ScARF Scottish Archaeological Research Framework

Regional Archaeological Research Framework for Argyll

Chapter 9. Medieval



General view of Castle Sween from the southeast © HES

9. The Archaeology of Medieval Argyll (AD 1100 – AD 1600)

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Brief Summary

Between AD 1100 – 1600 Argyll transformed from being inhabited by a hybrid culture of both Gaelic and Norse speaking peoples to being predominantly Gaelic speaking, under the influence of the Kingdom of Scotland. The period was a mix of shifting alliances, territorial struggles, with the Church and secular administration becoming ever closer. Fish was significantly important to the local economy as too were other forms of trade such as cattle droving, textile production and a variety of small scale industries such as mining (silver and copper), charcoal burning, bloomeries, boat building and general crafts production.

Secular lords used an increasingly nuanced set of monumental and architectural motifs to demonstrate their social position. They were amongst the first to adopt castle building techniques in places where they would interact with outsiders and most needed to express their dominance, especially near harbours. However, they were equally at home reoccupying duns and crannogs when engaging with their own communities and where they wanted to demonstrate their ancestral links to the land.

The church was a central part of the medieval period and this is when we start to see the first stone built chapels being built and the emergence of the classic late medieval West Highland sculpture, which consisted of either grave slabs depicting warrior figure s or warrior-type imagery or with scrollwork, mythical beasts, angels, tools and crosses. By the 12th century the reforms that swept Europe saw a shift in focus away from the Celtic church to a more Latinised church. Towards the end of this period the growing influence of the Protestant Church was also being felt. Although there are a large number of resources to help study and understand this period, many aspects need further research, such as how poorer people lived; the date of the different types of settlement that we have for this period; the fishing economy; the environment (see Section 10.2) and how the changes in temperature in weather affected agriculture, settlement and diet; chapels and the medieval spiritual landscape; patterns of patronage, and; administrative landscapes such as parish boundaries.

9.1 Introduction

The purpose of this study is to look at the archaeology of Argyll in the period between circa 1000 and circa 1600. Argyll is taken to be as defined by the current local authority area (i.e. not including the area north of Ballachuilish, which was part of the former county of Argyllshire) but also excluding Bute, covered by a separate research agenda (Raven 2012a).

By the eleventh century Argyll was the product of a meeting of Gaelic and Norse cultures. There seems to have been some continuity from the old, Gaelic Dalriadic kingdoms, especially, but not exclusively, on the mainland, but centuries of interaction with Norse settlers and polities around the Irish Sea had heavily influenced their political structures and culture. Whilst seemingly retaining a heavily Gaelicised identity and language the Inner Hebrides had become part of the Kingdom of Man and the Isles, or Sudoroy, under the sovereignty of the Norwegian Kings and in the archdiocese of Nidaros. Nevertheless, the Isles and the mainland remained heavily integrated, with the major landholders, often styling themselves as kings, holding cohesive territories in both the islands and mainland. Links with Gaelic Ireland and Scotland were maintained throughout. From the eleventh century onwards Scottish royal power increasingly asserted itself from the east. In the west the kings appealed to and swapped allegiance between the Norwegian and Scottish crowns in attempt to bolster their respective positions and independence until their shenanigans prompted Norwegian invasion and, ultimately, the ceding of Norwegian sovereignty to Scotland in 1266. After this blow Gaelic culture eclipsed any remnants of Norse language and cultural affinity. The kings came to be styled lords who continued to be fluid

in their loyalties to the factions of the Scottish court. In southern Argyll the MacSweens were displaced by lords loyal to the Stewarts, in the north and west, the MacDougalls, were displaced by the MacDonalds, who rose to create a burgeoning polity – the Lordship of the Isles. In the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries Gaelic culture experienced a renaissance, partly through the stability, unity and patronage of the Lordship of the Isles, then backed by royal favour, and largely funded by the profits of exported fish and mercenaries. It resulted in a complex, structured social system, arts, learning and architecture. However, a mix of over expansion, infighting and failure to maintain royal favour, probably fuelled by economic and environmental crises, led to the collapse of the Lordship, social decay and over two centuries of increasingly destructive clan warfare. Into the vacuum stepped the Campbells, who emerged from a small landholding in the central mainland to ultimately eclipse all other contenders. Throughout the medieval period the tension between Gaelic and the wider European culture, and the pull between Gaelic Ireland and the rest of Scotland, both Gaelic and Lowland, remained.

This grand narrative of five hundred years of history is based on a very small number of primary documents, many of which were written to appease a specific audience. For instance, as David Caldwell has pointed out (pers. comm.), the presumption that the Isle of Man was the centre of Sudoroy comes from a chronicle written in Man to sustain the claims of the then Manx royal lineage. Read critically, one could reasonably postulate that the centre of the kingdom was nearer its geographical centre, in the Inner Hebrides. In order to fully understand medieval Argyll a multi-disciplinary approach that makes the most out of all the available sources is required. However, the archaeological record is the key resource and needs to be placed at the centre of any future scholarship.

9.2 Sources and Approaches

A vast wealth of resources is available to support the study of the medieval period in Argyll. Various bodies have been dedicated to publishing related historic records to the estates and land owning families (eg Black Book of Taymouth – Innes 1855, Book of Islay – Smith 1895, The Book of the Thanes of Cawdor – Innes 1869, Highland Papers – MacPhail 1914-34, Argyll Sherriff Records – Paton 1915, 1918, Campbell Papers – Campbell 1916a, 1915b, Argyll Sasines – Campbell 1933, MacTavish 1935, Acts of the Lords of the Isles – Munro and Munro 1986, Campbell Letters – Dawson 1997, etc). The Argyll County Records Office holds much unpublished estate archives, and many remain in private ownership and are largely untapped. The recent opening up of access to the archive of the Argyll Estates at Inveraray is a huge bonus (which will allow testing of some of the information released but unreferenced through Campbell of Airds, eg 2000-04, 2004a, 2004b). Many families who were not or are no longer resident to Argyll had holdings there, their papers are also often of relevance (eg the MacFarlane Papers in the Procurator Fiscal's Library in Glasgow, or the Antrim Estate Papers in the Public Record Office in Belfast). The quality of the information to be extracted from these archives is perhaps best demonstrated by several academic studies of particular lordships, such as the Campbells (Boardman 2000, 2003, 2005, 2006), MacSorleys (McDonald 2000) or MacDonald South (Kingston 2004), or genealogical history (Sellar 1971, 1973, 2000, Woolf 2004, 2005). A number of excellent clan based histories have also used a combination of these archival and oral sources to great effect (eg Cregeen 1968, MacLean-Bristol 1995, 1999, 2007, MacTaggart 2004 and West Highland Notes and Queries).

As a complement to this more document-based history a considerable number of oral and traditional histories have been recorded and published, either in book form (eg Campbell 1889, Dewar 1964, etc) or as booklets produced by community groups either interested in local

history or family histories (eg Wright 1989, Whittaker 1993, Rentoul and Dalton 2009, Clare nd, Higham nd). Argyll has a long pedigree of local scholars who have drawn together some excellent studies (eg Beveridge 1903, Grieve 1923, MacTavish 1935, Lamont 1966 and 1968, MacEacherna 1976, Campbell 1977) and it is a tradition which continues (eg Storrie 1981, MacDonald and Murdoch 1997, Byrne 1997 and 2010, Begg 1999, 2002, Pallister 2007, Hay 2009).

Irish sources, and particularly the Book of the Dean of Lismore (Watson 1937), have preserved a wealth of medieval poetry relating to Argyll, some being composed there, others referencing it, but all relating to the wider cultural milieu (eg see Meek 1998, 2004, McLeod 2004). The online database of Gaelic bardic poetry is bound to contain much currently untapped material.

Despite early interest in Argyll place-names (eg Gillies 1906, MacMillan 1960, Alcock and Alcock 1980), more thorough analyses have only recently begun to pick up pace. Macniven's study of Islay (2015) is an exemplar for how in-depth analysis of a defined area can reveal a huge of wealth of information about how past societies organised and occupied the landscape (also see Holliday 2016 for Tiree).

This localised approach to associated historical disciplines has bled into archaeological studies, throughout the twentieth century a number of local heritage societies pioneered the celebration and study of areas of Argyll: Cowal, Kintyre, Mid Argyll and Lorn. Their journals and publications (Kist, Historic Argyll, Campbell 1984, Rennie 1993, Hood nd) are a wealth of information and in-depth studies.

Antiquarian interest in Argyll was also high, and various monuments, types of sites or areas attracted a range of interests, some of which were specifically medieval (eg Whyte 1873, 1875, Drummond 1881), while others only captured this in passing (eg Currie 1830, Christison 1904). Campbell and Sandeman's (1964) valuable survey is unusual in its comprehensiveness and needs to be recognised alongside the results of wider research campaigns primarily concerned with prehistoric occupation, such as Fairhurst's (many of which are referenced below, but also see 1969) and Cregeen's (see Abernethy 2008), or early medieval, such as Alcock and Alcock (1979). The results of this work supported one of the most comprehensive archaeological surveys of any region in Scotland – the survey of Argyll by the Royal Commission of the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (1971, 1975, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1992) and the spin off compendia, such as Steer and Barrowman's Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands (1977) or Argyll Castles in the Care of Historic Scotland (1997), the introduction to which is invaluable. Unfortunately, against the weight and depth of this survey subsequent archaeological survey has been slow to follow.

Perhaps the only extensive work in medieval archaeology throughout the 1980s and 1990s has been David Caldwell's work in Finlaggan (CANMORE ID 37708) (see Finlaggan: Case Study) (the full report of which remains unpublished, although smaller articles and reports are available – Caldwell 1990, 1993, 1998, Caldwell and Ewart 1993, a thoughtful summary is also found in Caldwell 2001) and the surrounding hills (Caldwell et al. 2000), together with a wider synthesis of Islay and its neighbouring islands (2001, 2008). Argyll's castles have continued to attract interest (eg Simpson 1958, 1966, 1967, 1991, Millar 1963, 1966, Turner and Dunbar 1970, Dunbar and Duncan 1971, Turner 1998, Ewart and Baker 1998, Caldwell et al. 2015b, Caldwell and Stell forthcoming) and conservation at Historic Scotland's properties has also resulted in some excavation (eg Ewart and Triscott 1996, Lewis 1996). However, this is beginning to change with the surveys of the Kilmartin Museum, Ellis, Regan and others, who have begun to identify the extent of sites still to be identified across the Argyll landscape. The success of these later surveys has begun to inspire local museums and community group surveys (one of the most comprehensive being by the

Ross of Mull Historical Centre) and investigations of particular sites (Hidden Heritage Project) and Baliscate (CANMORE ID 294740). Colin and Paula Martin have also acquired an invaluable aerial photographic archive, primarily focussed on coastal and foreshore sites (also see Martin and Martin 2003, Martin 2008, 2009, 2014).

Region wide academic analysis has also borne fruit, with PhDs by Holley 2000 (also see Holley and Ralston 1995), James (2009), Thomas (2009), MacDonald (2010) to name but a few. Argyll's place in wider, regional (often incorporated alongside wider west coast and or Highland studies) or national examinations should not be ignored or discounted (eg Gregory 1881, Bannerman 1977, Bridgland 2004, Cruden 1960, Duncan and Brown 1957, Cowan and Easson 1976, Dunbar 1981, Tabraham 1986, 1988, 1997, McDonald 1997, 2007, Fawcett 2002, 2011, Stell 2006, Oram 2014a, Caldwell and Hall 2014 , Duffy and Mytum 2015). These studies provide a sound basis for future research and opportunities for the benefits provided by taking a multi-discipline approach.

9.3 Secular Seigneurial Building

Due to their monumental construction and positioning, as much as being the product of the lordly aspirations of the leading kindreds and the creation of localised lordships, secular seigniorial buildings are perhaps the best surviving and most obvious features of the medieval landscape in Argyll. They include re-occupied or continuously used prehistoric duns, hillforts and crannogs, alongside new forms of monument such as mottes, castles, towers and island sites, which are sometimes built on top of earlier sites.

There is also another grouping of sites which may date to this period, but may equally belong to another period altogether: ringworks. The most upstanding examples are in Islay: Dun Nosebridge (CANMORE ID 37721) and Dun Guaidhre (CANMORE ID 21853). They resemble, but are not identical to, some of the large bailey earthworks in Galloway, such as the Motte of Urr (CANMORE ID 64982), but they lack the motte. They have a passing resemblance to Scandinavian ringworks, Manx promontory forts or Norse longphorts in Ireland, but are multivallate, inland and generally sited on hilltops. Whilst their date remains unclear it is entirely possible that these reflect a local interpretation of earth and timber castles situated within the early establishment of the Kingdom of the Isles or the power of the MacSorleys. Earthworks at Dunollie (Alcock and Alcock 1987) and Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036) (Breen et al. 2010), both containing late thirteenth-century material but which may be earlier, could also sit within this grouping. An additional possible example may be the ringwork shown in aerial photographs at Kilchoman Bay, Islay, but generally attributed to a later mansion belonging to John of Islay.



Aerial photograph showing Dun Nosebridge, Islay © HES

A handful of sites that have been classified as mottes have been recorded in Argyll, with their distribution largely restricted to Cowal and the upper stretches of the Clyde, with one example in the Mull of Kintyre. The Cowal mottes tend to be located at the base of valleys, presumably close to the best arable land and to control routeways. If these fall within the classical motte-building tradition it could be argued that these are a product of an Anglo-Norman form or approach to lordship, similar to

those adopted both by colonising communities in England and Ireland and by native kinship groups elsewhere in Scotland, as part of a pan-European package informing how land should be held and exploited and how lordship should be expressed. In Scotland mottes seem to have some correlation with knights-fees, but the relationship is not clear, nor does it appear to be absolute (eg see Tabraham 1984, 1988). Scottish examples tend to consist of simple towers on mounds and lack the large baileys or enclosed or defended infrastructure necessary to house large military retinues that are common in England and Ireland. Those on the Clyde could potentially be attributed to the early influence of direct Scottish central authority. Those in Cowal, however, could equally be understood as a product of local lords positively assimilating themselves into Scottish society. The local lords and motte builders, the Lamonts, came to be stewards to the Stewarts in the 1200s, also exemplifying this process in action. Indeed, this may also highlight that it may be unhelpful to view all motte-type structures as the product of a unified cultural model. In this period Gaelic lords in Ireland were building 'raised raths', which have been interpreted as a Gaelic reaction to and interpretation of European motte building, rather than an adoption of the Anglo-Norman model. The differences between Scottish mottes and ringworks and those in the Anglo-Norman world could reveal similar cultural and social divergences, and more work is required in order to understand and specifically culturally situate Scottish motte building.

Whilst it is tempting to see mottes as setting a precedent for the masonry castles to come, paralleling the wider European narrative, their construction appears to have been contemporaneous with the re-adoption of prehistoric sites, such as crannogs and duns, which arguably sit more comfortably within a Gaelic milieu (in the central Highlands there is evidence for a degree of continuity throughout the tenth to eleventh centuries, but in the west and north, especially where Norse settlement appears to have been most absolute, there is a clear phase of abandonment: Ireland also shows a re-intensification of settlement on crannogs and ringforts in the same period). This indicates a fundamental change in perceptions of lordship,



General view of Castle Sween from the southeast © HES

hierarchy and heritage in Argyll society. The pattern of monument-type adoption reveals that this process was mediated, informed, interpreted and expressed at different times and in different places.

Castle Sween (CANMORE ID 39028) is widely accepted, on the basis of architectural analogy, as being one of the oldest masonry castles in Scotland. Indeed, throughout the 1200s there appears to have been a spate of early masonry castle construction throughout the west coast, including Argyll. Many historians have seen these as being built by local lords under royal patronage as a bulwark against the wild west (eg Grant 1988). This perhaps fits well for a good number of enclosure castles, built by lords who had a substantial mainland base and were heavily ingratiating themselves with affairs of Scottish Kings and, at the same time extracting themselves from the influence of the Kings of Norway, Man and the Isles and/or the MacSorleys. Castle Sween seems to have been erected in conjunction with the MacSweens gaining the Scottish king's confirmation of their estates. Likewise, the MacDougall castles at Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036) and Duart (CANMORE ID 22662) appear at the same time as they courted the Scottish king and attempted to extricate themselves from Norway.

Further west, hall houses, or chamber castles, seem to have been more common. These appear to have been built within a different cultural context, perhaps outwith or as a rejection of Scottish royal influence. In Argyll, the architectural embellishments seen at and size of Aros (CANMORE ID 22272), coupled with its size, is perhaps the most indicative reflection of the western lords' independence and their equality of status with royal magnates further east. Skipness (CANMORE ID 39798) or Fincharn (CANMORE ID 22777), in mainland Argyll, however, demonstrate that they were not solely a western phenomenon. Other forms of the hall house can be found throughout Scotland, but again they tend to be restricted to the very high echelons of court society. They can also be found in Ireland, providing an alternative source of inspiration for Gaelic lords. The earlier examples are relatively simple in form, showing no evidence for vaulting and containing a first floor entrance. The hall house form of castle is certainly different from the enclosures mentioned above, but is this simply just a different type of building or does it reveal something different about the messages these lords were keen to convey? If we interpret these, as has been common, as fortified or monumentalised halls, rather than 'castles', then there would seem to be a keen emphasis on display and the bringing together of disparate communities for activities, such as feasting and judicial assembly. However, such activities are equally likely to have taken place in free-standing or lean-to buildings within the enclosure castles. The insertion of masonry hall ranges at a later stage, though, may suggest that there was perhaps some recognition that the timber buildings at enclosure castles did not provide a suitable venue for some lords and a later converging of the two traditions.

It remains unclear where accommodation was provided in many early castles, Irish sources would suggest that this was mainly located outside the main castle and that the main chambers were only utilised for display and defence (Loeber 2001). The number of outbuildings surrounding Hebridean castles would support a similar situation in Argyll (Raven 2005). Outwith Argyll, at Dundonald (CANMORE ID 41970), the addition of chambers was only an afterthought (Ewart and Pringle 2004), and the development of the towerhouse, with internal chambers above the hall, would also seem to verify that the provision of accommodation within the castle itself was a later requirement.

The understanding of castles in the Lordship of the Isles and Scotland's Gaelic seaboard remains very much in the dark, and this confusion extends to their dating. There are a few glimpses from the documentary record, a handful of charters, some poems and other written histories, often written long after the event. Yet it is difficult to directly relate the documents with the castles

themselves, either in form or to phasing in the remains of the masonry. Some have tried to identify characteristics in building styles with particular dates (for example see Caldwell and Ruckley 2005), others have tried to rely on comparisons between more ornate features, such as moulding. However, this is problematic at the best of time and interpretation becomes even more complicated when dealing with a culture keen to emphasise their earlier antecedents and cultural distinctiveness and therefore all too ready to adopt already old forms of architecture. Simplicity and antiquated window forms do not therefore necessarily indicate backwardness but can represent a deliberately chosen conservatism, reflecting agency and choice. Dating consequently represents a key issue for castle studies in Argyll and beyond. Building on the work in England and Ireland Mark Thacker has pioneered innovative techniques to analysis, phase and date mortars that he is applying to west coast castles and which has the potential to transform the ongoing debate.

One linking feature shared by most early enclosure castles and hall houses is their location, which tend to be coastal and focussed on good harbours – this almost certainly reveals the importance of fisheries and the contribution of the payment of portage and for permission by local and foreign fishermen to exploit a lord's fisheries to the economies of the west coast lordships. Warmer temperatures in the twelfth to fourteenth centuries saw an explosion in fish numbers, much closer to shore than previously. This resulted in a significant expansion of Atlantic fisheries, English and European fleets followed, and, presumably, Hebridean fleets also joined them, trading their catch for export. Indeed, it is the vast, new, monetary income that these fisheries generated that fuelled the Gaelic renaissance in this period and Gaelic culture's artistic and architectural legacy.

The main exceptions to this coastal distribution are those castles on Loch Awe, which remained both a main thoroughfare and boundary between lordships for most of the middle ages. What these have in common with their coastal cousins, however, is that they are on nodal points, where Gael met incomer, lords met vassals, and that it was here that lords needed to impress their credentials and most required to exploit the architectural grammar that castles offered.

Cairnburgh Castle (CANMORE ID 21823), in the Treshnish Isles, Dun Chonnuill (CANMORE ID 22374), in the Garvellachs, and perhaps Claig Castle (CANMORE ID 38131), Jura, however, depart from this, being remote from any settlement or landing and in the case of the first two almost entirely out at sea: all can only be interpreted as being primarily concerned with monitoring sea routes. In the case of Cairnburgh it is perhaps telling that despite being perceived as being important enough to get mentioned in Hakon's Saga and regularly mentioned in charters, neither it, nor Dun Chonnuill, really conforms to the castle model, mostly relying on cliffs and stretches of masonry covering the main approaches for defence, and both are often interpreted as being relatively early.

Across Western Argyll from the twelfth century onwards reoccupied prehistoric fortifications – brochs, duns and crannogs – became an increasing feature of medieval landscapes. The excavated examples reveal a range of forms of reoccupation, from the post-built houses that fill the entirety of walled interior of Dun Fhinn in Kintyre (Fairhurst 1939), to the scattered huts built throughout the enclosures of Kildonan (CANMORE ID 38756), Kintyre (Fairhurst 1956), and MacEwen's Castle (CANMORE ID 39861), Cowal (Marshall 1983). To this we might add the more substantial buildings outside Tirefour broch in Lismore (Stoddart forthcoming). Further east it is possible that there was more continuous occupation of such monuments. In Perthshire and Galloway, for instance, there is evidence for their continued use throughout the tenth and eleventh centuries (see Raven 2005 for a fuller discussion).

The reuse of sites that would have been seen as

old and predating the Norse incursions should be seen in the context of medieval kindreds who were increasingly emphasising their native and Gaelic origins through manipulation of their genealogical pedigrees. This was further emphasised by associating many of these sites with founding figure s in clan pedigrees. Dun Mhuirich (CANMORE ID 39122) in Knapdale, was named after one of the founding figures in the genealogies of the leading families in the area, including the MacSweens (see Sellar 1971 and Meek 1998). It is unclear whether 'Muirich' ever lived at the site or later associations with the dun as their ancestral seat were fictitious. Nevertheless, it was occupied in the later Middle Ages (Regan 2012, 2013) and the continued use of the placename, directly linking it to a key ancestral figure, is surely significant, as is the deliberate visual relationship between it and Castle Sween (CANMORE ID 39028), itself named after another eponymous Figure in the same genealogies. The association of both sites with the same stretch of seaway and with good harbours is also revealing. The MacSweens continued the practice of using pre-existing fortifications as they established themselves in Ireland, after their eviction from Scotland, prior to a later phase of castle building (Breen and Raven forthcoming). Even where the nomenclature is not so evident the ancestral connections of some clans with prehistoric fortifications lasted throughout the medieval period. The Campbells seem to have associated themselves, their core origins and heartland directly with a fortified island in Loch Avich, Caisteal na Nighinn Ruaidhe (CANMORE ID 23170). Likewise, the MacDonald and MacDougall occupation of the Dalriadic capitals of Dunaverty (CANMORE ID 38302) and Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036) were intended to demonstrate their inheritance of the early kingdoms with links to Ireland. Caldwell (pers. comm.) has tentatively suggested an alternative location for the 'Isleborg' mentioned in Hakon's Saga could be an inland site in Tiree built upon what appears to have been a crannog. Those sites chosen for reoccupation predominantly reveal a concern with monitoring and seaborne traffic and controlling harbours. The number of these sites that then became the focus for later castles is also surely significant.

Lesser kindreds continued to occupy duns and crannogs throughout the later middle ages and into the seventeenth century. Many of these continued to be coastally situated but many are also located inland and show an association with local resources, arable, woodland, fishing, routeways, grazing and hunting forests. Their lack of fortification may also reveal a willingness to express connections with their tenants and clansmen, rather than the need to impress them with architecture. The longevity of occupation remains unclear, however, the picture may be skewed by the nature of the documentary and map based evidence we have to date their occupation, which tends to be much later in origin.

Finlaggan (see Case Study 12: Finlaggan) provides an interesting glass through which to view the broad spectrum and development of west coast and Argyll fortifications. The first phase of medieval use appears to have been the construction of a masonry castle built over the remains of a prehistoric dun on a small island at the end of a larger island. The castle appears to be very early and resembles Rushen in Man more than its Scottish neighbours and has been tentatively identified with the Crovan dynasty. At a later date the castle seems to have become redundant, and perhaps as a deliberate attempt to obliterate and supersede any Crovan connection, was then demolished and replaced with a much larger complex of buildings spread across both islands (see Caldwell 1993, 1998, Caldwell and Ewart 1993). This complex included dwelling houses and service buildings but also a large, well built masonry hall on the larger island. The smaller island was retained for assembly or lordly councils, housed in a series of rather diminutive huts. Whilst no longer a castle it housed all the same functions, but with all the units usually arranged within one castle structure, instead distributed in separate disarticulated buildings. Unlike most castles of the time it is not sited on the coast but inland,

on the main glen dividing Islay, but surrounded by wide pastures and hunting grounds. This may have allowed the inhabitants to display their cattle wealth but, also, the degree of separation from the sea would have encouraged a sense of transition, for those whose journeys had begun with a boat journey outwith Islay. The change in symbology embedded in the transition from a masonry castle to a less enclosed island complex may reveal much about the changing nature of MacSorley and later MacDonald lordship, from one more feudally orientated to one more embracing a Gaelic world view.

This arrangement (inland, with a number of related islands, and associated with some form assembly or judiciary function) is one reflected throughout Argyll and the Isles. For instance, see the relationship between the castle on Eilean Tighe Bhain (CANMORE ID 23471) and the nearby complex of structures on Eilean a Bharain (CANMORE ID 185988), on Loch Tromlee.

The changes at Finlaggan (CANMORE ID 37708) were taking place at the same time as many Argyll lords were beginning to adopt a new architectural form: the tower. Towerhouses became increasingly common throughout Scotland and Ireland from the late fourteenth century onwards, initially as the main residences of the main lords, then, from the sixteenth century, more commonly at the centre of sub and lesser lordships. They were often inserted into and onto earlier structures, such as Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036), Castle Sween (CANMORE ID 39028) and Duart (CANMORE ID 22662), the result of extensive remodelling, such as at Innis Chonnel (CANMORE ID 23162), but many appear to have been built on virgin sites, such as at Carrick (CANMORE ID 40804) and Moy (CANMORE ID 22392). They comprise a varied collection, widely differing in size, complexity and the nature of internal features. The origins of the towerhouse have been the subject of much debate. In Argyll, some were clearly inspired by Irish traditions, if not built by Irish masons. As the MacDougalls re-established themselves they built their new castle at Dunollie using wicker centring (a method used to support a vault from underneath during construction and achieved elsewhere largely through using wider planks). Wicker centring is relatively common in Irish towerhouses and increasingly taken to be indicative of a date in the first half of the 1400s (Rory Sherlock pers. comm.). Carrick Castle also displays features, such as the gable or angled open headed windows (the most distinctive feature being a window head formed from two flattish stones leaning together), which would perhaps sit more comfortably within an Irish setting than a Scottish one There is a small corpus of other Scottish examples), although it also takes a lead from Gothic traditions. However, the influences for most fourteenth and fifteenth-century towerhouses are not so clear cut.

Scottish towerhouses have not been subject to the same intensive study in terms of architectural and spatial analysis as their Irish siblings (perhaps best exemplified by Sherlock, O'Keeffe and others) and such a study is long overdue. Whether built anew or on sites with a pedigree, the predominating focus continued to be coastal and associated with harbours (and again this has become the focus of much Irish scholarship, see Sherlock, Kelleher, Naessens, Breen, Gardiner, McNeill amongst others). Whilst it is probably no coincidence that the commencement of this secondary phase of castle building coincided with increasing foreign exploitation of west coast fisheries, the wealth this exploitation produced helped contribute to the wider Gaelic renaissance (see Raven 2005). However, it continued into the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, when the Little Ice Age resulted in a collapse in off shore fish numbers and their relocation to deeper waters. Pelagic fishery exploitation dramatically reduced, as did the income generated. However, leases and legal disputes show that lords, and notably the earls and bishops of Argyll, became suddenly very concerned with defining and maintaining control of river and estuary salmon fishing, often using fish traps in conjunction to boats. Trade in these fish species is likely to have made



General View of Carnassarie Castle from the south © HES

a contribution to lords' coffers. Colin and Paula Martin have done much to identify the remains of fish traps and early harbours, and have noted their relationship with castles, but more work is required to date and understand their use and phasing (Martin and Martin, Martin 2008, Martin 2009). Richard Oram (pers. comm.) has noted that in Iceland the scale of industrial fish processing resulted in specialised sites and that it seems likely such sites existed in Argyll, centred on Loch Fyne and other nodal points where shelter and access coincide.

The tension between royal patronage and burgeoning independence also continued. For instance, the MacLeans established new castles as they emerged from the shadow of the Lordship of the Isles. Many of the older castles remained under direct royal ownership, albeit operated by a constable or captain with the position held by the head of the main local lordship, as at Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036), Dunoon (CANMORE ID 40729) and Tarbert (CANMORE ID 39316). Some of the largest and ostentatious towerhouses were clearly built to make a statement of newly established power: Carrick Castle was built on the site of an earlier hall but in its final form is proclaimed the Campbell's arrival as a dominant power on the upper stretches of the Clyde, whilst Moy, seemingly built on a previously unoccupied site, announced the arrival of a newly empowered MacLean kin group.

Caldwell (pers. comm.) has recently suggested the early use of artillery fortifications throughout Argyll, notably by the MacDonald South at Dunyvaig (CANMORE ID 38002) and other sites in Islay and Colonsay as well as by the MacLeans at Breachacha (CANMORE ID21576). This reflecting an early adoption of artillery in the Irish Wars, and perhaps fuelled by guns recovered from the Spanish Armada.

Elsewhere, the later sixteenth century witnessed more gentile approaches to towerhouse building, more familiar with Lowland Scottish styles and, in some cases, perhaps demonstrating protestant

identities. This is probably most demonstrable at the decorative Carnassarie Castle (CANMORE ID 22835), built by the new Protestant Bishop of the Isles, under Campbell patronage. Despite the renaissance mouldings, resembling politer houses in Stirlingshire, their place in the Gaelic world was emphasised through inscriptions and also through the siting of the towerhouse alongside an earlier dun. However, its domesticity may be overstated. It sat on the main pass into Mid-Argyll and was the focus of activity during reprisals against the Campbells throughout the 1600s. Likewise, Gylen Castle (CANMORE ID 22936), Kerrera, built by the heirs to the then protestant MacDougall lordship shows an understanding of the grammar of polite landscapes and manipulated approaches. From the sea the seaward face appears stern and unadorned, but once landed the visitor would climb up and perambulate around the hillside until the castle's, previously obscured, gentile opposite face was revealed, exhibiting an oriel window and sculptures of ladies and gentlemen adorned in the most up to date fashions. These details are much more similar to the towerhouses of Ayrshire than its Argyllshire neighbours, and a study of the comparisons may bear further fruit.

The polite and gentile form of towerhouse became increasingly common from this period onwards, and many, such as Duntrune (CANMORE ID 39147) and Kilmartin (CANMORE ID 39515) would be not be incongruous anywhere else in Scotland (also see Dalglish 2005).

Argyll also possesses a number of lesser known smaller towers, which may be very simple diminutive towerhouses or represent something quite different. Some appear to be the centres of much smaller lordships, such as Island Muller (CANMORE ID 38787) or Dun Ara (CANMORE ID 22069) on Mull. Others, however, are less clear, such as Caol Chaorann (CANMORE ID 22795), Torran, built near a good landing on Loch Awe and just below a potentially reoccupied dun with a name linking it to a position in medieval lordship, Dun Toiseach (CANMORE ID 22771).

The individualism expressed across four centuries of castle building in Argyll may preclude against the usefulness of dividing them into broad categories – the differences between each example of hall house are almost as broad as between them and contemporary enclosure castles. This is a subject that would bear considerable further analysis.

9.4 The Church

Whilst the early church is fundamental to Argyll's identity, subsequent developments have attracted surprisingly little interest (notable exceptions being MacDonald 1974, MacDonald 2010, MacDonald 2013). For instance, the landscape is peppered with small rectangular unicameral chapels, often stone-built and contained in small rectangular or rectangular enclosures, yet very few can be dated and it is therefore difficult to place them accurately in time or understand how they inform us about spiritual and pastoral care for their patrons or the communities they served. Those with a 'kil' or 'cille' placename associated with them are often taken to be very early, but the ubiquity of this prefix in places where Norse incursions appear to have obliterated pre-existing placenames suggests that many could be much later in origin, either being Norse or post-Norse foundations or sites. The potential for them to have retained associations with earlier churches throughout the Norse period should not be discounted, the presence of earlier sculpture suggesting continued recognition of Christian activity at some older sites. Further east there may have been less disruption of use. Many of these sites, however, could equally only immediately pre-date the foundation of the parish system and the twelfth-century reforms that swept the church throughout Europe and found a particular expression in Argyll in the shift away from the western 'Celtic' church, centred on Argyll and Ireland, to a more Latinised church (see Cowan 1974, 1978, Barrell 2003, Bridgland 2004). Comparison with other areas suggests that these churches were potentially the product

of two competing systems. In some areas they appear to have been founded by monasteries in an attempt to deliver and spread pastoral care, in others local lords seem to have founded churches, sometimes in order that their tenants could receive spiritual succour but more often than not to deliver to their own household's needs.

Disentangling these sites from ones that leave similar remains, built to mark and provide devotional opportunities at crossing and landing places, holy wells, places associated with holy events of places, remains problematic, however. In many cases they also remained in use once the parish system had become established, either due to continued spiritual attributions, or because they served remote and disparate communities. Many also served as the focus for burial until relatively recently.

Notwithstanding that many of churches may have originally been timber, Argyll appears to boast some of the earliest lime bonded masonry churches in Scotland (perhaps paralleling the early adoption of masonry castles) – exhibited by a number of rather plain unicameral, relatively large twelfth-century churches seemingly built by Somerled and his immediate descendants. These appear to precede a phase of more widespread church building most characterised by lancet windows, often in pairs at the eastern gable wall, and sockets for rood screens. The majority of these are relatively plain but there are a small number of highly ornate churches within this group. Killean (CANMORE ID 38555) is perhaps the best exemplar of this group, patronised by the Lords of the Isles as they extended their hold over Kintyre. Dunstaffnage may also fall into this category but it is not clear if this was a parish church or intended solely for the devotion of the MacDougal lord and his household. Throughout the western seaboard chapels were often built close to but not directly connected to castles, which may suggest something about how Gaelic lords perceived their connections to the church, but it may also betray earlier origins as the relationship between chapels and high status farmsteads and reoccupied duns has some pedigree. A small number of churches exhibit sculptural embellishments, such as sheela-na-gigs, the significance of which remains poorly understood in a Scottish context. Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036) aside, this group of churches tend to be seen as a part of a phase of parish formation, but without harder dating evidence this can only be an assumption, especially as architectural conservatism can hinder dating through comparison. The larger size may result from a centralising of resources and a desire to accommodate larger numbers of parishioners inside, where they could witness the mass; although they remain relatively modest in size compared with the likely populations and it seems likely that most worshiped outside and participated in mass simply by association.



Window in the south wall of Kilean Old Parish Church © HES

It can be no coincidence that the founding of a monastery at Saddell (CANMORE ID 38866) by Somerled coincided with the extension of his power in Kintyre. Following Somerled's lead and the break with the western tradition at Iona, he and his descendants began an almost unprecedented programme of founding and building reformed monasteries, often with ties to the sees of Paisley and Furness, rather than Nidaros. As the MacDougals attempted to establish their own dominance and refocus the Kingdom of the Isles inwards

and towards Scotland the establishment and later embellishment of Ardchattan was surely a deliberate ploy to take the focus away from Iona. It is perhaps in this context that we could also view the creation of the Bishopric of Argyll and the Cathedral at Lismore (CANMORE ID 23100), but this is far from certain. The difficulties it suffered throughout the rest of the Middle Ages perhaps reflects the diminution of MacDougall power and the continued association with the MacDougalls leading to a lack of willingness of other lords to act as patron. The continued lack of political unity in Argyll may have also contributed.

Ecclesiastical patronage does not appear to have been a significant feature of Campbell lordship in mainland Argyll (Boardman's 2005 denotes their predilection for castle building instead). Like most of the lords of central Argyll and Cowal they seem instead to have been largely content with less architecturally embellished sites, such as Inishail (CANMORE ID 23456) in Loch Awe. Larger churches in eastern and mid-Argyll, like Kilneaur (CANMORE ID 22788), Kilfinan (CANMORE ID 39866) and others, mostly appear to be both relatively early and under the patronage of kindreds other than the Campbells. Campbell policy seems to have extended to monasteries, although they may have been influential in the attempts by Scottish kings to relocate the bishopric of Argyll to Saddell. The only exception to this is the collegiate church in Kilmun (CANMORE ID 40768 and CANMORE ID 250643), which is late and exceptional in many ways, reflecting a rejection of West Highland aesthetics in favour of Gothic norms.

The enlargement of churches and the refurbishment or building of new monasteries was a feature of the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles through the fourteenth and into the early fifteenth centuries, such as the extension of Killean (CANMORE ID 38555) and the new building programmes at Iona and Oronsay (CANMORE ID 37822). However, with the collapse of the Lordship, building at churches and monasteries sharply declined. Despite the handful of iconic examples of monastic building, there are surprisingly few examples of reformed monasteries compared to elsewhere. There are also much fewer nunneries than might be expected. The lack of construction activity in Argyll may be a product of the drop in revenues and paucity of the parishes which are well documented from the late 1400s through to the Reformation. Alternatively, it is possible that this reflects the continued central dominance of Iona.

An interesting feature of Argyll and Hebridean church building is the strong connections



Remains of Collegiate Church of St Mun with Kilmun Kirk in the background © HES

between Irish and Scottish masons. Similarities in style and features, along with Irish names inscribed at Oronsay, have led some to suggest that these masons came directly from Ireland (although see Caldwell et al 2015a) but this would not account for the hybrid nature of Hebridean masonry, so the situation of masonry there is likely to be more nuanced.

Studies of early Christianity have emphasised how deeply embedded the church was throughout the landscape. It remains less clear, however, how these were perceived, understood and exploited by the later church. For instance, although pre-existing crosses and boundaries were adopted by later churches, it is less clear if these were used to mediate new messages. Crosses erected in later periods may have complimented pre-existing patterns but equally may have enabled the manipulation and reinterpretion of existing crosses in the establishment of new understandings and patterns throughout the landscape. Later folk tradition has often been uncritically used as an indicator of continuity and this needs to be routinely tested. On the other hand, the wear on the cross base at Kilchoman (CANMORE ID 37434), Islay, suggest prolonged use of ballaun stones and quern stones were certainly adopted into church buildings, reflecting earlier traditions.

Almost every parish church graveyard in Argyll boasts at least a few examples of Late Medieval West Highland Sculpture. The most common motifs used are perhaps the warrior figure s, often buckling on their war gear, or holding spears, but they are also often shown mounted, or represented through seigniorial imagery: swords, galleys, hunting, etc (also McDonald 1995 for other imagery adopted by Hebridean lords). They are overwhelmingly masculine, martial and noble in character, although they appear to have been commissioned by craftsmen and those further down the social ladder than burial sculpture elsewhere in Scotland, where only the highest echelons were commemorated in this way. A few clergy, women and corpses were also depicted. Smaller slabs have marked the graves of children, but this, again, is not clear.

These figures were often surrounded by scrollwork, mythical beasts, angels, tools, crosses and much more, but interestingly direct references to saints or request memorial prayers are absent. This is an art form that is distinctive to the Gaelic Scottish west coast Highlands and Islands, but the extent to which it may have taken its lead from wider European imagery is generally unacknowledged. Steer and Barrowman's (1977) seminal study, built on a number of earlier regional studies (Whyte 1873, 1875, Lamont 1968), drew together the corpus of examples then known, and tried to make sense of how they may have been created and identify patterns in the imagery used. Recently, Caldwell and his colleagues (2010, 2015a) have begun to reappraise their conclusions, suggesting that instead of schools of carving based in a limited number of localities, usually centred on monasteries, there were peripatetic groups of carvers exploiting quarries local to whoever was employing them.

He has also begun to think about patterns of patronage, their dating, the meaning of the weaponry, arms and armour represented, the choreography of the figure s and the iconography of much of the symbols used, but, despite their prevalence and the fact that they are such emotive exemplars of Scottish Gaelic culture (the four examples occurring Ireland are as distinct from the Scottish ones as they are similar), there remains much to be understood about this corpus. Study and comparison of the distribution of carved stones, both within churchyards and between parish church and monasteries, may reveal much about how and where they were designed to be presented, devotion and patronage. Many graveslabs are likely to remain buried within graveyards. Adoption of the approaches outlined in the Future Thinking of Carved Stones in Scotland (ScARF 2016) may also prove fruitful.

Very little is understood of how priests were supported and accommodated. Oral history often suggests they lived nearby or interprets architectural oddities as indicators of lofts within the churches themselves. Further study could help shed further light on this issue.

9.5 Administration

While Innes (1851) and Cowan (1961, 1967, 1978) pulled together evidence for most medieval Argyll parishes, their date of foundation remains vague (although see MacDonald 2013). The relationship of parishes to early administrative districts and the establishment of control and taxation by centralising powers, possibly linked to the creation of kingdoms and the development of proto-states, renders understanding the date and process of their creation and mapping parish boundaries a crucial issue. It would also assist in providing a picture of the structures that underpinned society. There is also a relationship with fortifications and churches that remains obscure (see Raven 2005). In the Isles, and particularly Islay, there appear to a number of additional land units that may have predated and probably underpinned the parish unit. These include pennylands, ouncelands and other units that may represent some form of proto-parish structure (MacKerral 1944, Bannerman 1974, Lamont 1981, Easson 1987, Macniven 2015), but these configurations are different from where similar units appear throughout the Kingdom of Man and the Isles. Placename and documentary evidence suggests these units may be most densely concentrated on the Isles, Lorn and Kintyre, those areas most under the MacSorley influence, but there are occurrences elsewhere in Argyll and only in-depth study reveal any patterns and what this might indicate.

A small number of individual examples of assembly sites in Argyll are known but they have not been studied in detail as sites, nor have how they fit into wider structures of governance. This is all the more curious as the documentary evidence surviving for Finlaggan (CANMORE ID 37708) means that it has been particularly well looked at (eg Caldwell 2003) which means that this should serve as an exemplar for many others. Archaeological evidence for medieval feasting supports documentary records indicating the continuity of assembly at Dunadd (CANMORE ID 38564) (Lane and Campbell 2000). Other sites, usually mounds or stones, have been identified through placename evidence, linked to names for assembly, such as Eireachd or Mód (of which there is a small concentration in Cowal and a recently discovered group in Mull – Whyte 2014), or to Gaelic titles for lawyers, judges or courts (O'Grady 2008, James 2009). The subject would benefit from closer study.

It is also possible that some of the Argyll coastline was subject to a rudimentary system of coastal monitoring. Similar systems were well established in Man from the twelfth century, the traces of which are cliff-top promontory forts, with earthworks containing houses and stands for bonfires or beacons (Johnson 2002). A number of placenames containing aingeal, faire or freachadain, amongst others, suggest the potential for something similar in Argyll. By the sixteenth century there are records of MacDonalds using bonfires to send signals across the seas between Ulster and Islay. Dun Athad (CANMORE ID 37290), in Islay, has often been interpreted as belonging to this period, but the cliff top peninsula setting, with a large rectangular structure sitting behind a large earthwork is strikingly similar to some of the earlier Manx examples noted above.

9.6 The Wider Landscape

Medieval settlement remains elusive throughout Scotland and the situation is no different in Argyll. Few of the strategies developed to address this situation have borne fruit. This includes concentrating on the area around later settlements, which has been the default mainstay of historic settlement studies in Scotland since the 1950s despite a spectacular lack of results (for a summary of the current

state of Scottish historic rural settlement studies see the Historic Rural Settlement Group's Research Framework – Dalglish & Dixon 2008). Whilst this may partially be a product of the lack of readily identifiable medieval material culture and buildings constructed from highly perishable materials leaving little archaeological trace, this – more probably – suggests some form of discontinuity and break in the nature, location and/or form of settlement. Work in the Outer Hebrides (Raven 2005) indicates that a dramatic realignment of settlement occurred somewhere between the fourteenth and sixteenth century and that the post-medieval settlement pattern is largely a product of the eighteenth century and not the product of continuity.

With the exception of the fewbuildings associated with duns and castles very little has been identified that can be dated with any certainty from the twelfth to fifteenth centuries. A number of circular post built structures associated with charcoal burning activity at Dunloskin Wood, Cowal, have been dated to between the eleventh and fourteenth centuries (Rennie 1984, 1997, nd). Whilst some have recently suggested the domestic use has been misidentified, recent excavations in Lochaber have confirmed this interpretation (Ellis forthcoming). Their shape and location suggests they may not be representative of normal houses, and may be seasonal charcoal burners' huts, similar to the shielings on Jura that accompanied Pennant's eighteenth-century itinerary (1774). The only other domestic building dating to the thirteenth century is the recently excavated sub-rectangular building at Kilchoman (CANMORE ID 187906) (Ellis 2015). Of similar date is the kiln-barn at Baliscate (CANMORE ID 294740) (Ellis 2017), suggesting grain processing might have been more intensified than would otherwise be indicated by what appears to be an absence of contemporary mills. Post-built houses appear to have been common in the twelfth century in the Scandinavian world and eastern Highlands: the post-built structure within Dun Fhinn (CANMORE ID 38467) perhaps indicates this tradition may have spread into Argyll but, currently, no other examples have been identified.



The clifftop setting of Dun Athad, Islay © HES

Those sixteenth-century houses that have been closely dated are often unusual in their siting: Gunna (CANMORE ID 141630) (James 1998a, 1998b) sits on a hard to reach tidal island while those at Finlaggan (CANMORE ID 37708) (Caldwell and Ewart 1993) relate to what is effectively a closing off and obliteration of the MacDonald lordly use of the site. They are, however, similar to contemporary houses excavated in mid-Argyll by James (2004, 2009) and in Lewis, North Uist, Skye and Perthshire (Raven 2005). Characteristically, these houses are relatively small and insubstantial, sub-rectangular in plan, mostly with a central hearth (although some have end hearths) and often largely turf built or wicker walled.

There is often an assumption crucks were used throughout the medieval period, although some would argue against this (Dixon 2002). However, despite some limited evidence suggesting the possibility of cruck construction in neighbouring districts (eg Dixon 1998, Walker 2008), the evidence is not persuasive. Cruck building elsewhere only seems to have become common from the fifteenth centuries onwards and there is little evidence that this technique was imported into Argyll any earlier. More evidence may redress this picture.

It is curious that similarly formed buildings identified through survey in Islay (Caldwell et al. 2000) and mid-Argyll (James 2009 and Regan) tend to be more upland in setting than associated with later low-lying arable fields. Although these late medieval houses often sit within or alongside small areas of rig and furrow, their ephemeral form and more upland distribution may suggest a number of possibilities, none of which are necessarily mutually exclusive: a greater concern with pastoral resources, displacement through war (recent work has certainly suggested this is the case in Colonsay in the early seventeenth century – Breen and Raven 2012) or a reaction to environmental stress (Raven 2005). A widespread programme of excavation would test the date, function and environment of similarly shaped buildings. Environmental work may also help to answer if any of these scenarios has any validity and compliment larger scale survey and excavation. This would also help answer questions about the extent of woodland and the importance of woodland exploitation for charcoal manufacture and galley building to the Argyll economy (see below).

New models for identifying medieval settlement are required.

Field walking in the more fertile fields of Kintyre noted, but did not record, concentrations and spreads of imported medieval wares (Cummings pers. comm.). Revisiting these fields along with analysis of the context of middens containing medieval pottery in Coll (Crawford 1997) may provide opportunities for investigations into lower lying settlement. Concentrating on one, defined settlement unit, such as a pennyland, through a combination of survey, test pitting and chemical analysis from lowland to upland may also prove highly productive. Another possibility may be to excavate around the vicinity of the earlier, smaller chapels, as, throughout the North Atlantic, from Orkney to Greenland, there is a strong correlation of chapels with important farmsteads from the Norse period onwards. Closer analysis of the Historic Land-Use Assessment may also bear fruit by providing areas of survival of medieval settlement to focus upon. Work in Ireland has shown how difficult creel houses, or creachts, can be to identify in the archaeological record, often only a scatter of stake holes remain, occasionally accompanied by a hearth. The grey literature contains odd reference to 'isolated hearths' and other un-identified stake holes that may, just, on further inspection, prove to be indicators of medieval settlement. Excavators, especially when prompted by developer funded work, should be encouraged to look for possible indications of ephemeral structures, many of which may only survive within the top soil.

The upland location and ephemeral form of many of the houses that have been identified as medieval could also suggest that many sites which have been identified as shielings, simply because they are upland sites, may, upon closer inspection, be discovered to represent medieval houses. The similarity of their remains could say something about the transient, transhumant and/or seasonal nature of medieval settlement and land use. Do they, for instance, as noted above, simply reveal a reaction to the most effective method for achieving subsistence farming in an arable poor, upland marginal environment; a reaction to environmental collapse; a shift towards cattle and pastoral resources; a defence mechanism at a time of increased raiding and decreased stability, and/or; the adoption of mass-migratory systems, with whole communities permanently shifting from pasture to pasture, similar to that Tudor English commentators witnessed in Ireland (see Raven 2005, 2012b, Dixon forthcoming for different perspectives). Shielings are poorly understood as a rule, as archaeologists use the classification to cover a diverse range of structures, almost any upland building, and land uses, and the subject tends to be dismissed. Much further excavation and analysis is required. Further, in-depth work, incorporating excavation may allow for more nuanced identification and expand the understanding of the extent and nature of medieval upland land use.

Further work on the development of dykes and field systems is needed in order to understand their date and development. An initial place to start could be the Historic Land-use Assessment which has identified small upland spreads of rig and furrow and distinctive globular field-systems in Mull and Islay which could represent a different form or date of agriculture (RCAHMS 2002). Further investigation of medieval and localised cultivation practices (see Dixon 2016) may also help elucidate this further.

Recent excavations at Baliscate (CANMORE ID 294740), Mull, may also help rewrite the settlement history of Argyll. Baliscate also continued to be used into this period, the early medieval chapel was reused by a building similar to but slightly larger than those buildings outlined above. It has a large quantity of pottery associated with it (Ellis 2017)), which may suggest a domestic use rather than a later chapel. However, the post-excavation analysis of Baliscate has the potential to re-write Hebridean settlement history. The dating of the hand-made pottery produced throughout the Kingdom of the Isles and potentially Ulster and Man has proved particularly hard to date and interpret. Diagnostic features rely on vessel form and decorations which are often all but undecipherable but on a small number of sherds within an assemblage, all of which are poorly phased and dated (Raven 2005). Many pottery specialists had even begun to lazily attribute all historic hand-made Hebridean wares from the tenth to nineteenth centuries to the meaningless cover-all term: 'craggan-ware'. Some form on consensus was, nevertheless, beginning to appear in the way of typologies and very broad contextual dating (see Campbell 2003, Raven 2005). However, carbon dating analysis at Baliscate has revealed that pottery of a form that has previously been dated to the later Middle Ages dates, instead, to the thirteenth century (Hall et al 2017). This calls for a substantial reanalysis of medieval hand-made pottery throughout the western seaboard. Added to this should be studies of why so many of these sites contain imported continental wares and why there seems to have been little exchange or trade of Hebridean wares: for instance, whilst there are some morphological similarities between Manx and Hebridean medieval pottery, no Manx pottery has been identified in the Hebrides, or vice versa.

There is an assumption that the medieval landscape of Argyll was largely deforested, with some areas of woodland that was sufficiently mature and well managed to provide materials for castle, church and galley building. The likelihood is that the high medieval period was sufficiently warm (see Section 10.2) and dry enough to support wide scale arable farming, especially in flatter, lower lying areas. Limestone areas, like Lismore, and a few pockets of land, such as around Campbeltown in Kintyre, appear to have been particularly desirable in this period, which seems to be largely a result of their arable potential. Using data from elsewhere, it appears that the Little Ice Age is likely to have significantly reduced this capability. This is most evident around coastal zones, where storms, sand blow and soil destabilisation appears to have been increasingly common. Many medieval remains in machair environments, such as Coll and Tiree, were subsumed in the sand. Oram (2014b) has argued that Highland and Hebridean Scotland is unlikely to have been immune from the waves of cattle disease that spread across Europe in this period, and James (2009) has identified several recorded examples relating directly to Argyll. Oram has also identified one reference that may suggest that the Hebrides were not isolated from the Black Plague (also see Oram and Adderley 2010). This environmental collapse, especially if complimented by pestilence, is likely to have had a significant impact on the Argyll economy, adding to, and perhaps even being a significant cause of, the political collapse that characterises Highland and Hebridean history from the 1400s onwards. This is likely to have resulted in less dependency on arable and contributed to a shift in settlement patterns, with the relocation of settlement away from fields which were no longer as agriculturally productive as they had been. However, very little work has been done by environmental archaeologists or soils

scientists to reveal the character of medieval landscapes in Argyll and assess the nature and scale of change.

Only a few medieval middens have been identified, never mind sieved and analysed. There is therefore little to inform us about diets, subsistence and changes in farming. What has been investigated is predominantly high status, associated with castles, or so denuded to the point where we can only say cereals and animals were the main foodstuffs. The middens at Finlaggan (CANMORE ID 37708) (Caldwell pers. comm.) and Gunna (CANMORE ID 141630) (James pers. comm.) appear to corroborate documentary evidence and research in the Outer Hebrides and Northern Isles regarding marine exploitation. At Finlaggan cod was being extensively consumed in the thirteenth century, with limpets becoming increasingly common in the sixteenth century. It is unclear whether the predominance of limpets relates to a crisis subsistence diet or its increasing use as bait, but its use at the higher status and non-coastal Finlaggan perhaps suggests a more cultural predilection. Considerably more research is needed.

The paucity of potential mill sites probably suggests that, as elsewhere in the Gaelic world, there was little attempt by Gaelic lords to coordinate centralised control of grain processing and that this was primarily seen as a subsistence and domestic activity. However, discounting references to mills in the sundry items listed in rentals as these are likely to be formulaic and not a direct record of realities on the ground, there are hints that milling may have been more widespread than the archaeological record immediately suggests. Oral tales occasionally refer to events said to be held at mills, sixteenth and seventeenth-century maps contain the odd reference to muilinn place-names, and there is evidence in the form of a millstone from Finlaggan (CANMORE ID 37708) (Caldwell pers. comm.). More landscape survey may identify early mill sites, lades, etc on the ground.

Poetic sources and carved stone imagery make it clear that hunting was central to Gaelic lordly life and status. However, with the exception of deer traps in Jura, few trappings of hunting activity and hunting forests have been identified in Argyll. More in depth study is likely bear good results and help demonstrate how these shaped the medieval landscape and contributed to lifestyles and economies.

Whilst the contribution of off shore fishery exploitation to the Hebridean economy and trade has been discussed above, much less is known regarding other resources. Sixteenth century records indicate cattle droving was taking place, with cattle being shifted from Islay to Knapdale in 1505. There are also references to Argyll cattle located much further south. Hides were also being exported in large numbers. There are hints that cloth, in the form of mantles, was also a major export (Caldwell pers. comm.). There is a high likelihood of medieval mining of silver and copper resources in Islay (Cressey 1995; Caldwell et al. 2000) which would have contributed to the production of high status goods for export if not exported as raw materials. Charcoal burning and bloomeries (Atkinson 2003) further highlight small scale industrial processes for domestic production and export and help substantiate the claims of some families to be hereditary armourers, boat builders and craftsmen. Unfortunately, though, few production sites have been identified or excavated, nor have the schools for carved stone creation. How these families were housed, the patronage they received, what status they had, the details of craft production are therefore highly obscure.

Equally obscure is how and where trade and exchange took place. Droving indicates that much was taken direct to markets outwith Argyll. However, it seems highly unlikely that trade did not occur within the various territories within it. The chance find of Viking Age ring silver on Dunstaffnage (CANMORE ID 23036) strand hints at open air beach markets in the preceding period and it is highly likely that the

practice of holding less formalised markets at easy landing places continued, both on the occasion that a merchant vessel might turn up and on regular annual dates in well-known and traditional places: a pattern well known throughout contemporary Scandinavia and Ireland. Regular markets dates are also likely to have been accompanied by fairs and it seems probable that the small number of known rural fair sites that are recorded from the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (Black 1999) had their origins in the medieval period. On recorded fairground is Cnoc nan Dubh Leitre (CANMORE ID 22043) in Mull which is only readable on the ground by a large area of open ground surrounded by the footings of small bothies and tents.

Other market activities are likely to have occurred at harbour sites and despite the valiant efforts of Colin and Paula Martin (Martin and Martin 2003, Martin 2008, Martin 2009) much more work is required, especially to test and date their findings. This should be coupled by research into historic coastal change to help identify and understand maritime use, maritime routeways and marine resources exploitation better.

9.7 Summary of main research questions identified above

1. The date and function of ringworks
2. The date and socio-cultural context for mottes (for example, do mottes in Argyll fall within the classical motte building tradition, do they have any correlation with knights-fees, can those found on the Clyde be attributed to the early influence of direct Scottish central authority, or are they a native interpretation?)
3. The understanding, dating and phasing of different castle building traditions (this is at the most basic level but also includes; what are the different socio-cultural messages being mediated, are there different castle building traditions and what does this reflect, what does ongoing development tell us about changing patterns and expressions of lordship)?)
4. The use of timber buildings and external buildings at castle sites
5. The layout and uses of internal spaces within castles
6. The date, meaning and symbolism of different architectural features in both secular and ecclesiastical building, and the relationship between the two
7. The origins, dating, status and form of medieval crannog, island dwelling, dun and hillfort use
8. The landscape and maritime context of castles and reoccupied prehistoric sites (for example, what is the relationship between seaways, harbours, fishing grounds, fisheries, in close proximity to castles)
9. The uses of islands in assembly and multiple island sites in relation to castles castles or administrative locations
10. Genealogies of place – length of occupation, re-use and/or continuity of use, links to people, families, etc
11. In depth place-name studies, interrogated for information on landscape, administration and locational uses
12. The impact of the High Medieval fishing boom on the economy and landscape
13. Adaptation to altering fishing patterns
14. The dating and use of fish traps
15. The dating of chapels, their subsequent use
16. The provision of pastoral and spiritual care (this will be multi disciplinary but include understanding material changes in the expression of devotion, developments in the size, layout and internal use of space at churches, links to secular sites and patronage, how were priests supported and accommodated, etc)
17. The medieval spiritual landscape (for example, we need to identify and better understand the early church and

devotional sites, the later transformation of some churches into parish churches and understanding those that did not, the significance of and distribution of sculpture, whether stone churches were built by masons from Ireland, the relationship between the later church and earlier churches, crosses and church boundaries, links to administrative and sacred landscapes and pilgrimage, etc)

18. The dating, phasing, symbolism and use of carved stones
19. Patterns of patronage
20. The development and use of administrative areas (such as parishes and lordships) and estate boundaries
21. The location and use of assembly places
22. The location and nature of coastal monitoring features
23. The location, form, type and pattern of lower status housing and settlement (see Case Study 11: Bàrr Mór) together with specific questions such as, was cruck building a feature of later Medieval building practices in Argyll?
24. Patterns of land use, farming and woodland, changes and adaptation to environmental changes
25. The physical, environmental, social and economic impact of climate and coastal change. How did this affect farming practices, settlement patterns and diet?
26. The re-analysis, dating and phasing of handmade ceramics, together with an understanding of patterns of pottery distribution, including imported wares. Why do so many sites have imported wares and why was there little trade of Hebridean Ware?
27. Craft and industry, the scale and distribution and social cultural and economic contributions
28. The location, extant, pattern and social contribution of trade and exchange. Where did trade take place?
29. Maritime landscapes and exploitation

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