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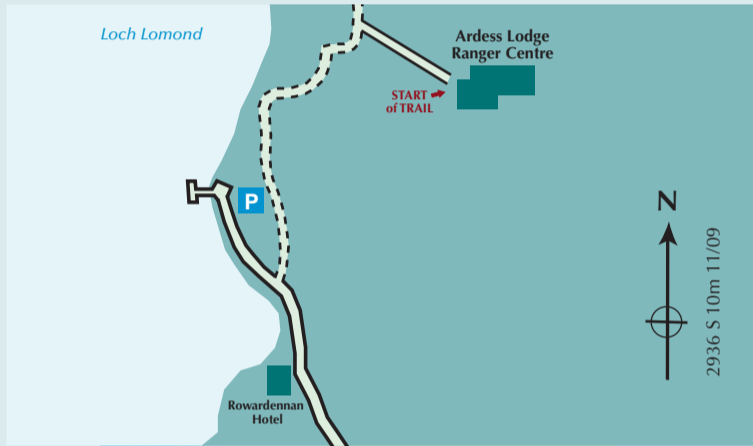
The National Trust for Scotland works to conserve and present our nation's heritage. We are a charity and rely upon the support of our members and visitors. Please join us today by filling in the membership leaflet.

The NTS Ranger Service at Ben Lomond carefully manages the cultural and natural heritage of this important property. If you have any questions or comments please call into the Ranger Centre or contact us at:

NTS Ben Lomond Ranger Service, Ardes Lodge, Rowardennan, By Drymen, G63 0AR  
Tel: 0844 493 2217  
Email: benlomond@nts.org.uk

For more information on archaeology at NTS sites, visit [www.nts.org.uk](http://www.nts.org.uk)

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*In the heather, amongst the bracken and under the oaks, the archaeology of Ardes is waiting to be explored...*

## Human impact

At first glance, Ben Lomond appears a wild untouched place. But for hundreds of years people have worked this land and altered it in the process.

As you walk the trail, you will find many bracken-covered mounds of stone. In fact these are the ruins of houses, farm buildings and field-walls.

They are reminders of an active community of farming families living by the banks of Loch Lomond several hundred years ago.

About 250 years ago, the system of farming began to be replaced with large-scale sheep grazing. Later, the Rowardennan area became popular with rich gentry for game shooting. With no role for small-scale farming, many families moved away to the cities or emigrated from Scotland. By the early 1800s most of the houses on the trail were abandoned. The people who once lived here spoke Gaelic. Ardes is Gaelic for the high (ard) waterfall (eas), referring to the prominent waterfall on the slopes above. Many other local names have since been lost or forgotten. Very few archaeological studies have been carried out into settlements of this period. Only recently has this neglected area of Scotland's heritage become the subject of extensive examination.

## A forgotten past



Uncovering the remains of two houses (site 11).



Excavating the outlines of a turf building (site 9).



One of the finds from site 9 - a handle for an iron grille.

Miles of stone and turf dykes marked property boundaries and prevented animals from grazing on the crops. 'Rig and furrow' was the common form of cultivation from the 16th century to the 19th century. The rigs were long built-up lines of earth, cattle-dung and organic materials, which provided a fertile strip for growing crops such as oats and barley. The furrows were dips that helped drainage. In order to ensure a fair division of arable land, each year tenants drew lots to decide which rigs they would cultivate.

## In the fields

Most of the sites on the trail were built two to four hundred years ago. During this time the area would have been more heavily populated than today. The local inhabitants grew crops and grazed cattle, goats and sheep. In the summer months, families took their animals up to higher pastures and lived in shielings (small seasonal stone and turf buildings). Here they tended the animals and prepared dairy products. With the approach of autumn, the families left the shielings to prepare for the harvest and the annual cattle markets in Falkirk and Stirling. Rob Roy MacGregor owned land around Ardes from 1711 to 1713. The property was confiscated when he was declared bankrupt and branded an outlaw.

## A busy community



Houses at Ardes were once similar to these reconstructions at the Highland Folk Museum, Newtomore.



Artist's impression of 18th century life at Ardes (site 11).

Any number of surprises could lie beneath your feet! Archaeological excavation has revealed a small part of the story. The rest has to be pieced together through written records and work carried out elsewhere.

- 1 In the 19th century, Victorian gentry came hunting at Ardess. The stone kennels at the foot of the slope, and the hunting lodge by the loch (now the Youth Hostel) both date from this period.
- 2 Beside the small burn at the foot of the slope, you can see the stone base of a building, thought to be a house or mill last in use 250 years ago.



Stone remains under the trees at site 2.

It is well placed for getting water, but the midges must have been irritating neighbours!

- 3,4 If you look closely, you can see the faint, undulating lines of rig and furrow (see "In the fields" description over page). This pre-dates the present Oak woodland.
- 5 You are now moving up to the hillside grazing areas. This turf and stone 'head dyke' marked where cultivation ended and livestock grazing began.

- 6 Iron was once smelted at a furnace on this hillock, the site of which may be marked by the stones here. Bog iron (an orangey silty substance) was collected from wet ground, while nearby hillside woodlands, now gone, provided the vast amounts of charcoal needed for fuel.

Once smelted (separated by intense heat) the iron was either shaped here or taken to a blacksmith to make tools and weapons. The ground here is much greener as turf has grown over piles of "slag", the waste product from the smelting process, which you are now standing on!

40m further on are the stone footings of a building; perhaps it was connected with the iron smelting work?

- 7 The oak woodland was planted in the late 18th century. The timber and bark served several purposes, from use in industrial leather-making to building material and fuel. The traces of buildings and agriculture suggest that several families may have been displaced when the woods were planted.

Native tree species such as holly, hazel and rowan are making a comeback because the Trust has erected fences to protect them from grazing sheep and wild deer.

- 8 It is not clear what this stone bank is for. It is possibly to create a working platform linked either with a house site or charcoal production.

*We hope that you enjoyed this trail and will keep your eyes open elsewhere for more of Scotland's hidden history.*

- 9 The outlines of a turf building can be seen here. It may have been lived in for a short time by people working in the woods.



Excavation revealed the entrance, a lot of 19th century pottery and a handle for an iron girdle for cooking over an open fire.

Left: Pieces of clay tobacco pipe were found. This piece shows a picture of a steam train probably Stevenson's Rocket of 1829.

- 10 This large stone-walled house is marked on a map from 1866 and named *Tigh an Eas* (House by the Water). Excavation showed it has a door facing north and a well cobbled floor at the west end. Finds include: window glass, iron nails, pottery, bottles, and shirt buttons. This house was probably home to the shepherd who used the large sheepfold uphill to the north.
- 11 Here among the oak trees you can see the remains of two houses. These both had large boulders as foundations but probably had turf walls. Excavation revealed some bottle glass. Given this lack of finds and the method of construction, these buildings may date from the 18th century.
- 12 You are now standing next to the remains of a long building, most likely separated into living quarters and animal byre. The nearby burn and access to water may account for the cluster of buildings in this area.

