

<b>CONTENTS</b>	<b>PAGE No.</b>
Figure 1: Site Location Map	2
Introduction	3
Background information on the Isle of Gigha	3
Figure 2: Site plan showing trench locations	6
Report on the Archaeological Evaluation	7
Conclusion	9
Figure 3: Photograph of the house plot, Trench 1, prior to excavations	10
Figure 4: Photograph of house plot, Trench 1, on completion of excavations	10
Figure 5: Photograph of Trench 2 on completion of excavations	11
Figure 6: Photograph of Trench 3 on completion of excavations	11
Discovery and Excavation in Scotland entry	12
Acknowledgements	13
Bibliography	13
Photograph Lists	13
Contents and Location of the Archive	14
Report Distribution	14
Contact Addresses	15



## ***Introduction***

An archaeological evaluation was carried out in advance of submission of an application for planning permission for the development of a single dwelling house at Ardailly, Isle of Gigha ( NGR: NR 6429 5068). The archaeological evaluation was carried out by Fiona Baker of Firat Archaeological Services on 3 November 2004 on a dry and sunny day.

The archaeological policy of the West of Scotland Archaeology Service, who advise Argyll and Bute Council on archaeological matters, and Historic Scotland is that all excavation and ground disturbance on the Isle of Gigha requires an archaeological response. The reason for this blanket archaeological requirement for the island is due to the range and density of archaeological sites known on the island, its geographic location and suitability of the island for settlement. It is very likely that there are as many buried archaeological remains on the island as there are visible archaeological sites. Indeed it is likely that more archaeological sites are buried and invisible from the surface than have so far been identified on the island

## ***The Isle of Gigha***

The Isle of Gigha is a low lying and fertile island measuring 6 miles long north-south (NNE-SSW) and about 1 mile wide with the highest point, Creag Bhan (white or sacred rock) rising to 100m. It is located three miles off the west coast of Kintyre and it is in a key position on the coastal route down Kintyre and it lies between Kintyre and Islay, seat of the Lords of the Isles. Gigha is generally taken to mean God's Island or Isle of the Gods or, less often, as Good Island. The difference in meaning between God's Isle and Isle of Gods is considerable and there is archaeological evidence to support both interpretation. Folklore and pagan beliefs are well documented for the Isle of Gigha and a great many of the prehistoric sites are imbued with legend, folklore and traditional pagan Celtic customs, notably those which were adopted into the early Celtic church. Early Christian sites also indicate the importance of the island in the Christianisation of the Atlantic Sea Province in the 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> centuries and Irish connections are attested in both archaeological remains and folklore. The population of Gigha has decreased steadily from 514 inhabitants on Gigha and Cara, the island off the south end, in 1755 to about 140 inhabitants today.

The island has a long spinal ridge of outcrops of epidiorite with basalt inclusions and there is quartzite and grit in the south and east of the island. Some of the best examples of glacial rock in Scotland are to be found on Creag Bhan, the summit of which appears to have not been covered with ice during the Ice Age. The island is fertile and has particularly fine dairy pasture over about one quarter of its area. There is a story that the potatoes grown on Gigha were of such excellent quality that Irish potato farmers used to buy them to place on the top of their own potatoes at the market. The two largest lochs, Mill Loch and Upper Loch, are both thought to be artificial lochs and the small islands in Upper Loch may be crannogs. There are a number of caves around the coastline of the island.

There are some 200 recorded archaeological sites on Gigha including Bronze Age burial cairns and cists, standing stones such as the famous Bodach and Cailleach at Achamore and cup marked stones. There are at least ten, possibly as many as thirteen

duns or fort sites, most of which probably date to the 'Dark Ages' of the first millennium AD. Early Christian cross sites such as Kilchattan (cross missing since the 19<sup>th</sup> century), Ruidh'a a' Chaibeal and the altar like Holy Stone indicate Gigha was amongst the first Christian communities of Scotland. The remains of a 13<sup>th</sup> century chapel at Kilchattan to the south of Ardminish, the main settlement, is dedicated to a 6<sup>th</sup> century Irish missionary St Catan. The octagonal stone font from the old chapel is now in the new church at Ardminish. A former minister on the island, Rev. Dr Kenneth Macleod, (born 1872) wrote the famous song *The Road to the Isles* amongst other songs and he is commemorated in a stained glass window in the church at Ardminish. A standing stone carved with ogham script along its NW edge is located close to the ruins of the old chapel. Translation of Ogham is still being researched and refined but it appears the inscription, which is in Irish type ogham, contains the 'maq' (son) element suggesting the inscription is a commemoration of 'x son of y' and one suggestion has been 'the son of Coiceile'. There are also a number of medieval graveslabs in the old kirkyard, some of which date back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century and which largely commemorate the MacNeills. The remains of a 15<sup>th</sup> century chapel are present at Findluga on the small island Isle of Cara off the south coast of Gigha. There are also abundant traces of medieval and post-medieval settlement, agriculture and fishing.

One of the first historical events recorded for the Isle of Gigha dates to 1263 when King Haakon of Norway anchored his fleet of over 100 ships in the Givalum Sound at the SE corner of the island before the battle of Largs. While King Haakon was on Gigha he received the allegiance of Murdoch and Angus of Kintyre, the Lairds of Gigha. King Haakon also anchored his fleet at Givalum Sound after his defeat at Largs by King Alexander before returning to Norway.

In 1309 King Robert the Bruce granted the 'Island of Gug' to the Earl of Mar. In 1335 Edward Balliol formally granted Gigha to John, Lord of the Isles and Chief of the MacDonalds and this grant was confirmed by Edward III when he occupied Scotland in 1336 and again in 1343 by King David II when the Scottish kings had regained their position. The island remained in the hands of the MacDonald Lords of the Isles until 1449 when Alexander, Earl of Ross and Lord of the Isles died having granted part of the island to Torquil MacNeill of Taynish and 'two merklands' to the monks of Paisley. In 1493 the whole island became the possession of the MacNeills of Taynish. In 1530 the island was plundered by the pirate Allan McLean (Allan-na-Sop) who killed Neil MacNeill of Taynish and a large number of the inhabitants. However, James V again conferred the title to Gigha on the murdered MacNeill's son, also called Neil, and elevated Gigha to a Barony. Just a few years later in 1542 eleven gentlemen of Gigha were slain by unknown assailants and the title deeds were 'lost' before they reappeared in MacDonald (Clan Ranald) hands in 1554. The following year, 1555, Neil MacNeill was restored as Lord of Gigha by Mary Queen of Scots but he then sold the island to the MacDonalds of Islay. The MacDonalds then sold Gigha to Sir John Campbell of Calder but it was repurchased by McNeill of Taynish in 1590 for 3000 merks (£170 sterling).

The island then belonged to the MacNeills of Taynish until the later 18<sup>th</sup> century. In 1689 William of Orange had landed on Gigha on his way to Ireland and he was supported by MacNeill of Gigha. The MacNeills also remained loyal to the Crown during the 1745 Rising, which was not surprising as the Duke of Argyll was MacNeill's overlord. In 1779 MacNeill of Taynish sold his part of the island to John

MacNeil of Colonsay who became the first resident owner and the rest of the island was owned by another family member of the MacNeills of Tainish.

In 1865 the island was sold to J Williams Scarlett of Thryberg in Yorkshire for the sum of £49,000. This was the first time the entire island had been under single ownership and it remained in the Scarlett family until 1919 when it was sold to Major John Allen. Allen sold the island to RJA Hamer in 1939 and his son-in-law, Somerset de Chair, sold it to Sir James Horlick, who created the famous gardens at Achamore, in 1944. The Horlick family, (as in the drink Horlicks) owned the island until 1973 when it was sold to David W Landale. The Horlick Family made considerable efforts to improve the island and stop depopulation and they modernised all of the farms and increased dairy production up to 250,000 gallons of milk a year. Landale sold the island, including all of the islands main businesses and a fish farm, to the English property developer Malcolm Potier's company Tanap Investments for £5.4 million in 1989. In 1992 it was attached by Interallianz Bank of Zurich and it was then bought by David Holt of Holt Leisure Parks (owners of Inverkip Marina) for over £2m. On 15 March 2002 the island was bought by the inhabitants for the sum of £4,000,025 who now own and manage the islands resources as the Isle of Gigha Heritage Trust.

*Figure 2*  
*Site plan showing trenches*

## ***Report on the Archaeological Evaluation***

Ardailly Croft covers several acres of land and is located on the W coast of the island with good views to Jura and Islay. The owners of the croft considered several plots for the site of the new house before deciding on the house location in an area where there was less chance of disturbing buried archaeological remains. Unfortunately there was not time during the one day evaluation to undertake a walk over survey of the rest of the croft but it was apparent that archaeological remains are present on the croft.

The British Geological Survey map indicates the underlying geology at the development site is Epidiorite, hornblende-schist and allied types with outcrops of basalt, dolerite, camptonite and allied types.

The house plot is located in a field to the east of the ruined croft cottage. The field is under grass pasture and traces of runrig are present in this field although it is much denuded and only visible in places. The furrows are spaced 3.5m apart and it appears as though these furrows are more likely to be drainage ditches rather than furrows of lazy beds or runrig. It was apparent from the ground surface that the field had not been ploughed for some years. The field containing the new house site is entered by the main track at its E corner and the track, which is slightly raised above the field surface curves around the field and leads to the croft house site and a burn runs along the S and W sides of the track. On the S side of the burn, approximately 50m S of the field gate, and across the track, a linear alignment of boulders was observed but there was not enough time to investigate this feature, which may be a wall.

A prominent knoll in the field was given a visual inspection and determined to be a natural bedrock outcrop.

The house plot is located in the NW corner of the field and is c. 2m lower than the level of the track that runs down to the field gate in the NE corner of the field and which runs alongside the bottom edge of the steep 20m contour, which may be a raised beach. The 20m contour is a cliff and opposite the track it appears as though the cliff face may have been quarried out but it was too overgrown to be certain without closer investigation. The field slopes away to the SW and on the W side of the fence lies unimproved ground overgrown with bracken, brambles and Juncus grass. A dry stone wall runs along the line of the E boundary fence c. 2m E of the fence line. A major drain runs along the W side of the E fence and a modern concrete manhole with the junction of three drains is exposed to the E of the excavation area. Several small depressions were visible across the surface of the field and these may represent ploughed out boulders. Field clearance stones were present in places along the E boundary.

The building plot measured 15m x 9m and is aligned NNE-SSW at 20°. The site slopes very gently from E to W. The topsoil was stripped by a machine fitted with a toothless ditching bucket. The topsoil was homogeneous medium brown slightly clayey loam – clay 50%, silt 25%, sand 25% and was quite gritty in texture. The topsoil contained occasional inclusions of small angular and rounded pebbles and two pottery sherds of late 19<sup>th</sup> century plain white earthenware were recovered. The topsoil was 0.50m deep. It had obviously not been ploughed for many years and perhaps never by a mechanical plough. Neither the landowner or his 70 year old aunt

or either of the machine operators, who are both local farmers, could remember this field ever having been ploughed.

The topsoil lay directly on the natural subsoil, which was stony sand and silty sand. The subsoil was quite mixed and ranged from medium brown gritty silt with pockets of pale grey-brown and pale orange-brown sand with occasional patches of oxidised black peagrit and gravel. The subsoil contained frequent inclusions of water rounded pebbles of 0.03m x 0.03m x 0.02m on average and less frequent cobbles of up to 0.07m x 0.07m x 0.05m on average. Occasional boulders measuring up to 0.40m x 0.30m x 0.30m were also present. Towards the NE corner of the trench a major basalt bedrock strike was present running E-W. This could also be traced on the ground surface to the E of the excavation area. Schist bedrock outcrops were present elsewhere in the trench but the basalt strike was most prominent. Fractured angular basalt stones measuring from 0.08m x 0.08m x 0.04m up to 0.50m x 0.40m x 0.20m were prevalent in the NE corner of the trench. Due to the stony natural horizon and bedrock outcrops it was impossible to get a clean surface at the subsoil interface. The stony subsoil and protruding boulders and bedrock also indicated that this field had never been intensively ploughed or deep ploughed.

The house plot is well drained as it is on a gentle slope but it is also exposed to the S, W and NW winds, which would have made it unattractive for earlier settlement. Only the 20m contour along the E side of the access track provides shelter to the plot.

In addition to the main house plot, two further trenches were excavated along the line of the proposed access track. Trench 2, measuring 11m x 1.60m and up to 0.65m deep was excavated c. 2m E of the SE corner of the house plot and sloped from E to W from the fence line to the trench corner. Topsoil up to 0.40m deep was present throughout the trench. A silted up drainage ditch at least 1m wide and colonised by flag iris and *Juncus* grass was present at the fence line and bedrock outcrops were present on the slope. Boggy ground and black peat (clayey silt) up to 0.25m deep was present at the bottom of the slope and overlay natural pale orange grey brown sand and gravel with frequent inclusions of small stones. Two terracotta pipe drains of early 20<sup>th</sup> century date running N-S were present in the peat subsoil. The peat was clean and did not have any organic inclusions and was formed by poor drainage and standing water at the bottom of the natural E to W slope. No peat deposits or drains were present in the main excavation area.

A third trench, Trench 3, was excavated on the E side of the field enclosure fence and drystone wall. This trench measured c. 3m x 1m and was excavated to a depth of c. 1m. Due to the steep drop of c. 2m – 3m from the track and fading light this trench was not recorded in detail but it was obvious that no archaeological remains were present. This trench flooded immediately on excavation. The topsoil overlay a stony layer of boulders which in turn overlay pale grey-buff sand.

## ***Conclusion***

No archaeological remains were present on the house plot and the only man made features encountered were two earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century terracotta pipe drains and a silted up drainage ditch.

The site is exposed to the prevailing winds and would not have been an ideal location for prehistoric or later settlement.

Traces of ridge and furrow agriculture is present in the field but no evidence of ridge and furrow could be determined in the main excavation area where the topsoil was remarkably homogenous and had obviously not been intensively cultivated or ploughed for perhaps a century and it had never been deep ploughed. The furrows noted intermittently across the rest of the field are perhaps more likely to be shallow drainage ditches rather than evidence of lazy beds or runrig.

**Figure 2: Photograph of the house plot, Trench 1, prior to excavations. View to the east.**

**Figure 3: Photograph of house plot, Trench 1, on completion of excavations. View to the south.**

**Figure 5: Photograph  
of Trench 2 on completion  
of excavations. View to E.**

**Figure 6: Photograph of  
Trench 3 on completion  
of excavations. View to  
SW.**

*Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*

**LOCAL AUTHORITY:** Argyll and Bute  
**PROJECT TITLE:** Ardailly Croft, Gigha  
**PARISH:** Gigha and Cara  
**NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:** Fiona Baker  
**NAME OF ORGANISATION:** Firat Archaeological Services  
**TYPE OF PROJECT:** Watching Brief  
**NMRS NOs:** none  
**SITE / MONUMENT TYPE:** greenfield, single house development  
**SIGNIFICANT FINDS:** none  
**NGR:** NR 6429 5068  
**START DATE:** 3 November 2004      **END DATE:** 3 November 2004  
**PREVIOUS WORK:** none  
**PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:** none

**MAIN DESCRIPTION:**

An archaeological watching brief was undertaken of the topsoil strip over an area of 135 square metres in advance of an application of a planning permission for a single house development. Two smaller trenches measuring 11m x 1.60m and 3m x 1m were also excavated over the proposed access track. No archaeological remains were present and two terracotta drains of early 20<sup>th</sup> century date and a silted up drainage ditch were the only archaeological features encountered.

**PROJECT CODE:** ACG04

**SPONSOR:** Mr Lachlan Wotherspoon

**ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:** Hillcroft, Station Road, Rhu, G84 8LW, Argyll

**ARCHIVE LOCATION:** With Firat Archaeological Services and to be deposited in the NMRS. Report lodged with WoSAS.

## ***Acknowledgements***

The watching brief and reporting was undertaken by Fiona Baker, Director, Firat Archaeological Services. The requirements of the archaeological work were specified and monitored by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service represented by Stuart Jeffrey. The project was funded by Mr Lachlan Wotherspoon and the machine excavation was carried out by Ian Wilson and Mark Rennie.

## ***Bibliography***

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1:625,000, 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition 1979.

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Harlequin Press, Oban.

Ordnance Survey        2001 Kintyre North, Map Series: Explorer 357, 1:25,000

## ***Photograph Lists***

### **Colour Print Roll 1 (APS)**

<i>Number</i>	<i>Direction (To)</i>	<i>Description</i>
13	N	Plot prior to excavation
14	W	Plot prior to excavation
15	E	Plot prior to excavation
16	W	Plot viewed from road
17	NE	Plot viewed from natural knoll in field
18	W	Trench 1 excavations in progress
19	N	Trench 1 excavations in progress
20	SW	Trench 1 excavations in progress
21+22	N	Trench 1 excavations as completed
23,24+25	S	Trench 1 excavations as completed
26-28	E	Trench 2 on line of proposed driveway
29	W	W section of Trench 2 showing buried peat
30+31	SW	Trench 3 on line of proposed driveway
32+33	W	Excavations as completed

### ***Contents and Location of the Archive***

The project archive contains the following items:

- One bound copy of this report
- One digital copy of this report
- Field notes and sketches
- Photographs as listed

The archive is currently held by Firat Archaeological Services and will be deposited in the National Monuments Record of Scotland in due course.

### ***Report Distribution***

Five copies of this report have been produced and distributed to:

- Mr L Wotherspoon
- West of Scotland Archaeology Service (2 copies and digital copy)
- National Monuments Record of Scotland (including digital copy and project archive)
- Firat Archaeological Services

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