second has an overlay of the plan from "Chambered Cairns of the Central Highlands" by Henshall and Ritchie.



Next, I decided to revisit a couple of cairns near Kilcoy on the Black Isle. Kilcoy South is one of the group of 5 that includes Carn Glas. It is of Orkney-Cromarty type and memorably has

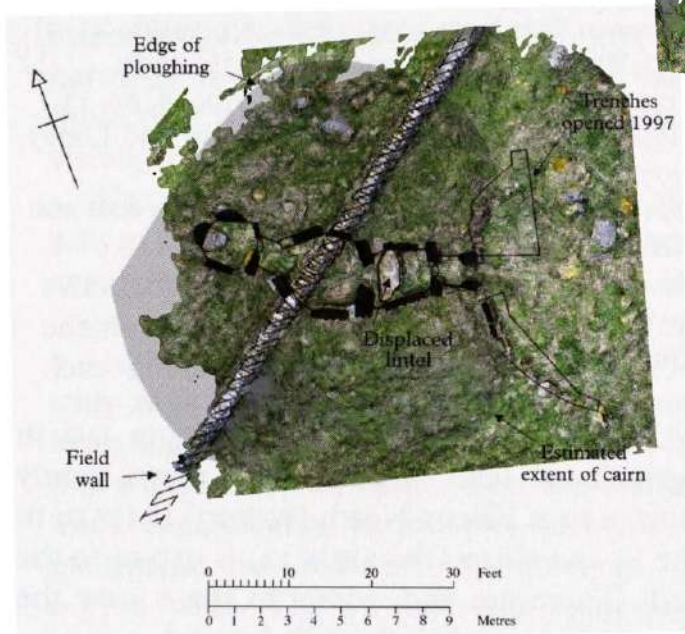
a fairly modern dyke running through the centre of it. Like Carn Glas it was excavated by Woodham in the 50s.

Again, you can view the 3D model on Sketchfab at

<https://sketchfab.com/models/ceb8503973f74bb8800e255e46e05955>.



Photogrammetry -3 views of Kilcoy South. The last again has an overlay of the Henshall and Ritchie plan.



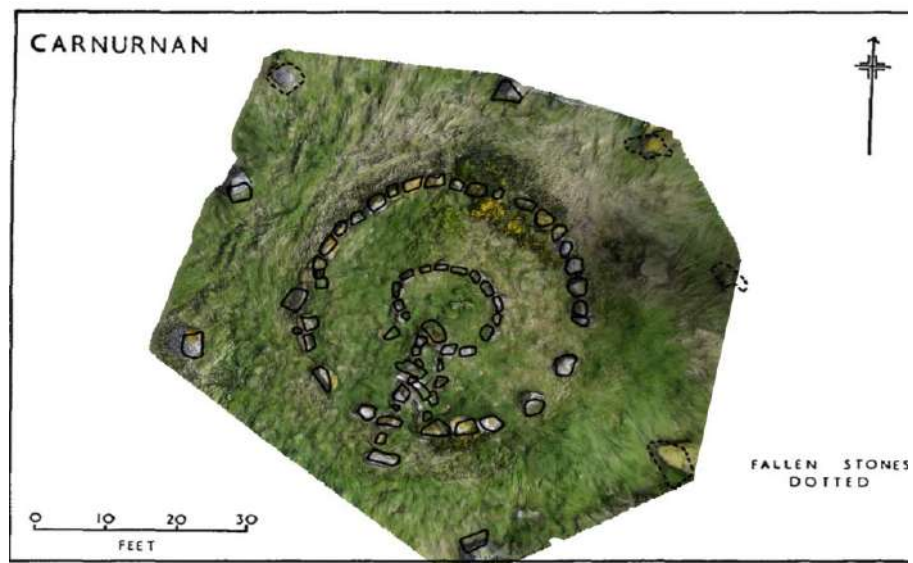
The variously spelt Cairn Irenan (Carn Urnan etc) is the remains of a rather nice Clava type cairn not far from the Kilcoy group. It is basically in the back garden of a currently uninhabited house and is rather unhelpfully surrounded by tall trees on one side and a construction fence on the other. Using the full height of the 5-metre pole just about all the

photographs taken aligned perfectly, however the real problems started with the processing. Editing out the trees and construction fence, which in many cases “hugged” the outer standing stones, was a time-consuming challenge. The resulting model looks a little blurry where trees have been removed and it still shows some vestiges of the fence. You will also notice some prominent whins in full bloom!

Sketchfab 3D Model: <https://sketchfab.com/models/e029d99db1f6430caba21946b397756f>



Photogrammetry views of Cairn Irenan. The second is overlaid with Woodham's plan from the 1950s.



James McComas

AND LASTLY from the visit to Tiree, a family connection.

THE ISLAND OF TIREE.

Memories of a Lighthouse Keeper's Daughter, Mabel Campbell.



It was in the summer of 1943, while stationed at Kinnaird Head Lighthouse, Fraserburgh that my father, James Campbell received a letter from the Northern Lighthouse Board, informing him of his promotion to Principal Keeper at **Skerryvore Lighthouse, Tiree**

Skerryvore was a 'Rock' Station and lies **12 miles off the coast of Tiree**. At a 'Rock' Station it was only the keepers who lived there and the families were homed at some suitable location. At this time, in 1943, the families were based on the island of Earraid along with the 4 families of the Dhub Artach Lighthouse Keepers. Later in the 1950's the families were relocated to Oban.

At Skerryvore and Dhub Artach there were 4 keepers, a Principal and 3 assistants. A keeper would serve 2 months on the Rock and then have 1 month ashore. Not everyone would be suited to this way of life and isolation.

The Lighthouse Board had 4 Tender Vessels which were necessary for servicing the many outlandish lighthouses around the coast and in particular the 'Rock' Stations such as Skerryvore and Dhub Artach. Two ships were based at Granton, one at Stromness, Orkney and one in Oban. When my father was at Skerryvore the Tender Vessel was the 'Hesperus'. Once every month the 'Reliefs' were carried out, the keepers exchanged and the Rock Station supplied with fuel and supplies. In the winter months it was quite common, due to bad weather, for the 'Reliefs' to be overdue by days and sometimes weeks. Should this happen the Relief was abandoned until the following month! In later years a helicopter would be used to transfer Keepers to and from Rock Stations.

Apart from the light keeping duties most Keepers had their particular hobby. Woodwork, metalwork, painting and putting ships in bottles were some of the hobbies enjoyed. The Keepers had access to a well-stocked workshop which every Station had, as the Keepers were expected to deal with and repair any problem that arose. My father took great pride in making woollen rugs and they adorned our home for many years.

The Lighthouse Board supplied all Stations with reading material. Boxes of books would be distributed and exchanged around the Lighthouse Stations every few months. The women also received 'The Home Notes', a suitable magazine at that time.



Who is this baby being held by James Campbell at Arnish Lighthouse, Stornoway?

The answer later.

The island of Earraid lies off Mull, overlooking Iona. On a still Sunday morning, the bells of Iona Abbey could be heard ringing. As a 10-year-old child, at that time, I have very fond and happy memories of the time I spent there. The houses for the 8 families formed a small street, at the end of which was the house that contained our Schoolroom. The Lighthouse Board employed a teacher to look after our education. Whilst I was there the teacher was Mrs MacDonald, who crossed over to Earraid every day from her husband's farm. Mrs MacDonald was kind but strict and ran a well-disciplined class which aged from 5-12 years old.

In the same house as our Schoolroom there was also the Radio Room. Twice every day at 9am and 6pm one of the Keepers on shore leave would speak to 6 Stations to pass on any information and to learn that all was well. The 6 Lighthouses were - Skerryvore, Dhub Artach, Hyskeir, Lismore, Barra Head and Ushenish. At Earraid we also had the luxury of a telephone, with the number Fionnphort 2.

Opposite each house on the Street was a large walled garden for growing fruit and vegetables. There was also a henhouse as most Keepers kept hens. It was also at the foot of the garden that the Elsan Toilet was situated. No mod cons in those days!

Earraid had several lovely sandy beaches where during the summer months, as children, we spent many happy hours. A raft would be made using driftwood found on the beach. Using one of these rafts I remember teaching myself to swim. After many hours and days spent on the beach we all became 'experts' and would attempt to swim over to Mull at low tide.

Picnics would be organised by some of the wives and the venue was always David Balfour's Bay. It was a lovely, sandy beach on the opposite side of the island, facing the Torran Rocks. It was called after the main character in R. L. Stevenson's book 'Kidnapped' as Earraid is the island that the fictional character finds himself on after being shipwrecked. There always seemed to be an abundance of food, as no doubt the wives wished to show off their baking skills!

On a few occasions, my father along with the Keeper from Dhub Artach would decide to go fishing. They would bait a line of about 50-60 hooks using shellfish, which they would lay

and leave overnight in the Sound of Iona. Sometimes, I would be allowed to go with them and sometimes I would be allowed to row the boat, which I really enjoyed. Then came the excitement when the lines were hauled up to reveal the catch of various types of fish. These were distributed amongst the 8 houses and made a welcome change of food.

After only 2 years on Skerryvore, my father received a letter from The Northern Lighthouse Board telling him that he was being transferred to Stroma. This was an Island Station lying off John O'Groats in the Pentland Firth. I was sorry to be leaving Earraid, but wondered what lay ahead at Stroma.



My Mum next to the teacher on the right on Earraid.

Anji Hancock, yes, it is me as a baby earlier in the photo with my grandfather James Campbell.

Editor Jonie Guest

Contributions for NOSAS newsletter should be sent by email to jonie.guest@gmail.com