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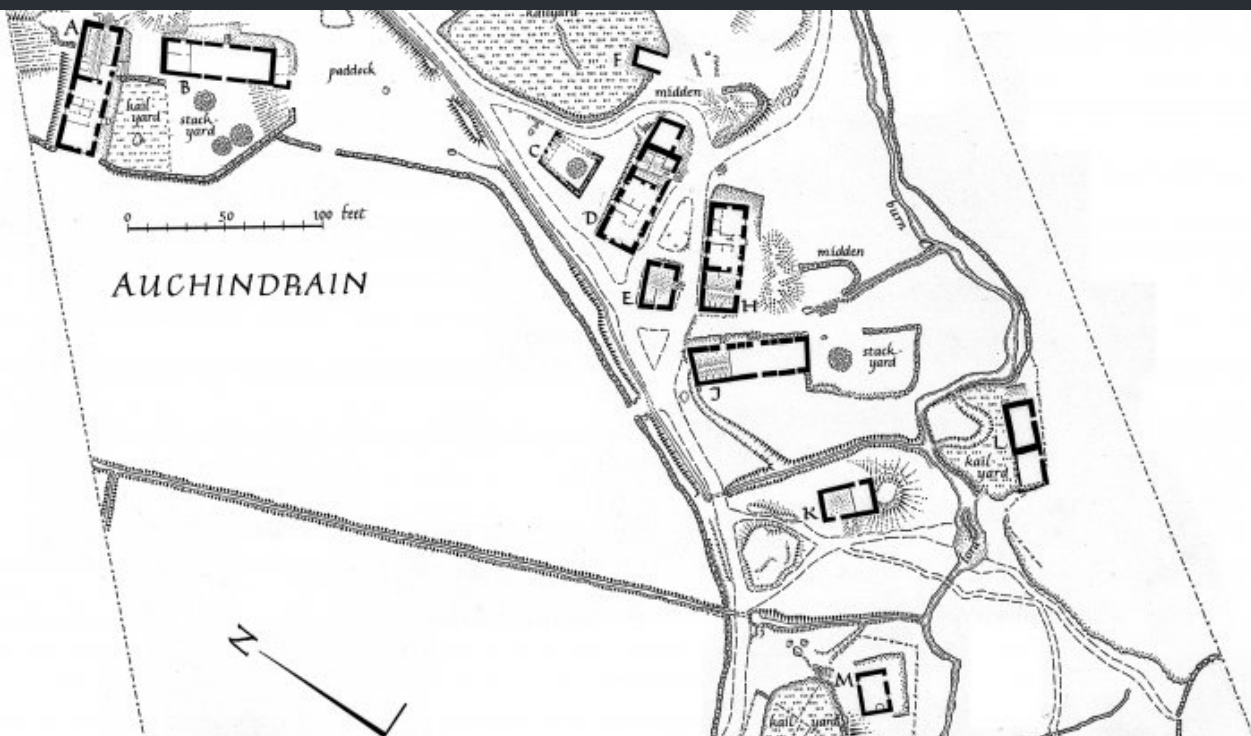
Auchindrain Township - Loch Fyne, Inveraray, Argyll and Bute





The Landscape

The baile of Auchindrain is situated in the saddle of a bealach between the Leacan Water and the Douglas Water to the south of Inveraray in Lorne. The very place-name Auchindrain (Achadh an Droighinn) is indicative of its marginality. The prefix Achadh means a field and is interpreted as denoting a secondary settlement. This marginal location suggests that the Auchindrain settlement is secondary, perhaps growing up as an outfield improvement, colonised from the primary settlement at Braleckan sometime in the medieval period. High ridges to the north and south limit cultivable ground to a narrow strip barely 500m across at the march dyke with the neighbouring town of Braleckan, narrowing to as little as 250m at the watershed. Land suitable for cultivation is limited mainly to the south-facing slope, where there are the fields used for hay and forage crops up until the 1960s. Although separated from the townships of Braleckan, Auchindrain and Killean by about 3.5km of rough ground rising in many places to over 400m, the Douglas Water provided the main area for the summer grazing of cattle until the practice was abandoned. The shieling huts along the Douglas Water presumed to belong to Auchindrain are mostly placed in tributary valleys a little north of the exposed valley-bottom.



The Settlement

The majority of its buildings straggle irregularly along the north bank of a small tributary of the Eas a' Chorabha for about 400m. In the 19th century, each tenant's family appears to have occupied a byre-dwelling, usually associated with a barn, stable and cart-shed as well as a small kailyard and a stackyard, while cottars and tradesmen occupied rather smaller houses. The dwellings at this period were for the most part built on an east-west axis and the doors and windows are concentrated in their S walls, while the barns stand at right angles to them, probably to utilise the prevailing westerly winds in their winnowing-passages. A roadway wound through the township from NE to SW, linking it at each end to the public road, which is here also joined by the former drove-road from Lochaweside.

The buildings are of local rubble masonry, originally laid in clay mortar but subsequently rebuilt or pointed with lime mortar. Water-runnels are provided at the bases of the walls where necessary, and many of the buildings are fronted by raised cobbled areas. All comprise a single main storey which may incorporate a loft or half-loft, but some of the dwellings have been provided with attic floors in comparatively recent times. The typical byre-dwelling comprises a 'room', closet, kitchen and byre, all disposed linearly under the same roof, with separate entrance-doorways to the house and byre, but with inter-communication between the byre and kitchen.

Most of the buildings were originally cruck-framed; each cruck made of two timbers scarf-jointed and pegged at wall-head level. The majority of the crucks were sawn off at wall-head level when the original thatched roofs were replaced by coverings of corrugated iron. Some of the barns and other subsidiary buildings were originally hip-roofed at one or both ends and incorporated a cruck beam placed centrally in the end-walls. Most of the present byre-dwellings are gable-ended, but one at least of them was originally hip-roofed at the byre end but gable-ended at the house end.

The corn-dryer at the south end of Building K is a mid-19th century building, but it was constructed on the site of the earlier kiln barn. Close examination on the ground revealed that the earlier kiln was a platform type constructed in one end of a barn, typical of those found on the Western Isles. Furthermore, the kiln barn has the type of footings more typical of a pre-improvement building, with a superstructure of turf, or perhaps of wattle and daub.

There is evidence of earlier phases to be found at the site. For example, two of the barns in the middle of the settlement preserve the traces, variously, of earlier phases and redundant byres. Langland's estate plan of 1789 (Fairhurst 1968) shows the majority of the buildings were orientated roughly from NW to SE, and it is suggested the primary buildings were those aligned down-slope on this axis. This may be seen at other sites in Argyll abandoned in the 18th century (Blarowin, Glenshira, and Strone Point, Canmore IDs 23639, 40467). One building, now no longer visible, at the entrance to the site from the public road, had rounded corners when recorded by RCAHMS in 1986. This type of construction appears to be a common architectural feature of excavated medieval buildings in Argyll, such as that excavated at MacEwan's castle (Canmore ID 39861), or at Loch Glashan.

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<https://canmore.org.uk/site/23412/loch-fyne-auchindrain-township>
<https://canmore.org.uk/site/39861/kilfinan-macewans-castle>
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