

INCHMARNOCK

- Fig. 1. 1, 2, 4. Neolithic Axeheads, Porcellanite.
 3. Fragment Neolithic Axehead, Basalt.
 5. Flint artefact. Irish type flint.
- Fig. 2. 6. Part of Pitchstone artefact.
 7. Flint scraper.
- Fig. 2. 1. Medieval green cup.
 2. Lignite disc.
 3. Part of lignite armlet.
 4. Sherd of cup. Iron Age ware.

References:

- Hewison J. King (1895) *Bute in the Olden Times* Vol I pg 134 Vol II pg 182 Blackwood Edinburgh and London 1895.
- Marshall D. N. (1963) *Trans Bute Nat. Hist. Soc.* Vol XV pg 5-10 1963.

BRONZE AGE CAIRN, LITTLE KILMORY, BUTE 59. 045500

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My attention was drawn to the site in 1977 by Mr Dan Boag of North Park, Inchmarnock, who had uncovered the edge of a metre long stone while ploughing. Investigation showed that it was a kerb stone of a cairn about 10 m in diameter. This stone had been pushed outward by the pressure of the cairn material and also perhaps by the cultivation of the field. The field has been tilled for generations so it is little wonder that the cairn has been almost completely ploughed out and was undetected until the edge of the kerb stone was uncovered. In the adjoining field to the S, three B.A. cists were found in 1933. The cists, sunk in the ground, contained the remains of three children aged 6, 11 and 13. A food vessel had been placed beside the eldest child (*Trans B.N.H.S.* Vol XI 73-79).

Mr Livingstone of Little Kilmory farm readily gave permission for the excavation of the site. This was carried out in 1978 and 79 by members of the Buteshire Natural History Society with the help of members of the Cowal and Cumbernauld Archaeological Societies under the direction of the writer. As the field is regularly cropped a complete excavation of the site was not possible but enough was done to establish the nature of the cairn.

The cairn lies some 250 metres from the shore in a field that slopes gently down to the sea with some outcrops of schist ridging the slope. A raised beach, showing on the ground as a shallow ridge stretches slightly inland beyond Kilmory cottage about 1.5 km. The shingle of this raised beach is unusual as the stones are angular and ice shattered not water rolled. Julian Hill, geologist and W.E.A. organiser, who examined the deposit, thought it would have come from some material laid down in the ice age but moulded into the form of a raised beach by the action of the sea. As kerb stone 3 was found to be set in earth and shingle and as earth lay to the S of it, it seems that the cairn was set against the end of this shallow ridge.

Method of Excavation

Five kerb stones were uncovered to the S set edge to edge in a curve making about 1/5 of the estimated circumference of the cairn. A line of fairly large stones (35-40 cm) continued the curve of the edge of the cairn on the seaward side for 1 m. To the landward side the remains of a rotten schist kerb stone (50 cm) and the edge of the cairn material continued the line of the edge a further 4.5 m. Thus about one-third of the perimeter is defined.

Four cuts were made through the estimated edge of the cairn but neither kerb nor cairn material were uncovered; shingle lay just under the shallow soil. A vague line of stones in cut A may indicate where the edge had been. The same type of line was uncovered in cut B taken to the S of the estimated edge which may suggest that the cairn was oval rather than round. A cut 2.5 x 2.5 m, was made in the estimated centre. In the landward side of this cut there was evidence of recent disturbance, pieces of wood, iron and modern china with darkened soil. Under the soil was shingle with hardly any earth among the stones. If there had been a burial in the centre all trace of it had been removed. To the W of this central trench a small stone (30 x 35 cm) was uncovered, set upright, and lying WSW x ENE. Cairn material was to the S of it, on the other side was darker soil with smaller stones laid flat, under the shingle.

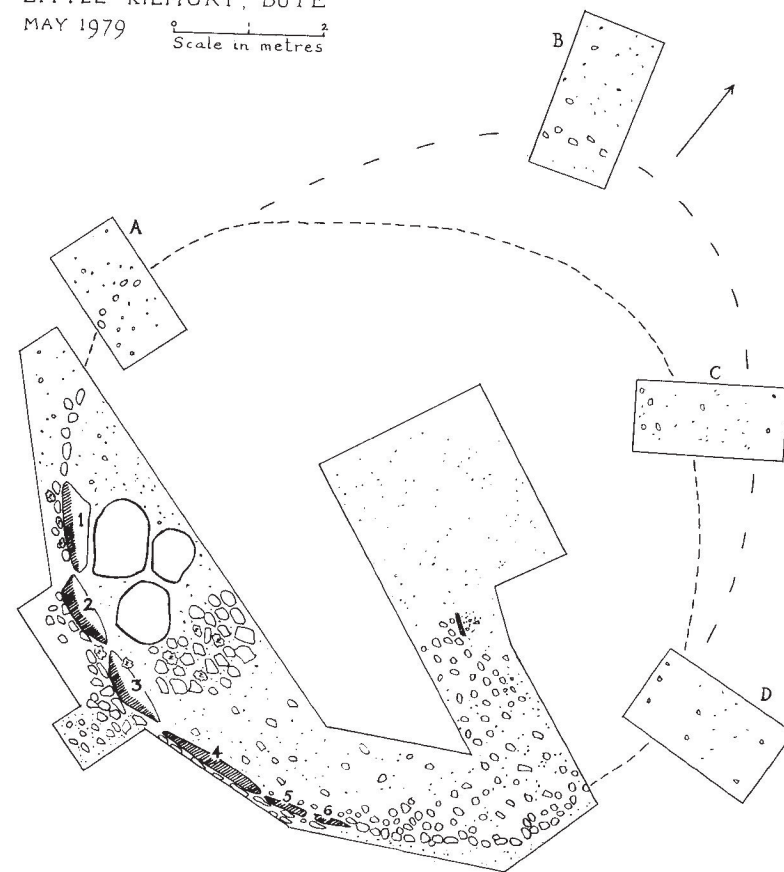
The Kerb

Kerb stones 1, 2, 3, and 4 are massive slabs of schist. Such stones could have been fairly easily obtained from the outcrops of schist near by. Stone 1 was packed on the outside by stones (35-40 cm) half of them quartz. Stone 2, 95 cm deep, its base set in earth and shingle was packed with earth and large stones on the outer side. The stone now lies at an angle of 60 degrees. Earth lay nearly 1 metre deep beyond the packing. Stone 3 was very firmly packed with large stones, this stretched 50 cm, the packing continued another 50 cm but the stones were smaller and there was more earth. Stone 4 seemed to be standing more upright than the other stones so far described. It too was packed on the outside but, as this setting of stones ran into the baulk, the extent of the packing was not established. Stone 5, 80 cm long, smaller

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MAY 1979

Scale in metres



than the other kerb stones and thinner was also packed on the outside. The next stone was smaller still (50 cm) but as the stone was rotten and very friable it was not possible to define it exactly.

The line of the kerb continued to be defined for a further 2 metres by the edge of the cairn material. There were no socket holes from which kerb stones could have been pulled nor any sign of packing stones. The ground had been ploughed over constantly for so many years that such signs may well have been obliterated.

The Cairn Material

Inside kerb stones 1 and 2 three massive stones were uncovered. It is unlikely that they were in their original position. Two of these stones would have been suitable for use as kerb stones. The third one seemed too thick and blocklike to have made a suitable edging stone. When they were lifted it was found that they did not lie on cairn material but on earth with a scatter of small stones. This layer was at a slightly lower level than the cairn material inside stones 2 and 3. This cairn material was well laid with little earth between the stones, which seemed to have been chosen for their flatness. Quartz was also used. The cairn material uncovered to the landward side differed markedly, being made up of smaller, water-rolled stones. A few quartz stones were found in the vicinity of the small upright stone. The cairn material faded out 1.80 m from the estimated centre and was not picked up in any of the cuts made round the perimeter of the cairn.

Discussion

The excavation established that there had been a cairn with a kerb set against the edge of a deposit of raised beach material. As the kerb stones were firmly packed almost to their tops on the outside it seems unlikely that the cairn ever stood with the kerb upstanding. No trace of a kerb was found apart from the six stones set edge to edge to the S. Perhaps the difficulty of building a kerb in shingle and the shape of the raised beach deposit made the builders change their plan. The actual build of the cairn differed from the S to the E side. Constant ploughing had removed all trace of cairn material from the centre of the monument. The present land surface at the centre of the cairn is 1 m above the top of stone 2 to the

S but the slope to the N is barely perceptible. No trace of a burial cist or burial deposit was found in the central area. The small stone set upright, off centre, may possibly be all that was left of a small cist. The other stones perhaps stood higher and so may have obstructed the plough. The difference between the material on either side of this stone, cairn material on one side, darker soil, small flat stones above the shingle on the other and the small quartz stones found near it might serve as pointers to this idea.

The site was back-filled and cultivated after the excavation in May 1979.

As well as six known sites of cist burials there are several cairns on Bute assigned to the Bronze Age. Rullecheddan has been completely removed. At the two small low cairns on the Kerrytonlia foreshore no kerbs were found when Professor Bryce investigated them in 1903. He also examined the cairns on the Kerrycrusach moor, at Scalpsie Bay and Watch Hill, Ardrosdale but while he found a cist in the one at Scalpsie he did not report finding a kerb at any of these sites. In 1979 a small flint arrowhead, Neolithic in character, was picked up from a rabbit scrape at the Watch Hill cairn. No kerb was found at the very much ruined cairn at Glen Callum Bay (Marshall 1969). The large round cairn at the N end of Inchmarnock has not been excavated.

While Little Kilmory seems to be the only example of a possible cairn-with-a-kerb on Bute a variety of types of kerbs round cairns have been recognised in Argyll and are discussed in *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* 1974-5. Little Kilmory seems to have no close parallel among them.

I would like to thank Mrs S. Gell, Cambridge, who prepared the Little Kilmory plan for publication and drew the finds from Inchmarnock.

References

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 Lynch F. and Ritchie J. G. N. 1974-5. Small Cairns in Argyll. Some recent work. *Proc. Soc. Ant. Scot.* Vol 106 1974-5 30-33.
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AERIAL RECONNAISSANCE IN BUTE 1977

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The summer of 1977 was remarkable, in climatic terms, for the prolonged drought which affected the whole of western Scotland. In early May, however, conditions had seemed far from promising, with most soils at saturation point and only the south-eastern parts of the country showing signs of drying out. Yet, by the beginning of June the weather pattern had reversed, and, while Soil Moisture Deficit figures on the east coast were struggling to rise above the 50 mm level, readings on the Outer Isles had soared above 90 mm. Eventually the east began to catch up, but S.M.D. figures throughout the west remained around 100 mm until the end of August. Not surprisingly, flying conditions during this period were equally good, and the clear skies allied with a stable weather pattern invited the aerial photographer to conduct a wider-ranging survey than has normally been practicable in recent Scottish summers.

The need to obtain aerial photographs of certain monuments in Islay and Jura for the relevant volume of the Royal Commission's *Inventory of Argyll* luckily coincided with this promising spell. Accordingly, on July 7 a Cessna 182 took off from Edinburgh Airport on a reconnaissance sortie which was designed to follow a roughly triangular course taking in the Kilmartin area of Mid Argyll and the Kintyre peninsula, as well as the islands of Islay and Jura. Conditions were almost perfect, with no more than $\frac{1}{8}$ cumulus cloud at 7,000 ft, unlimited visibility and wind speed at ground level less than 5 kts. The crew comprised Allan Brember, pilot, and, for the Commission, John Keggie, who took the photographs, together with Geoffrey Stell and the author, acting as observers.

When the survey of monuments in Islay and Jura was complete, the aircraft flew on to Campbeltown, but despite the extremely dry conditions no significant cropmarks could be seen. At this point, with four hours' flying elapsed, the decision was taken to follow the east coast of the peninsula northwards, rather than return home by the direct route. At