

**IMK99**

**The Archaeology of Inchmarnock: Report 6.1**

**Medieval and later Inchmarnock:  
a framework for a multi-disciplinary Project Design**

*Prepared on behalf of Sir Robert Smith*

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## INTRODUCTION

Research and fieldwork to date (*Inchmarnock Reports 1 - 5*) have created a base-line study of the history and archaeology of Inchmarnock. The greatest potential for further work, both in terms of research and management, lies with the sites and monuments of the island in the medieval and later period, down to the present day.

The key medieval site on the island was and remains the site of St Marnock=s chapel (Site 4: *Inchmarnock Report 3*, 4-6, Figures 5 & 6; Plate 2), by Midpark. Clearly, however, the chapel did not operate in isolation but rather formed part of a broader medieval landscape. There are indications that the buildings at Sites 5 and 8 formed contemporary elements of this landscape; the radiocarbon dates suggest that the caves at Site 16 were also resorted to at this time. The field clearance cairns at Site 11, the >Dysart= (Site 15) and the corn-drying kiln at Site 17 probably also belong to this period.

## ST MARNOCK=S CHAPEL & AN OUTLINE CHRONOLOGY OF MEDIEVAL AND LATER INCHMARNOCK

St Marnock=s chapel is the most visible element of the island=s medieval past. It is also pivotal to later settlement on the island. Indeed, it is through the chapel that history and archaeology meet, the point at which the largely undocumented past comes down to the time of historical record. As a site, the chapel almost certainly influenced the location of the mid-nineteenth-century steading at Midpark and its predecessor. A series of early plans, by John Foulis in 1758/59, another for the Bute Estate in 1769 (probably the work of John Leslie [Andrew McLean, pers comm]) and the recently found plan by Samuel Girdwood in 1821 graphically chart the development of this settlement prior to its improvement in the second quarter of the nineteenth century and its subsequent depiction on the First Edition Ordnance Survey map (surveyed 1863). The chapel may have also influenced their positioning and layout. As a structure, the chapel, together with its graveyard, was certainly utilised for its stone. There is documentary evidence that the site was robbed of its stone on at least two occasions, in the early eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. An inventory in the Bute Estate archives (BE/6, 731), dating to 1821, describes the chapel site as an >old wastage ... stones only valued=.

An outline chronology or time-line for the island can begin to be established (Table 1). The ecclesiastical site impinges several times upon this chronology, whether as a site, a functioning building or simply as a place where stones could be obtained for other works. But into this time-line can also be placed archaeological finds, both from the site and elsewhere on the island, evidence from the Bute Estate rentals and inventories, and other elements of historical data. The earliest period, not unnaturally, is also the most obscure.

An association with an obscure early Irish Saint, *Mernóc*, is not sufficient to demonstrate the presence of a Christian community in Inchmarnock as early as the sixth or seventh century. Similarly, the reference in the late medieval *Scotichronicon* to a monastic cell on the island may simply reflect little more than the story which has come down to us in the accounts of St Brendan, describing the activities of *Mernóc* and his fellow hermits on the >Island of Delights=. However, there can be little doubt that Inchmarnock lay within the orbit of the >monastic thalassocracy= (Dumville 1997, 17), centred on Iona and embracing the western seaboard of Scotland in the period 550-800.

The evidence of early carved stone crosses from the site (Fisher, in press), the associated spring and the curvilinear form of the stackyard (possibly the original burial ground) conspire to support the case for an early community on the site. The tradition of a separate women=s burial ground beside the chapel may represent the survival of segregated burial practices that can be traced to Early Christian Irish origins at Iona and elsewhere on the west coast (Herity 1995; O=Sullivan 1994), including, locally, St Blane=s on Bute. Similarly, the construction of an elaborate church in the later medieval period is best explained by the continued sanctity of an important Early Christian site, *Mernóc*=s early monastery.

The place-name *Kildauanach* is shown on Blaeu=s map of 1654, coincident with the area later known as Midpark. It has been suggested that place-names containing the Gaelic element *cill* (>church= or >churchyard=) were in existence by 800 (Nicolaisen 1976, 130, 143). *Kildauanach* is translated by Hewison (1893, 132) as >the church of the monks=; by Watson (1926, 301) as >church of thy Benignus= / St Benen. However, it seems likely that the place-name has been misplaced, either by Blaeu or by Pont, whose (lost) late sixteenth-century map Blaeu used. The place-name almost certainly refers to Kildavanan on the north side of Ettrick Bay, some 5 km to the north of Inchmarnock.

The remains of the chapel of St Marnock, partially excavated in 1973-74 and still visible, belong to the high medieval period. It was probably built in the latter part of the twelfth century, long after *Mernóc*=s original monastic settlement. Links between these two religious foundations, however, are sufficient to suggest a degree of continuity of religious life over a period of 600 years. The dedication to St Marnock itself indicates a continued association between the saint and the site and presumably also its continued sanctity.

The well-known rune-inscribed cross, discovered in 1889 near the chapel site, demonstrates the existence of a Christian Norse religious community in perhaps the late tenth or eleventh century. Although the island may have simply been used as a place of sepulture, it seems more likely that the community would have been resident on Inchmarnock. This is an important find and its significance cannot be over-emphasised.

This is one of the few rune-inscribed crosses to have been found in Scotland, possibly reinforcing the island's connections with the Isle of Man to the south and the time when it formed part of the Norse Kingdom of Man and the Isles. The inscription - >raised the cross to ?Guthleifr= - has been carved across the centre of the cross-arm; in a second, barely legible inscription on the reverse, only the word >cross= can be recognised (Liestol 1984, 229-230).

The many Irish Christian monastic communities on the west coast of Scotland experienced varied fortunes after the eighth century when Viking raiding (and later settlement) began to disrupt the region, leading to what Dumville (1997, 17-18) has described as a >thinning out of ecclesiastical settlement=. St Maelrubha's monastery in Applecross, Wester Ross, was abandoned but St Columba's community in Iona survived and was ultimately transformed by 1203 into a Benedictine Abbey. St Moluag's monastery in Lismore did not survive but remained a holy place and was selected as the site of a new cathedral for the Bishopric of Argyll in the thirteenth century. From what is known of the history of Inchmarnock it appears that, like Lismore, the monastic community was dispersed at some point but the site retained its religious significance.

A construction date for the chapel of about 1150 x 1200, based on architectural evidence, suggests that it may be linked to the Stuarts who first acquired control of Bute at this time. The same family was also responsible for the construction of the larger church of St Blane's in Bute.

The architectural sophistication of the chapel seems disproportionate to the size of Inchmarnock. It suggests that this was more than a parish church serving the needs of the island's population. The very real possibility emerges that the site of St Marnock's monastery, as the local centre of the saint's cult, was more widely venerated, possibly as a significant place of pilgrimage. The survival of the Blane and *Mernóc* dedications may reflect the appropriation of the local saints' cults by the incoming Anglo-Normans to legitimise their holdings.

## OBJECTIVES

The overarching objectives of the project are to consider how Inchmarnock's inhabitants utilised their island landscape in the medieval and later period and how Inchmarnock itself related to the wider world. Inchmarnock offers the opportunity, in microcosm, of exploring major ideas of continuity and change at a variety of different levels; changes in the stewardship of the island in the medieval and later period, for example, will have impacted to a greater or lesser degree upon the ecclesiastical, political, social or economic life of its inhabitants. Equally, for the earlier period, there is the vexed question of the relationship between the Celtic and the later Norse Church. Also it should not be

forgotten that down to the middle of the thirteenth century, Inchmarnock, along with Bute, was technically part of the Norse kingdom of Man and the Isles. Although Norse control of this area had been ineffective for some considerable time prior to this, there is nonetheless the possibility that Norse settlement remains may survive to be identified.

The multi-disciplinary approach proposed here will thus seek to provide as complete an account as possible of the island's medieval and later past. In part, this will serve to fill out the various gaps which exist in the preliminary chronological outline (Table 1). Out of this study, however, will emerge a coherent synthetic narrative of the archaeology and history of Inchmarnock from the seventh century AD down to modern times.

Detailed objectives on a site-by-site basis are set out in Appendix 1 in connection with a series of excavation outlines for Sites 4, 5, 8 and 16, to be undertaken in conjunction with further survey work as access around the island improves. A series of scoping outlines for palaeoenvironmental investigation, place-name and historical studies, further research in the Bute Estate Archive and a programme for the collation of oral history material are also set out in Appendix 1.

## PROJECT TEAM

A Project Team has been assembled to meet the objectives of the project. This comprises both in-house specialists at Headland and its field and post-excavation support staff, as well as leading academics from Scottish universities and other bodies.

The Project will be managed and co-ordinated by *Dr Christopher Lowe*. Dr Lowe, a co-founder and co-director of Headland Archaeology, has over twenty years' archaeological experience, and fifteen years in the management and co-ordination of large-scale projects. His specialist areas include the Early Christian and Medieval archaeology of North Britain, with research interests in the archaeology of the Early Christian Church. His doctorate at the University of Durham, completed in 1987, comprised survey and analysis of early ecclesiastical sites in the Northern Isles and Isle of Man. He is currently involved in the excavation of a medieval church and earlier settlement on Papa Stronsay, Orkney.

Dr Lowe has a well-established publication record. He has over thirty publications to his credit, including two substantial excavation monographs of his work on Papa Westray, Orkney (Lowe 1998) and, as co-director with Olwyn Owen, of the 1985-87 excavations of the multi-period settlement site at Kebister, Shetland (Owen & Lowe 1999). The excavation monograph for his 1991 excavation of the Anglo-Saxon monastic settlement at Hoddom, Dumfriesshire, is currently awaiting the results of peer review. In addition, he was also a contributor to the recent Canongate Making of Scotland series with his popular book on post-Roman settlement in southern Scotland (Lowe 1999). He also

serves on the Council of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, the Whithorn Research Committee and is an assistant leader of the East Lothian Young Archaeologists= Club.

Project Manager:	Dr Christopher Lowe
Field Supervisor:	Mr Stuart Halliday
Palaeoenvironmental co-ordinator:	Dr Stephen Carter
Palaeobotanical analysis:	Dr Timothy Holden
Pollen analysis:	Dr Richard Tipping (Senior Lecturer, Department of Environmental Science, University of Stirling)
Historical Studies:	Dr Steve Boardman (Lecturer, Department of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh)
Oral History:	Mrs Jessica Herriot & Dr Margaret Mackay (Director, School of Scottish Studies, University of Edinburgh)
Carved stones:	Mr Ian Fisher (RCAHMS)
Bute Estate archive:	Andrew McLean (Mount Stuart, Bute)
Academic peer review:	Dr Barbara Crawford (Lecturer, Department of Medieval History, University of St Andrews)
Academic peer review:	Dr Anna Ritchie OBE (Archaeological Consultant)

## INTERIM PRODUCTS & PROJECT LIAISON

It is important with a project of this size and duration that it is executed cost-effectively to the highest professional standards. It is also important that the project and its results should be open to peer review. External academic referees have therefore been approached to comment upon the project and to review its objectives. An interim report will be prepared annually and deposited in the National Monuments Record of Scotland; a summary will also be submitted to the Council for Scottish Archaeology for inclusion in its annual round-up of work, *Discovery & Excavation in Scotland*.

A Project of this size will also be of interest to a range of local, regional and national bodies and these will be approached as a matter of courtesy. Contact with the National Trust for Scotland will also be maintained in accordance with the terms of the NTS conservation agreement.

- National Trust for Scotland [NTS];
- Historic Scotland [HS];
- Royal Commission on the Ancient & Historical Monuments of Scotland [RCAHMS];

- West of Scotland Archaeology Service [WoSAS] (archaeological consultants to Argyll & Bute Council in respect of planning matters);
- Buteshire Natural History Society.

## **APPENDIX 1: PREVIOUS REPORTS**

### **THE ARCHAEOLOGY OF INCHMARNOCK**

- 1 Carter, S 1999 *An Introduction to the Archaeology & History of Inchmarnock*. (July 1999)
- 2 Halliday, S 2000 *Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites* (February 2000)
- 2.1 Halliday, S & Lowe, C E 2000 *Gazetteer of Archaeological Sites* (Revised: May 2000)
- 3 Halliday, S & Lowe, C E 2000 *Results of the May 2000 Survey & Evaluation* (June 2000)
- 4 Lowe, C E 2000 Summary & Interpretative Overview of the May 2000 fieldwork (June 2000)
- 5 Holden, T., Lowe, C E & Halliday, S. 2000 *Survey of the farm steadings at Northpark, Midpark and Southpark, Inchmarnock* (October 2000)



## APPENDIX 2: BIBLIOGRAPHY

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- Lowe, C E 1991 >New light on the Anglian minster at Hoddom= *Trans Dumfriesshire & Galloway Nat Hist & Antiq Soc*, 3<sup>rd</sup> ser, LXVI (1991), 11-35.
- Lowe, C E 1998 *Coastal Erosion and the Archaeological Assessment of an eroding shoreline at St Boniface Church, Papa Westray, Orkney*. Sutton Publishing, Stroud, Gloucestershire, 1998.

- Lowe, C E 1999 *Angels, Fools and Tyrants: Britons and Anglo-Saxons in Southern Scotland AD 450 - 750*. HS / Canongate Making of Scotland series. Edinburgh 1999.
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- Marshall, D N 1980 >Recent finds on Inchmarnock=, *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society*, 21, 15-18
- Marshall, D N 1990 >Carved stone cross from Inchmarnock=, *Transactions of the Buteshire Natural History Society*, 23, 5-7.
- Nicolaisen, W F H 1976 *Scottish Place-names: their study and significance*. Batsford, London 1976.
- O=Sullivan, J 1994 >Excavation of an early church and a women=s cemetery at St Ronan=s medieval parish church, Iona=, *Proc Soc Antiq Scot* 124 (1994), 327-365.
- Owen, O A & Lowe, C E 1999 *Kebister: the four-thousand-year-old story of one Shetland township*. Soc Antiq Scot Monog 14 (1999).
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- Tipping, R, Tisdall, E & Davies, A 2001 *Palaeoenvironmental Investigations, Phase II: Radiocarbon dating, sampling, analysis and interpretation*. Report to Headland Archaeology Ltd, January 2001.
- Watson, W J 1926 *The History of the Celtic Place-names of Scotland*. Re-printed by Birlinn, Edinburgh 1993.
- Yeoman, P A 1991 >Medieval rural settlement: the invisible centuries= in *Scottish*

*Archaeology: new perceptions*, ed Hanson, W S & Slater, E A 1991, 112-128.

### APPENDIX 3: MAPS

- 1654            Blaeu, J *The Ile of Boot*  
1747-55        Roy, W *Military Survey of Scotland* (sheet 13/5)  
1758-59        Foulis, J *A Survey of the Isle of Bute (The Patrimonial Estate of the Earl of Bute)* [bound volume of plans, original in Bute Estate Archive, copy held by Scottish Record Office RHP 14107, pp 79 & 80]  
1769            Leslie, J *Bute Estate Map*=(Title not known. Original, believed to be in Bute Estate Archive, not located. Photocopy extract received from Ian Fisher, RCAHMS)  
1801            Langlands, G *This map of Argyllshire...*  
1811            Mackinlay, J *Map of the Islands of Bute, Cumbrae and Inchmarnock* (prepared for Blain=s MS *History of the Island of Bute*).  
1821            Girdwood, S *Eye sketch of the Farm of Mid Park of Inchmarnock, Novr 20<sup>th</sup> 1821, pointing out some improvements with which the tenants want assistance.* (Bute Estate Archive: Plans of Farms, Enclosures etc on the Estate of Bute. Collected and bound in 1825. Plan no. 45)  
1824            Thomson, J *Southern part of Argyllshire*  
1869            Ordnance Survey *Buteshire 1:10560 scale map*, sheets CCIII & CCXIV (surveyed 1863)  
1869            Ordnance Survey *Buteshire 1:2500 scale map*, sheets CCIII.16 & CCXIV.4 (surveyed 1863)  
1896            Ordnance Survey *Buteshire 1:10560 scale map*, sheets CCIII & CCXIV (revised 1896)  
1896            Ordnance Survey *Buteshire 1:2500 scale map*, sheets CCIII.16 & CCXIV.4 (revised 1896)

**APPENDIX 4: RADIOCARBON DATES**

Four radiocarbon dates were obtained during the course of the May 2000 site evaluation; a further two samples were assayed as a result of the pollen sampling survey in November 2000 (Tables 2a & 2b):

<i>Code</i>	<i>Material</i>	<i>Site</i>	<i>Context</i>	<i>Sample</i>	<i>Calib 2-sigma</i>
AA-39965	Barley	8	811	001	AD 1222-1298
AA-39966	Hazelnut sh.	16A	1603	005	346 B 4 BC
AA-39967	Hazelnut sh	16B	1655	012	355 B 59 BC
AA-39968	Oats	16B	1651	011	AD 679 - 888

*Table 2a: Radiocarbon dates from Evaluation Sites 8 and 16*

The site-specific samples confirm the medieval date that was suspected at the corn-drying site (Site 8) and are strongly suggestive of eremitical activity in Cave 16B (AA-39968). An Iron Age component to the island's past (previously unrepresented) has also finally appeared, in the dates of the lower cave deposits (AA-39966 & AA-39967).

The pollen sample dates (Table 2b) from the peat-filled lochan at the south end of the island have identified a potentially well-preserved sediment sequence covering the critical transition from Mesolithic hunter-gatherer-fisher communities to the earliest farmers in the region in the Neolithic, the period between about 10000 and 5000 BC. However, the major implication of these radiocarbon analyses is that much of the later Holocene sequence, from the mid-Neolithic onward, is probably absent at this site. The absence of sediments of this date is probably due to truncation through peat-cutting (Tipping, Tisdall & Davies 2001).

<i>Code</i>	<i>Depth (cm)</i>	<i>Sediment</i>	<i>Calibrated age range, 2-sigma</i>
Beta-149075	152 - 156	gyttja	12330 - 11560 BP
Beta-149074	46 - 49	peat	7670 - 7500 BP

*Table 2b: Radiocarbon dates from pollen sampling survey*

## APPENDIX 5: PRELIMINARY OUTLINE DESIGN

### (A) EXCAVATION

The excavation and survey are planned as a three year fieldwork programme, 2001 - 2003. Details of the schedule are set out below (Provisional Timetable).

#### Site 4: St Marnock=s chapel

##### *Current condition*

Excavation at St Marnock=s chapel presents a series of management and research issues. The site has been left open since it was partially excavated in 1973/74, becoming inundated with rank vegetation. This was temporarily cleared in April 2000. The present floor levels inside the building form a series of arbitrary levels.

##### *Stage 1 (2001)*

Stage 1 of the excavation programme will be concerned largely with management issues, of bringing the building to a condition where it could be conserved. The evaluation data will clarify the nature of the subsurface remains in the immediate vicinity of the chapel and at specific features nearby.

Works will involve the removal of the 1973/74 spoil heaps from around the chapel; excavation of the interior of the building down to its primary floor level, to get its surfaces into phase; lifting of the carved stones from the chancel and their transfer indoors out of the elements. A series of long evaluation trenches, to the N, S, E and W of the chapel, will also be opened to assess the nature of the site=s archaeology, its extent and depth. A small evaluation will also be undertaken of the site where the runic cross and a second shaft (with burials nearby) are believed to have been found, roughly 50 m to the north of the site. Trial trenching of the so-called >Monks Causeway=, to assess its character and condition, is also proposed.

##### *Stage 1 objectives*

- do the remaining floor surfaces inside the chapel clarify the chronology of the building or its later use ?
- is there any archaeological evidence to corroborate the documentary evidence of its robbing, and can earlier periods of robbing be identified ?
- is there evidence of an earlier structure(s) underneath the extant chapel ?
- is the burial ground located in a particular sector of the stackyard ?
- are the graves aligned with the extant building ?
- is the burial ground ordered by gender, age or any other discernible factor ?
- what is the depth of archaeological deposits in the immediate vicinity of the chapel ?

- do additional structures or enclosures exist in the vicinity of the chapel ?
- is there any evidence that the stackyard wall preserves or reflects the line of an earlier enclosure at the site ?
- does evidence survive for the stone >causeway= east of the site ?
- do burials or other archaeological features survive at the cross-site and how do these relate to the medieval chapel ?

### ***Stages 2 & 3 (2002 - 03)***

Stages 2 & 3 of the excavation will be guided by the results of Stage 1. It is envisaged that this would involve open-area excavation of a large part (c.35 - 50%) of the stackyard. Further work in the field to the west would also be undertaken to clarify the dating and association of the ditch and other features revealed in the earlier evaluation (*Inchmarnock Report 3*, Figure 6). Full Project Designs would be provided prior to fieldwork. The objectives of this work would be to amplify the objectives of Stage 1 and to test some of the broader issues, summarised below, concerning the development of the Church in this area in the Early Historic and medieval periods.

- can an early ecclesiastical horizon be identified at the site and, if discernible, how does it compare with other western seaboard sites ?
- if present, what is the relationship between the early ecclesiastical site and its medieval successor ? Does it survive Viking incursions and settlement or was it abandoned ?
- what is the extent of the site and how was this space used ?
- what governed the original selection of the site and how did it function ?
- how does the site develop over the period from the earliest times down to the eighteenth century ?
- how did the building or buildings associated with the medieval chapel impinge upon the secular settlement which developed alongside it ?
- what is the relationship between the medieval chapel (or any earlier monastic site) and the structures at Site 5 and Site 8, and the use of the caves at Site 16 ?

### ***Treatment of excavated human remains***

Excavation of human remains is a sensitive subject. The works will therefore be undertaken sympathetically in accordance with the principles of Historic Scotland's *Operational Policy Paper 5* (1997) concerning the treatment of human remains in archaeology. A human-bone specialist will form part of the field team. Excavated remains will be washed and processed as part of the fieldwork programme. Age, sex and pathology will be determined on site and samples taken for potential radiocarbon dating and DNA analysis. The excavated remains will subsequently be re-interred on the site (in excavated areas, void of any archaeological deposits) and a record made of their location.

### ***Carved stones***

A large assemblage of carved and inscribed stones has been recovered from the site to date. A full analysis of this material is shortly to be published by Ian Fisher of the RCAHMS. Other slabs are known to form part of the present floor level in the chancel of the building, and yet others can be anticipated as a result of the excavation. Mr Fisher's expertise and knowledge of this material will be invaluable to furthering our understanding of any new slabs found.

The possibility is recognised that such material, particularly the more portable items, may be removed by treasure seekers. All excavated stones will therefore be removed to a secure (lockable) room in the Midpark steading. As per normal practice, all finds retrieved during the investigation will be subject to the standard disposal procedures and reported to the Queen's and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer in line with required Treasure Trove procedure.

### ***Reinstatement of chapel***

Consideration will be given to the stabilisation and conservation of the chapel ruins upon completion of the excavation. To this end advice will be sought from Historic Scotland, the National Trust for Scotland and the Scottish Lime Centre. If consolidation for display proves impracticable, the site will be reinstated in a sympathetic manner.

## **Site 5: Medieval settlement**

### ***Current condition and survey results***

The building at Site 5 was partially excavated by the Middletons in the 1970s, the area marked by a slight hollow at the north-west end of the structure. Pottery fragments, 14<sup>th</sup> to 16<sup>th</sup> century in date, and coins of 15<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century date were recovered at that time. The location of the building coincides with the smaller of the two settlements (a cluster of three buildings and their yards) mapped by Foulis in 1758/59. There are indications from the documentary record (Table 1) that this settlement was abandoned around 1770.

The turf-covered footings of the building are located on the east-facing slope above the slate quarries (Site 6). The structure, 9 x 5.5 m externally, is aligned NW-SE. A gap near the centre of the south-west facing long wall may represent the site of an entrance. A stone-edged revetment, up to 0.5 m high, extends 17 m downslope from the east end of the building.

The wall-base (*circa* 1.05 m wide) is only clearly defined at the upper end of the structure. It is constructed of large angular slabs and quartz boulders. No mortar is evident at the site and the stone footing almost certainly represents the base for a turf-

and-timber structure.

A shell midden is exposed to the north-east of the building. It is dominated by limpets (*Patella* sp) and winkles (*Littorina littorea*). Between the building and the midden, there is a short length of turf-covered masonry, possibly part of a yard wall or a fragment of an adjacent building shown on the Foulis plan. Meanwhile, on the higher ground above the building, extending from the rock-face on the south-west, there are traces of an enclosure dyke. Heavily overgrown with bracken, it is roughly 1.25 m wide and 0.4 m high. It appears to delimit the area of improved ground to the south-east. A corn-drying kiln or kiln-barn (Site 17), possibly the westernmost building depicted on the Foulis plan (allowing for some inaccuracy), lies 70 m to the north of the building.

### ***Excavation potential***

There is good archaeological evidence from the site that the settlement shown on the Foulis map of 1758/59 dates back to the medieval period. Rural buildings of this period are rarely identified and extremely few medieval rural settlements have been excavated (Yeoman 1991; Dixon 1998). Two superficially similar structures were excavated by the late Dorothy Marshall at Little Dunagoil, near Kingarth, Bute in the 1960s (Marshall 1964). Their chronology, however, remains uncertain. The chronology of the Site 5 building, by contrast, seems relatively well-established. Moreover, the significance of the finding of coins in the building should not be underestimated: it suggests a household of some status or substance with access to markets outwith the immediate locality. The presence of the adjacent midden may also provide information on dating and diet.

### ***Objectives***

- to clarify the nature of the finds assemblage found to date (do the coins relate to the island as a place of pilgrimage ?);
- to clarify the plan, chronology, function and constructional sequence of the building (how was it built and what was it constructed of ?; is there any evidence for crucks or for the type of thatch used in its roofing ? what was the building used for ?)
- to establish whether earlier structures survive on the site (are these similar to or the same as the extant building ? Is there an identifiably Norse element in the cultural heritage of the site ?);
- to clarify the nature and date of the adjacent wall-foundation (is it part of an associated yard, or part of another building ?);
- to investigate the nearby shell-midden (are other materials present, such as the remains of domesticated animals or fish-bones ?; when, how and how rapidly did it accumulate ?; can it tell us anything about the diet or activities (eg fishing) of the settlement=s inhabitants ?

### ***Reinstatement***



The site will be backfilled upon completion of excavation, returfed and re-seeded if necessary.

### **Site 8: Corn-drying area**

An extensive assemblage of burnt grain was recovered from the robbed structures on the mound at Site 8 (*Inchmarnock Report 3*, Figures 9 & 10). Immediately next to the mound are the upstanding remains of a small kiln, probably post-medieval in date which was partially excavated by the Middletons in the 1970s.

The excavated Site 8 assemblage was dominated by oats, indicating a medieval or later date for these features. A single carbonised barley grain from the assemblage has been radiocarbon-dated to AD 1222-1298 (AA-39965). The excavated stone settings are interpreted as the robbed remains of early corn-drying kilns and the site as a dedicated crop-drying area. Its location, on the higher ground above but adjacent to the fields, would have been both convenient and practical. Site 8, together with the clearance cairns and old dyke at Site 11, is assumed to represent an outlying element of the small medieval and later settlement at Site 5 / 17.

#### ***Excavation potential***

Only a handful of medieval corn-drying sites in Scotland have been identified and excavated and relatively little is known of their organisation (Lowe 1991; Holden forthcoming, in Lowe forthcoming). In the context of Early Historic and medieval Scotland the most common reasons for drying grain were to:

- dry the crop to aid threshing;
- aid dehusking and removal of awns of hulled grains;
- improve the storage properties of the grain, by drying the grain and killing pests;
- prepare the grain for grinding;
- malting grain.

With the exception of malting, the processes are a consequence of crop production in a temperate climate. They are undertaken in order to achieve full ripening of the crop, such that the chaff and straw are brittle enough to thresh and dehusk and the grain hard enough to mill or store. Exactly when the heat is applied is very dependent upon the crop being processed, and the geographical and economic context in which the settlement is operating. The charred remains from kilns can therefore be expected to reflect these conditions and provide an insight into the agricultural economy. Excavation of the mound and its immediate environs may provide further evidence of medieval crop-drying practices.

#### ***Objectives***

- are there earlier (pre-thirteenth century) or later medieval corn-drying kilns on the site and what stage(s) of the crop-processing cycle are represented ?;
- are there additional structures on the site and how were these used ?
- does the crop record change over time and are these reflected in the changes of island ownership or stewardship (from monastic / ecclesiastical to secular) ?.

***Reinstatement***

The site will be backfilled upon completion of excavation, re-turfed and re-seeded if necessary.

**Site 16B: Cave**

Two caves at the south end of the island were investigated as part of the May 2000 evaluation. No previous work had been undertaken at either site.

***Excavation potential***

Processing of the environmental samples from the two caves (Sites 16A & 16B: *Inchmarnock Report 3*, Figures 11 & 12) has produced clear evidence of occupation. Radiocarbon-dating of hazelnut shells has identified Iron Age occupation levels in both caves; the calibrated dates fall within the last quarter of the first millennium BC (346 B 4 BC & 355 B 59 BC: AA-39966 & AA-39967). Meanwhile, a sample of carbonised oats from an upper part of the profile in cave Site 16B has been radiocarbon-dated to AD 679 - 888 (AA-39968). This upper level could conceivably relate to occupation of the caves by hermits. This would also be the natural interpretation of the recorded >Dysart= place-name and the cave at Site 15.

***Objectives***

- to clarify the chronology of the cave occupation; do these relate to an Early Christian or medieval practice of eremiticism ?
- are there incised crosses or other Christian graffiti present in the rock faces ?
- was occupation temporary or seasonal ?
- how do the cave sites relate to other, contemporary settlements on the island ?

***Reinstatement***

The site will be backfilled upon completion of excavation, and re-seeded if appropriate.

**(B) FIELD SURVEY**

Field survey to date has increased the number of known sites from nine (*Inchmarnock*

*Report 1*) to 21 (*Inchmarnock Report 2.1*). A number of sites already listed have not yet been assessed in detail (*Inchmarnock Report 4*, Table 1). It is proposed that additional survey, starting with the SW quadrant of the island and progressing clockwise, will be undertaken in conjunction with the main excavation seasons over the period 2001 - 2003.

## (C) PALAEOENVIRONMENTAL INVESTIGATION

### **Off-Site Pollen Studies**

*Dr Richard Tipping: Department of Environmental Science, University of Stirling*

A well-defined marshy area survives near the south end of the island (site centre NS 022 590), south-west of the corn-drying area at Site 8. Pollen preserved in the peat, if undisturbed, can potentially provide a record of the local environment over the past 10,000 years.

A preliminary assessment in September 2000 (Tipping, Tisdall & Davies 2000) succeeded in identifying a potentially suitable pollen-core site. Retrieval of a pollen core was undertaken in November 2000. Assessment of the core and the results of an outline radiocarbon-dating programme, however, have suggested that much of the later Holocene sequence, from the mid-Neolithic onward, is probably absent at this site, having been removed through peat-cutting (Tipping, Tisdall & Davies 2001). Detailed analysis of the island's vegetation history and sediment stratigraphy, to determine origin, mode and rates of deposition as a response to agricultural activity and/or climate change in the medieval and post-medieval periods will therefore not be possible.

### **On-Site Palaeobotanical Studies**

*Dr Timothy Holden: Headland Archaeology Ltd*

Samples of all excavated contexts will be processed and assessed as part of Headland's normal excavation procedures. Examination of the carbonised remains from the various excavated sites and differences within or between them may be significant in terms of their chronology, function or status. In particular, the charred remains from the putative crop-processing area (Site 8) can be expected to provide an insight into the agricultural economy of the island and any changes over time.

### **Soil Mapping Survey**

*Dr Stephen Carter: Headland Archaeology Ltd*

The possibility that improved and deepened topsoils in the vicinity of early church sites may be related to agricultural innovations by early ecclesiastical establishments forms the subject of a current research programme being undertaken by Dr Barbara Crawford and

Dr Ian Simpson into early *papar* sites in the northern and western isles. Work on Iona, for example, has suggested that man-made soils were introduced to the site over some time within the period between the 7<sup>th</sup> century and the medieval period (Barber 1981, 359), possibly arriving as part of the >economic package= of the early Church. Excavations at St Boniface church on Papa Westray, Orkney, however, suggested that the deepened topsoils there are somewhat earlier, dating roughly to the period AD 250 - 750.

The Inchmarnock project presents the opportunity of testing this hypothesis further. A soil mapping survey, to quantify the nature and depth of deposits in the area of the old improved pasture around Midpark / Southpark, is therefore proposed. Further detailed analytical work will depend upon whether stratigraphically secure and datable horizons can be identified. The soil mapping work, potentially, may further our understanding of how the local landscape was exploited by the island=s ecclesiastical and secular overlords.

#### (D) MEDIEVAL HISTORICAL STUDIES

*Dr Steve Boardman: Department of Scottish History, University of Edinburgh*

The aim of the historical studies is to trace and analyse references to the Isle of Inchmarnock from its earliest appearances in the written record down to the sixteenth century. It is hoped to construct, as far as records allow, a narrative of the island=s ownership and exploitation during this period. A review of the major political, social, cultural and economic changes affecting the wider region of the Firth of Clyde will also be undertaken. The wider study should provide historical contexts for the various archaeological sites under review.

The starting point for investigation will be the published records of royal and local government, the chartularies of ecclesiastical institutions, chronicles and collections of charters and writs relating to individual noble families with landed interests in the region. From here, the investigation will be extended to unpublished primary sources available in the National Archives of Scotland and the National Library. Priority will be given to collections relating to institutions and families with an obvious connection to the Firth of Clyde area (for example NAS GD25, the collection relating to the Kennedys of Dunure/Ailsa). Where practicable, searches will also be made of unpublished material still held in private hands, most notably the Mount Stuart Archive on Bute.

#### (E) PLACE-NAME STUDIES

Place-name issues have been discussed in outline with Dr Simon Taylor of the University of St Andrews. Aside from the name of the island itself and its dedication, only a single

Gaelic place-name, *Tra na h-Uil*, the name of a skerry or sea-mark off the west coast of the island, has survived down to modern times. The remainder relate to the late 18<sup>th</sup> century agricultural improvement of the island and its reorganisation into North-, South- and Midpark. Maps and estate records seen to date are similarly lacking in early or more detailed place-names.

The important place-name >Dysert=, signifying an Early Christian eremitical site, has been recorded locally (pers comm, Jessica Herriot). The antiquity of this name, however, is uncertain and it is currently unclear how such a survival (given changes in the island= tenantry in the 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> centuries) could have been transmitted down to recent times.

Modern (20<sup>th</sup> century) field-names and place-names will be collected as part of the oral history enquiry and the whole discussed within the broader context of culture and language changes in the post-Improvement period.

#### (F) BUTE ESTATE ARCHIVE

The Bute Estate, as previously noted (*Inchmarnock Report 1, 5*), has a substantial documentary archive at Mount Stuart which should contain records relating to the management of Inchmarnock over the last 400 years. The majority of the papers are still being catalogued (Andrew McLean, pers comm). A preliminary search by the archivist has identified Estate Rentals and Inventories for Inchmarnock dating back to 1746.

A second visit to the Bute Estate archive was undertaken in conjunction with the standing building survey in September 2000. The Estate Rentals for 1746 - 1756, 1808 - 1827 and 1869 - 1875, the Northpark inventories for 1782/83 and 1801 and the Midpark inventory for 1821 have now been examined. Correspondence from William Muir, Commissioner to the Bute Estate in the third quarter of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, has thrown some interesting light on the chronology of the slate quarries at Site 6 and on aspects of the late 18<sup>th</sup> century programme of Agricultural Improvement for the island (Table 1). Further work in the Estate archive will be undertaken by the Project Manager in conjunction with the archaeological fieldwork programme. Advice on appointing a post-medieval historian to the project will be sought.

#### (G) ORAL HISTORY

There is evidence to suggest that a fairly substantial body of oral information, stories and anecdotes concerning Inchmarnock still survives on Bute. This may involve alternative versions of known (published) accounts, details of previously unrecorded events or simply information on the refurbishment of the various steadings and the types of crops grown at different times in the recent past. Some of this may derive from past tenants or from others who may have worked on the island on a casual or seasonal basis.

This material, including photographic and other relevant evidence, will be collected by Mrs Jessica Herriot under the supervision of Dr Margaret Mackay, Director of the School of Scottish Studies.

## PROVISIONAL TIMETABLE

Excavation on Inchmarnock will present a series of logistical challenges. It is therefore proposed that excavation will begin with Site 5. This will facilitate the setting up of an equipment store, a sanitation facility and emergency >overnight= base on the island. It will also allow us to test our procedures and will high-light any major logistical problems prior to the main season at Site 4.

### 2001

June                                      Excavation of Site 5  
    Survey SW Quadrant of island (Sites 10, 14 & 15)  
August / September      Excavation of Site 4 (Season 1)  
    Soil mapping survey  
October - December      Interim reports for Sites 4 & 5  
    Updated site gazetteer

### 2002

January - March              Preliminary post-excavation analysis (Sites 4 & 5)  
    Radiocarbon dating (Sites 4 & 5)  
April / May                      Excavation of Site 4 (Season 2)  
    Excavation of Site 16  
    Survey NW Quadrant of island  
June - December              Interim reports for Sites 4 & 16  
    Updated site gazetteer  
    Preliminary post-excavation analysis (Sites 4 & 16)  
    Radiocarbon dating (Sites 4 & 16)  
  
December                      Completion of Historical Studies  
December                      Completion of Oral History project

### 2003

April / May                      Excavation of Site 4 (Season 3)  
    Excavation of Site 8  
    Survey NE & SE Quadrants of island  
June - December              Interim reports for Sites 4 & 8

**DRAFT 2: 07 MAY 2001**

Updated site gazetteer  
Post-excavation design & publication plan

**2004-2005**                      Post-excavation & publication programme