ScARF Scottish Archaeological Research Framework

Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll

Chapter 2. Background and Aims of the RARFA



The administrative area of Argyll and Bute 2017
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2.1 What is a Regional Archaeological Research Framework?

A Research Framework is defined as

"... reference documents that guide development-led work within the planning system and aid local government curators in making decisions. They are also used to steer academic research and can help inform local society and community group projects"

(English Heritage 2014, 6).

Research Frameworks are intended to be 'living' documents which develop over time with additional information, new views and different arguments being added. They are never complete or perfect, rather, as '... the first stage in an ongoing conversation...' (Sanders 2013) they represent an attempt to gather our collective knowledge and understanding into one place. Topics not included initially in the RARFA can be added at a later date.

2.2 How does the RARFA engage with other strategies for Scotland's archaeology?

The RARFA ties in with a number of current strategies for Scotland's archaeology, these and the ways in which it does are set out below.

This RARFA aligns with the key messages in Scotland's Archaeology Strategy (2015, 3) that:

- Archaeology is important because it is one of the principal means of studying and understanding Scotland's historic environment
- Archaeology is vital to the telling of Scotland's story: history and prehistory
- The remains of past peoples and their activities contribute to the quality of Scotland's places: urban and rural settlements, landscapes and marine environments
- Our historic environment is dynamic and constantly changing through natural processes, development, land management and climate change
- Archaeologists are based in a wide range of public, private, educational and charitable organisations or are independent researchers, across Scotland and further afield

The RARFA will help to deliver the strategic objectives set out in the *Scotland's Archaeology Strategy Delivery Plan* (2016b), in particular Strategic Objectives 2.2.2 (review frameworks, their gaps in coverage of methods and theory) and 2.2.3 (support local/regional and thematic research frameworks).

Working with the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework this RARFA contributes to *Our Place in Time: The Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland* (2014b, 14) by helping to deliver one of three key priorities: '*Key aim: to investigate and record our historic environment to continually develop our knowledge, understanding and interpretation of our past and how best to conserve, sustain and present it*'.

On a regional level, this RARFA also contributes to three of the strategic priorities identified and expressed in the *Strategic Action Plan for Culture, Heritage and Arts in Argyll and Bute* (BTS 2014, 2) which are:

- Actions to establish the whole of Argyll and Bute as an area of cultural and artistic excellence, in order to release their full economic and social value
- A higher profile and visibility for the sector, giving it voice and the opportunity to advocate resources to meet needs across the sector
- A structure and delivery mechanism that encourages local engagement and supports local development while mobilising local people to take a pan-Argyll approach to priorities and actions.

2.3 Why is it necessary to produce a Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll?

Argyll as a region today has a distinctive character and identity, features which also hold true for many periods of the past. Today the region is remote, but at varying times in the past, it was a cultural crossroads, at the forefront of technological developments and social innovations. The archaeology of Argyll has an extremely important contribution to make in understanding all periods of the past.

The idea to produce a Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll (RARFA) came about as a result of a two-day Symposium called *Unfolding Argyll's Archaeological Story*, held by Kilmartin Museum in November 2015. The Symposium set out to establish what our present understanding of the region's archaeology is, as well as get an idea of unanswered questions and what might be the most fruitful areas of future research. There has been a long history of archaeological research in Argyll since the late 17th century, however, until the Symposium; there had never been an attempt to bring all those actively researching the archaeology and history of Argyll together.

Focusing on Argyll will build on the amount of work and research recommendations laid out by the Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) and attempt to paint a more detailed picture of a particular region. "It is as if ScARF provides the heritage community with a tree and branches but the leaves need to come from individual regions and projects." (E O'Riordan, ScARF, pers. comm.). The establishment of a Regional Research Framework comes as at an important and exciting time. Kilmartin Museum is embarking on a £6.7 million redevelopment of the Museum, which has necessitated a closer look at the whole span of human history in Argyll, information which will feed into the evolving interpretation strategy and eventually the new exhibitions. In addition, the Museum aspires to develop adult learning at a university level, and has been in discussions with the University of the Highlands and Islands, Argyll College and Orkney College as to the form that this might take. In this regard, the RARFA will be a crucial tool to guide future research as the partnership develops.

2.4 Lead Organisation remit

Kilmartin Museum Trust is an independent charity which runs an archaeological museum based in the heart of Kilmartin Glen, one of Scotland's most important landscapes. Since opening in 1997, the Museum has run a successful education service which works with all age groups from preschool to adult learning, enabling a variety of groups to learn about, appreciate and enjoy the areas archaeology and natural history. The service has included opportunities for people to engage in the archaeological process. For the last 13 years, the Museum has been the main repository for archaeological artefacts found in the region, and also curates Argyll and Bute Council's archaeological collections under a service level agreement.

The Museum employs a professional archaeological curator and field archaeologist and acts as a repository of knowledge about the area's archaeology. There is no comparable facility in the region. One of the outcomes from the 2015 Symposium was that it was widely recognised within the Scottish museum, heritage and academic sectors as well as by organisations such as Highlands and Islands Enterprise that Kilmartin Museum was best placed to manage the process of developing a Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll. It is the only non-commercial, professional archaeological organisation located in Argyll and is in a position to take forward the Framework.

2.5 Aims and Outcomes

The overarching aims of the RARFA are to:

- synthesise and summarise our knowledge of archaeology in Argyll to the end of 2016 and make this available to as wide an audience as possible
- highlight challenges, gaps and opportunities in our understanding and knowledge of the archaeology of the area
- consider how these challenges, gaps and opportunities might be overcome and/or addressed.
- The production and continued updating of the RARFA seeks to achieve the following outcomes over time by:
- acting as a research tool and providing context for new research
- clearly identifying where there are gaps in our current understanding and knowledge
- facilitating the integration of different kinds of evidence
- nabling us to tell fuller stories and provide an interpretative tool
- acting as an accessible resource for learning provision
- providing support and context for new research in the region
- providing a context to facilitate better protection of the area's archaeology (either in-situ or by record) through debate, discussions and policies
- acting as a resource which can be used for new partnerships and communities of interest to develop
- acting as a reference document which could guide development-led work within the planning system
- aiding local government officers, commercial units, voluntary organisations etc in making decisions about the archaeological resource with regard to development
- complimenting ScARF by providing a regional focus
- supporting the delivery of Our Place in Time: the Historic Environment Strategy for Scotland (2014b, 14).

2.6 RARFA Audience

The authors define the audience for the RARFA in the same way as Scotland's Archaeology Strategy (2015, 6): the audience is "all those who are or wish to be involved in Scotland's archaeology. Our archaeological community includes people of all ages and abilities and is made up of paid and unpaid, university-based, public-sector, private-sector, third-sector, independent, local, national and international researchers." The authors hope that all interested people will be able to access it and find the information it contains useful.

The audience can engage with the RARFA in any way they choose depending on their interests, experience, skills, motivation and remit.

2.7 Geographical Remit

The Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll will cover the current administrative area known as Argyll and Bute (Figure 1). The authors of the framework recognise that these borders are not intended to be restrictive and that discussion will necessarily cross these modern-day political boundaries and administrative waters at times. It is also recognised that a research framework has been produced for the Isle of Bute (Duffy 2012b) (see An Archaeological Research Framework for Bute: Case Study) through the Discover Bute Landscape Partnership Scheme, and therefore there has been less focus on the Isle of Bute in this document. Other frameworks for specific areas may emerge over time, something that all the authors would welcome as a positive development.



Figure 1: The administrative area of Argyll and Bute 2017. © Kilmartin Museum

2.8 How the Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll was Initiated and Developed

The Kilmartin Museum team was Dr Sharon Webb, Director and Curator of Kilmartin Museum and Biddy Simpson, Freelance Archaeologist contracted as Project Manager.

Using the papers produced at the November 2015 Symposium, Sharon Webb and Biddy Simpson created a discussion document, which was sent out for consultation in the summer of 2016. As well as containing a summary of the period specific research recommendations, identified at the 2015 Symposium, the discussion document also sought views on the proposed

process of establishing a research framework, its structure, format and content, much of which was based on the recommendations outlined by ScARF (Sanders 2013). A preliminary meeting was additionally held in July 2016 with the chairs, speakers and other specialists from the 2015 Symposium, to discuss this paper, at which time, period specific working groups were also set up.

Key leading figures in their fields were approached to be part of the period specific working groups, with those that felt able to contribute doing so. Other contributors were chosen as part of the process, or offered help at various points.

During the autumn of 2016, a draft of the framework was produced for a further meeting in November. The document was also sent out for wider consultation. In the winter of 2016/2017, the final RARFA was produced and published in March 2017. Biddy Simpson and Sharon Webb were responsible for co-authoring the Introduction, Sections 1–3, the summaries preceding each period paper and editing the papers in Section 4–10. The papers in Section 4–10 were written by the authors cited, together with their respective working group members.

During the consultation period it was noted that Marine and Maritime themes had not been given a great deal of coverage. This was acknowledged by the editorial team and the reasons there is a gap relate to a lack of time and resources. The Society of Antiquaries and ScARF have generously offered to help address this imbalance, but for reasons of practicality, it was decided that the launch of the main RARFA would go ahead, with the marine and maritime themes being dealt with at a later date (see section 2.9 below).

A full consultation list can be found in Appendix 3. A list of people who contributed can be found in Appendix 4

The people who contributed to each period specific paper are listed at the beginning of each paper.

2.9 How will RARFA be updated and kept alive?

All those who have contributed to this RARFA are committed to keeping it updated. A review and update of the RARFA will take place every five years or as considered appropriate for the individual sections.

As noted above, the need for a specific Marine and Maritime section has been identified late on in the process of creating this RARFA. Given the importance of the relationship between the sea, the land and the way that people used this to their advantage in Argyll, the need to address this imbalance is clear. Research on Marine and Maritime themes will take place over the coming months and the findings incorporated into the online RARFA. In the meantime, readers can find a huge amount of information about Scotland's marine and maritime past in the ScARF Marine and Maritime Panel Report.

Researchers and groups working in the area will be encouraged to feed in case studies regularly, with an annual reminder being sent out via email by Kilmartin Museum. Other activities, such as conferences will be encouraged.

The RARFA will be held on the ScARF wiki-style website which means that registered users can add ideas (for example for future/further work), comments, updates and new publications. Web traffic and user statistics will be monitored via Google Analytics. A user survey will be undertaken by ScARF (in conjunction with Kilmartin Museum) one year after the resource goes online.

ScARF plan to include an online section on 'use' case studies from academic, commercial, museums and other sectors.

If significant archaeological discoveries are made or relevant research is undertaken during developer-funded archaeological work in the Argyll and Bute Council area, project reporting will include a contribution to update the RARFA to the satisfaction of the planning authority, as advised

by the West of Scotland Archaeology Service. Archaeological contractors acting on behalf of a developer will be expected to secure the prior agreement of their client to the provision of such a contribution if required by the planning authority, and to confirm this in any archaeological method statement or written scheme of investigation submitted to the planning authority on their client's behalf. Should the results of the archaeological project warrant such a contribution to update the RARFA, its content will be agreed in advance with the West of Scotland Archaeology Service on behalf of the planning authority.

A user survey was conducted by ScARF in 2015 to review how the national research framework was being used. A review of the Research Framework for the Archaeology of Wales began in 2009 and updated period reports are currently being added to the website. In England, a review of English Research Frameworks was undertaken in 2013/2014 to evaluate the use, value and impact of Research Frameworks. The latter review has informed the creation of the RARFA.

The knowledge gained from reviews conducted by ScARF and other frameworks will be used to inform how the RARFA is updated in the future.

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