



Cataloguing St Kilda's past in pictures

As the St Kilda Archaeologist I spend nearly 6 months of the year based on Hirta, the main island of the St Kilda archipelago. Over the winter months I'm kept busy with St Kilda-related work, with reports to write and the website to maintain, and also various annual 'projects'. Recently I spent some weeks cataloguing some of the images held in the NTS Central Office Photographic Library. This turned out to contain over 700 prints and glass plates (this year I may get round to the slides).

These images contain a vast amount of evidence and information about all aspects of St Kilda life, from the 1880s until the 1970s. I was particularly interested in the buildings and the information we could gain about construction date, repair history, decoration, etc. So in summer 2004 I took over 50 images to St Kilda with me and with the help of the Work Parties set about identifying exactly where the photographs were taken from.

Already some fascinating details and information about the buildings has emerged; one of the cleits – stone-built stores scattered all over the island – appears to have been used as a blackhouse around the turn of the last century, while at least four of the houses were rendered and whitewashed.

The information we gain from taking this detailed look at past images helps us see more clearly the rate and processes of decay, as well as helping us make informed choices about our repair and maintenance programme.

Susan Bain
NTS St Kilda Archaeologist



Pastures old for Susan

The news that Susan Bain (far right in the photo) has left her post as St Kilda Archaeologist is not as bad as it may seem, as Susan has just been promoted to become the Trust's Western Isles Area Manager.

Susan's level-headed commitment to the islands and to the Trust has been invaluable in the 4 years she has been working on Hirta. The considerable experience she has gained here, and as Mar Lodge Estate Archaeologist before that, will stand her in good stead as her responsibilities increase to include the Trust's islands of Mingulay, Berneray and Pabbay, not to mention the Trust's ruined blackhouse at Callanish.

A new St Kilda Archaeologist has just been appointed, to carry on the important work of conserving the archaeology and built environment of this world-class cultural landscape.



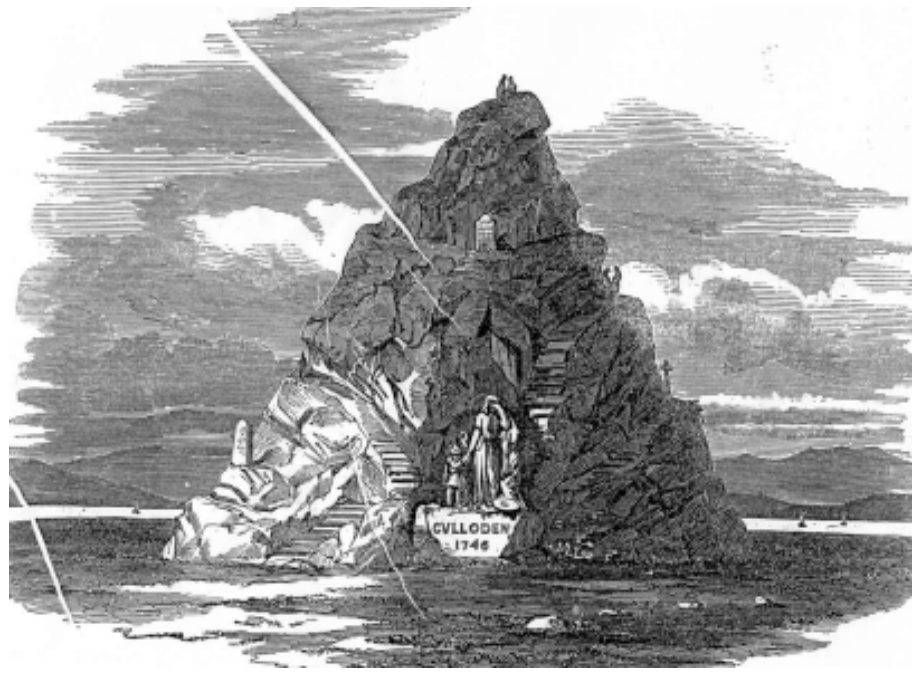
Culloden – memorials in times past

The Culloden Battlefield Memorial Project was launched at the beginning of 2004, with the aim of re-invigorating visitors' experiences at the site of this, the last battle fought on British soil on 16th April 1746. The new visitor centre with new interpretation on the battlefield will open in 2007 – Highland Year of Culture.

Archaeologically this is an extremely exciting project – and not just for the further information that we will be able to glean for the day of the battle itself. There are linked projects to elucidate the history of Leanach Cottage, the associated enclosed fields and nearby farmstead at Parks, as well as the subsequent history of the battlefield itself.

Working with Elspeth Masson, a volunteer in Inverness, and helped by property staff both present and past, we are uncovering the fascinating story of the 19th-century memorialisation of the site.

Few realise that it was in 1846, during the events to mark the centenary of the battle, that a decision was made to enclose the area containing the mounds of the graves of the clans with a dyke and construct a memorial on the site. Money was raised, an architect appointed (Thomas Mackenzie of Elgin)



Artist's impression of the design for the Culloden Memorial begun in 1849. For an idea of the proposed scale, note the size of the figures on the top and half way up.

and, in 1849, there was a grand ceremony to mark the laying of the foundation stone for the monument. A time-capsule was buried under the first stone, watched by a crowd of at least 2,500 individuals, and celebrated by 'the firing of guns, the strains of music and the partaking of refreshments'.

The monument reached some 4m in height before the funds ran out and,

although the then Forbes of Culloden spoke in 1858 of completing the memorial by altering the base so it could take an obelisk, it was not until 1881 that the present monumental cairn was constructed. Presumably the earlier time-capsule still survives at its base?

Jill Harden

NTS Highlands & Islands Archaeologist

Brodick Castle Limekiln

Excavation work has been completed on a limekiln in the grounds of Brodick Castle. The structure had been identified during a Thistle Camp in 2003 and volunteers recently returned to finish the work. Unlike most well-known limekilns, this site is not a large stone-built, buttressed draw-kiln, with a central circular bowl: it is a 'clamp' kiln.

Clamp kilns are usually simple U-shaped depressions cut back into a hillside or bank. They were filled with layers of limestone and coal, and fired in a single episode. The Brodick example is 6m long by 2.7m wide at the top, and over 1m deep. Unusually, however, it is lined with stone and the excavations revealed the remains of a central stone-built flue, to channel airflow and raise the temperature. The high temperatures achieved in the Brodick kiln were clearly evident in the burnt, shattered and even melted rocks of the kiln lining. In addition, much of the soil surrounding the kiln had been burnt (oxidised) to a deep orange colour. A thick layer of pure

lime covered the base of the kiln.

Because of their simple structural form, clamp kilns are often considered to be early in date, with draw kilns only appearing in the mid-18th century during the agricultural improvements. However, the stonework and flue at the Brodick example suggest that it might be later in date, and the recovery of mid-19th-century artefacts within the kiln appear to support this. It is even possible that the kiln was constructed to provide lime for building works at the castle, perhaps during the major extension design by Gillespie-Graham and built in 1844.

Very few clamp kilns have been subject to archaeological excavation in Scotland and so the Brodick example is an important addition to our knowledge. However, its unusual construction can be compared to another recently excavated example also on Arran, at Shiskine, and may represent a regional type.

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