



A Glimpse of Canna's Past

Canna has the most amazing archaeological landscape, with sites still visible from the Neolithic period, some 5000 years ago, through to the present day. But it has been, and continues to be, damaged by burrowing animals – especially rabbits – and the spread of bracken.

A five-year programme of low-level research began in 2004 to assess what survives on a variety of these sites. So far, the 18th-century settlement at Greod and a shieling site above the old township at Coroghan have been partially excavated by volunteers participating in two Archaeology Thistle Camps.

The rabbit burrows at Greod had gone along the edges and through the cores of the walls of the buildings. Inside, there was no evidence of any floors surviving, although various pieces of pottery, iron and shell were recovered. Why there should be no floor deposits is unclear – were they cleared out to manure the adjacent rigs? Or had the area been infested with bracken at some time in the past?

The shieling site above Coroghan had certainly suffered from the effects of bracken – still visible across the area. No archaeological layers survived at all, although there was clearly a sequence of stone-based shelters that had been built



Thistle Camp volunteers revealing a rabbit-damaged site.

at the mound we investigated. In addition, rabbits had also burrowed through the core of these walls and seriously undermined the stability of the different structures there. So there is no positive spin to be put on the on-going damage that is affecting the archaeological sites of this NTS property.

However, developing a knowledge of what has actually happened to this aspect of the heritage of the property is

crucially important. It will inform our future approaches to management there. In addition, everyone involved has learnt something of the skills associated with archaeological surveying, excavating and recording. And we have all had a brilliant time, with good food, great company and stunning surroundings.

Jill Harden
NTS Archaeologist H&I

Discoveries at Sailor's Walk

Historic building recording at the Trust's former Regional Office at Sailor's Walk, Kirkcaldy, has led to the discovery of fragments of 400-year-old painted walling in the attic.

Although obscured by centuries of dust and grime, enough can be seen to know that the 'grotesque doodles' are similar to painted patterns at 1st floor level.

Despite being heavily restored in the 1930s and (by the NTS) in the 1950s, many original fragments still survive of this late 16th-century building. A careful analysis of the roof indicates that much of the timberwork is old, and some is original, and the recording work has revealed many clues about the development of the building and its extension in the 17th and 18th centuries.

Further recording of the roof will be accompanied by external excavation during the current major works. The removal of plasterboard from areas that have been sealed for more than half a century may well lead to further discoveries.



Sailor's Walk. One of several historically important buildings on Kirkcaldy High Street.

Crarae and Killevin Church, Crarae

Crarae Gardens is best known for its fantastic display of rhododendrons, but few people realise that it has also been a centre of worship for over 5000 years.

In the centre of the lower garden there is a Neolithic chambered tomb, and only 120m away is a Bronze Age round cairn. In addition to these prehistoric remains, the visitor centre at Crarae sits beside the local graveyard. An 8th–9th-century AD carved cross-shaft used to be located within the graveyard, and a low rectangular mound probably marks the site of the early church of Killevin, which was the original parish church for Kilmichael Glassary.

Prior to the proposed construction of new facilities for the garden staff, to the north of the graveyard, CFA Archaeology undertook an archaeological evaluation on behalf of the Trust. Trial trenching

located a series of broad and shallow ditches probably marking the northern boundary of the church site. Midden or rubbish material was found in a few sample areas of the ditch, including animal bone and deposits of sea shells. In addition over 70 sherds of glazed and un-glazed medieval pottery were recovered from the ditch fills.

An area of heavy boulder paving was found just within the area enclosed by the ditches, and this could be the remains of a medieval structure or yard associated with the church.

Further excavation will be needed to fully understand what is clearly a significant medieval site, and the Trust is now rethinking its plans for the development in order to try to minimise disturbance.

*Derek Alexander
NTS Archaeologist West*



Area of medieval stone paving, with church wall in the background.

Valuing Highland Landscapes — Ben Lawers to Loch Lomond

The Highland Landscape Values Project is a study investigating peoples' perceptions of Highland landscapes and how these are affected by a knowledge of landscape history.

This is important because the Scottish Highlands are not the unchanging wilderness which they are often portrayed to be in popular culture. Instead this is a landscape of change and conflict: between tourism, farming, developments, forestry, and conservation. There is never a 'right' answer to these management debates, and as such there is a need for new ways of examining public attitudes to landscapes. The HLV Project is one of the first pieces of research to treat the natural and cultural elements of landscape as a single entity. Previous studies have focussed on examining individuals' perceptions of either 'wild land' or built structures rather than considering the landscape in its entirety.

How a person thinks about landscape is constantly changing. It can be affected by a multitude of influences ranging from long-term personal factors (such as a person's family relationships, place of residence and employment) to 'happen on the day' events, such as meeting a bull in a field or getting rained on all



day! It is therefore important to examine the reasons behind individuals' perceptions, to determine how deeply rooted these different landscape values are.

A series of exercises were devised to examine peoples' perceptions of landscape and the reasons behind them; these were piloted last summer in Lochtayside in conjunction with the final field season of the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project (BLHLP). NTS Thistle Camp volunteers and local school children participated in field research, exploring, commenting on and photographing the landscape features of Kiltyrie in central Lochtayside.

Individuals' responses to the landscape were linked to answers they had given to questions about their backgrounds. It was found that key influences on perception include a person's: age; place of residence; academic knowledge; reason for being in Lochtayside; and previous experiences in the area. Almost

all of the participants highly valued the area's history and were interested to find out more about it, suggesting that the BLHLP has been highly effective in heightening awareness and promoting interest in archaeology and the history of the landscape.

The fieldwork undertaken last summer is only one part of the project, which is just

as well as it has prompted more questions than it has answered! Further analysis of data is required, including the investigation of key trends in perception which have emerged. Conclusions will be tested by further research in Lochtayside and the comparative study area of Lochlomondside.

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The HLV Project is a partnership between the University of Aberdeen and the NTS, funded by the Economic and Social Research Council and Loch Lomond and the Trossachs National Park.

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