

## **Introduction**

The intent of this paper is to outline a brief history of excavation of Iron Age sites in Argyll and how these contribute to our current understanding of the period. Given the limited extent of this piece there is no room to repeat the often heated discussions that got us to where we are, although it touches on some of the more important, and in some cases ongoing, discourse. The paper then concentrates on the excavated evidence and suggests where we might take this in the future.

## **The Chronological Framework of Scotland's Iron Age**

Important to the ongoing debate is of course when the Iron Age begins and ends. The date 600BC was used by the Royal Commission on the Historic and Ancient Monuments of Scotland (RCHAMS) for the inception of the Iron Age in Scotland and used in its Argyll Inventories (RCHAMS; 1971, 1975, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1988, 1992). Some researchers, such as Harding and Ritchie, have argued for an earlier C7th-C8th BC date and it has become increasingly common to discuss the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age together with no hard delineation between the periods (Harding 1974; Ritchie & Ritchie 1981, Hunter & Ralston 2015). Similarly the termination of the Iron Age in Scotland is often framed by the broader agendas of individual researchers; whereby the Roman invasion in the C1st AD or their withdrawal from their northern frontier in the C3rd AD have been used. This period, in a modified form, is still used by some researchers in order to distinguish the Picts from earlier Iron Age cultures (Piggott 1966; Hingley 1992, Armit 1997; Armit & Ralston 2003,). However it has become increasingly common to view Scotland's Iron Age as part of a much longer period of development with the adoption of the 'long Iron Age' seen by some to continue until the arrival of the Norse in the late C8<sup>th</sup> AD with the traditionally defined Iron Age '*merging imperceptibly*' into the Early Historic period (Armit 1997). The breaking down of inherited chronological boundaries in recent research perhaps suggests there is no need for a universally accepted chronological scheme for the Scottish Iron Age, although this paper will adopt the broadly accepted age brackets of 700BC to AD500.

## **Previous work on Argyll's Iron Age**

Some of the earliest references to Argyll's Iron Age remains appear within the 'Old' and 'New' Statistical Accounts of Scotland, these often appearing as descriptions of parish antiquities (Statistical Accounts of Scotland 1791-99 Volume 5 & 1834-45 Volume 7). These predominately mention 'forts', 'castles' or 'watchtowers', or other 'ancient defences' many only briefly mentioned if they were significant remains or had traditional tales attached to them, reflecting the close relationship of educated ecclesiastics and early antiquarianism.

The collecting, recording and reporting of antiquities was given a formal framework with the founding of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in 1780 and from 1856 provided a more systematic framework for reporting survey and excavation results in the *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland* (PSAS). The locations of many these defended sites were surveyed during the compilation of the 1<sup>st</sup> Edition Ordnance Survey maps, often accompanied by brief descriptions within the associated name books.

Area surveys of the forts and duns of Argyll appeared in PSAS from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century but sites were also reported within other publications. These include those in Lorne (Smith; 1871, 1872 & 1875, Christison 1889; Watson 1914), Mid Argyll (Currie 1830; Christison 1904, Graeme 1948; Campbell & Sandeman 1962; Scott 1966) and Cowal (Honeymann 1890). Antiquities on the Argyll islands received similar attention with monuments noted on Bute (Hewison 1893), Coll and Tiree (Sands 1882; Beveridge 1903), Mull (Dunns 1883; MacLean 1923), Luing, Seil and the Garvallachs (MacAdam 1896), Colonsay and Oransay (Stevenson 1881, Symington Grieve 1923; Piggot & Piggot 1948), Arran (MacArthur 1873), Gigha

(Anderson 1939) and Islay (Childe 1935a). Much of this survey work informed the list or Inventory of Scotland's surviving heritage compiled by the RCAHMS after its establishment in 1908, this work ultimately appearing in its seven Argyll volumes, the last completed in 1992. The RCHAMS volumes provided overall summaries of Argyll's Iron Age in their respective areas, while broader synthesis of the period have been undertaken by other authors (Neike 1984; 1990; Ritchie 1997, Harding; 1997, 2004a; Armit 2004).

### **A Brief Excavation History**

In Argyll, including Arran and the Ardnmuchrchan peninsula, there are over 800 sites currently listed by RCHAMS that are potentially Iron Age. The site types include forts, duns, brochs, crannogs, enclosures and hut-circles, and while not all of these will prove to be of Iron Age date it does give some idea of the potential for the future study of Iron Age settlement. Of the sites listed under forts, brochs and duns only 45 have had some form of recorded archaeological intervention and a list of these is given in Table 1.

While excavations by earlier antiquarians in Argyll produced some important assemblages, the survey and excavation work initiated by David Christison in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century are still arguably one the principal sources that inform the debate on the nature of duns and forts in the area (Christison 1891; Christison, Anderson & Ross 1905). Christison's work and that of earlier antiquarians were however conducted within the parameters of their day, whereby stratigraphic sequences within the monuments were perhaps overlooked or poorly understood. Since then several excavators have added to this picture of Argyll's Iron Age notably, Ludovic Mann, Gordon Childe, John and Dorothy Marshall, Horace Fairhurst, Edgar Peltonberg and Euan Mackie amongst others (Mann; 1906, 1915, 1925, Childe & Thorneycroft 1938; Marshall; 1915, 1934, 1964, 1982, Fairhurst 1939; 1956, 1960, 1964; Peltonburg 1982; Mackie 1974). Some exploratory work was undertaken by RCHAMS when compiling the Argyll inventories in the late 1970s and early 1980s, and since then, apart from Henderson and Gilmours work at Loch Glashan, research excavation on Argyll's Iron Age has been notably lacking and was recognised as such being designated a 'black hole' of the period (Haselgrove *et al.* 2001). More recently Investigations on the duns at Barnluasgan and Balure, conducted by Kilmartin Museum were specifically undertaken to try and illuminate the period, while work by Cambridge University on Lismore has also cast important new light on Iron Age settlement in Argyll (Regan & Webb; 2006, 2007; Regan; 2008a, 2009b; Stoddart; 2008, 2009).

These more recent research projects have operated alongside developer-funded archaeology much of this reported in Discovery and Excavation in Scotland and the subsequent 'grey literature'. These infrastructure and development projects, even on a small scale, have produced some important results concerning the nature of Iron Age settlement in Argyll, such as the projects at Midross, Glenshellach, Dunstaffnage, and Kilninian (Beckett 2005; Maguire, Becket & Rennie 2005; Ellis; 2010, 2013). Given the relatively recent date of these excavations, much of the resultant material is still as yet unpublished or unsynthesised although some inferences can be tentatively drawn for the period.

Survey work has also continued to add to the picture of potential Iron Age settlement in Argyll, with the recording of previously unknown hut circles, platforms and even dun structures. Systematic coastal zone assessment surveys have been undertaken by the SCAPE Trust on Coll, Tiree, Colonsay, Oransay and Islay. Recent walkover surveys conducted by Kilmartin Museum at Carnassarie, Kilbride and Balnahard, Colonsay for example have

recorded four unrecorded dun sites and ten potential hut circles (Regan; 2007, 2008b, 2009b, 2012a).

### **Enclosed sites**

The majority of enclosed sites in Argyll comprise of structures classified as forts and duns with only 26 classified as enclosures and 6 sites categorised as brochs. The latter grouping is concentrated in the north and west of the area and, including a southerly example on Arran, are all located on the Argyll islands.

Defensive structures in the west of Scotland, particularly Argyll, are often known as duns, a Gaelic vernacular term that can be used to classify any fortified place, or even a naturally defensive place. The term 'dun' was adopted by RCHAMS and is now used to classify smaller (up to 375m) thick walled stone enclosures dating from around 500 BC to the early historic period. Forts by inference are larger in size and could date to an earlier period than duns. As a classification, these at the time necessary groupings, now seems unsatisfactory as duns and forts (and brochs) form a heterogeneous group, varying in size with different structural morphologies and landscape locations. The function, date and social significance of these structures have been much discussed, particularly that of the Atlantic Roundhouse, although this has tended to focus on the broch (and to a lesser degree the wheelhouse) conducted, with a few exceptions, within a decidedly insular framework (Neike 1990; Hingley 1992; Harding 1997, 2004a, Armit; 1991, 2004 Gilmour; 1994, 2000, 2005, Parker Pearson et al; 1996, 1999, Henderson; 2000, 2007 Mackie; 2000, 2007, 2008, 2010). Similarly the chronology and typology of enclosed Iron Age sites in Argyll has been open to debate particularly that between Neike/Alcock and Harding (Neike 1990; Alcock 2003, Harding; 1997, 2004a). Henderson and Gilmour have recently summed up the debate and argued that most of the excavated dun sites date to the second half of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC and while many dun sites have produced artefacts of later date, they also have evidence of earlier but poorly dated occupation or constructional phases such Druim an Duin and Ardifuir and few of the excavated sites have reliable 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD dates for their construction (Henderson & Gilmour 2011). One of the major factors that influence the fluctuation in this debate is the paucity of diagnostic or securely dated finds from excavated sites. All excavation work at these type sites has however added something to the overall picture of Iron Age settlement in Argyll.

### **Forts**

In Argyll ten sites classified as forts have undergone some excavation although only three have associated radiocarbon dates, Balloch Hill, Eilean an Duin and Dunadd. Of these Balloch Hill in Kintyre has the most comprehensive series of dates for Iron Age occupation, suggesting the fort was constructed and occupied between C8th-C1st BC (Peltonberg 1982). At Dunadd a small fort was constructed on the summit in the C4th/C3rd BC, although this structure might sit more easily within the dun category of monument, while the fort at Eilean an Duin would appear to have been constructed after the C3rd BC (Lane & Campbell 2000; Neike & Boyd 1990).

The dating of other forts is based on their recovered finds, these often relatively exotic or imported goods. The artefacts from the forts at Dunagoil and Little Dunagoil have recently been re-evaluated, these suggesting occupation at the former from the late Bronze Age through to the C5th AD, the later having been occupied from C3rd BC through until perhaps the Norse period (Harding 2004). Like Dunagoil, the finds from Dun Cul Bhuirg were examined sometime after the excavation and these suggested occupation between C1<sup>st</sup> BC-C3<sup>rd</sup> AD (Richie & Lane 1980). The late 19<sup>th</sup> century excavations on Dun Mac Sniachan

produced Iron Age metalwork dating to the early 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD, although how these relate to the complex of structures at the site is less clear (Smith 1875). The recovery of only saddle querns from the vitrified fort of Duntroon suggests this was occupied prior to the introduction of the rotary quern in the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> BC, although the date of their introduction is still under debate (Christison 1905). Iron Age decorated insular pottery has also been recorded from a number of fort sites in Argyll, Dun Hynish, Dun na Gall, Dun Balephetrish, all on Tiree and Dun Morbhaidh on Coll. Excavations on the vitrified fort on Eilean Buidhe along with those on the fort at Creag a Chaisteal produced no datable artefacts (Maxwell 1941; Smith 1875; Betts 1959, 1964).

## Duns

34 sites classified as duns have undergone some degree of excavation and as with forts only a minority of these, four, have associated radiocarbon dates. The dun at Kildonan Bay was revisited after its initial excavation specifically to obtain radiocarbon dates, these indicating occupation between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> AD, these dates reinforced by the few diagnostic finds from the original excavations (Peltonburg & Hood 1979; Peltonburg; Barnetson & Turner 1984). Roman pottery, however, along with what is likely locally produced Iron Age pottery, was also recovered, indicating that the dun, as suggested in the original published report, *'may have been built before the second century AD'* (Fairhurst 1939). More recently later 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC dates have been obtained from the duns at Loch Glashan (4<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> BC), Barnluasgan (dun 4<sup>th</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> BC and later enclosure 2<sup>nd</sup> BC -1<sup>st</sup> AD) and Balure (2<sup>nd</sup> BC-1<sup>st</sup> AD), (Henderson & Gilmour 2011; Regan forthcoming).

Again, as with forts, the dating of other dun sites relies on associated finds derived from the excavation of occupation material. One of the earliest dates of occupation comes from vitrified dun at Rahoy, this dated to the 4<sup>th</sup>-3<sup>rd</sup> BC based on the recovery of a looped and socketed iron axe head and part of a La Tene bronze brooch, this relatively early date perhaps underlined by the recovery of saddle querns (Childe & Thorneycroft 1938). A saddle quern was also recovered from the excavation of Clachan Ard on Bute, which might also suggest an occupation date before the 3<sup>rd</sup> BC (Marshall 1934). A comb fragment recovered from Dun Scalpsie might indicate a similarly early date if the suggested early Iron Age parallels are proven to be correct (MacCallum; 1959, 1963).

As at Kildonan, the recovery of datable Roman artefacts often proves to be the only diagnostic finds that date Iron Age occupation of dun sites. At Kildalloig, Glenramskill for example, the recovery of a bronze fibula and a spiral ring date the occupation of the site to the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD (Bigwood 1964). The Roman pottery, ring headed pin and strap end from Dun an Fhuair were examined sometime after the initial excavations (Anderson 1895a; Ritchie 1974). The finds derived from a midden below the dun and as such do not directly date the structural remains although they indicate occupation from the 1<sup>st</sup>-2<sup>nd</sup> AD to the middle of the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium AD. Roman pottery has also been recovered from Ardefuir and Dun Fhinn which suggests a date of construction prior to the 2<sup>nd</sup> AD (Christison 1905, Bigwood 1964). The excavation at Dun Fhinn also produced a glass dumbbell bead and similar beads have also been recovered from the Dun at Ronachan Bay and the fort at Dunagoil (Peltonburg 1979; Harding 2004b). More recently beads have been recovered from the dun at Balure and from an unenclosed settlement site at Kilninian on Mull, both of these sites returning 2<sup>nd</sup>-1<sup>st</sup> BC dates (Ellis pers. comm.; Regan forthcoming). The resultant research on these beads and others recovered from other parts of Scotland, the Isle of Man and Ireland has shown that the beads are of localised manufacture re-using imported Roman glass. A ring headed pin recovered from Dun Beag Vault perhaps suggests a date before the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD as does the recovery of decorated insular Hebridean pottery (MacKie 1963b).

Decorated pottery has been recovered from excavations on Dun Nighean and Dun na Cleite on Tiree, while finds of similar decorated pottery have been recovered from An Dunan and Dun Beag, also on Tiree, along with Dun Beic and Dun an Achaidh, both on Coll (Piggot 1954; Holley; 1994a & b, 1996a & b)

The recovery of undecorated pottery from Dunan nan Nighean on Colonsay led Piggot to suggest an occupation date of *'the last century BC or early centuries AD'* (Piggot 1951). Small quantities of undecorated pottery have also been recovered from Leccamore South, Kildalloig, An Caisteal, Dun Mhic Choigil and Balure (MacNaughton; 1891, 1893; Bigwood 1964; Fairhurst 1964; Hedges & Hedges, 1977; Regan forthcoming). The duns at An Caisteal and Leccamore also produced rotary querns which have also been recovered from a number of other sites; Torr a Chaisteil, Druim an Duin, Dun Chroisprig and An Dun and suggest occupation after their introduction sometime in the later half of the 1st millennium BC, but their use is a long one and without further dating evidence can not firmly place any of these sites in the Iron Age (Macarthur 1873; Christison 1905; Newall 1966; Betts 1969). The excavation on Dun Breac produced iron slag and a few stone objects but no datable artefacts while that at Suidhe Chennaidh produced only bones and charcoal (Graham 1915; Christison 1891). Similarly excavations at Kingcross and Eilean Bhuide along with smaller evaluations at Barnagad and Castle Dounie failed to produce readily datable artefacts (Balfour 1910; Maxwell 1941; Regan; 2006, 2011).

The recovered artefacts from the dun at Ugadale Bay indicate occupation of the site from the C8th AD and perhaps sporadically into the late medieval period, although as the excavator pointed out the investigations were limited in nature and produced no firm dates for the actual construction of the dun (Fairhurst 1956). Similarly the early historic artefacts recovered from Dunollie and Eilean Righ I along with the medieval finds from MacEwans Castle while indicating occupation in those periods, may not necessarily date the primary construction or occupation of these structures (Alcock 1978; Brown & Currie 1987; Marshall 1982).

### **Brochs**

As noted above brochs are relatively rare in Argyll and absent from the mainland. The excavated example of Dun Mor Vul on Tiree has resulted in much discussion as to its dating and pottery sequence, which has informed the debate on the pottery from other sites. It is now perhaps generally accepted that the dun itself was constructed in the middle of the C1<sup>st</sup> BC and occupation continued possibly without a break until the middle of the C3 AD. The site however has a pre-broch Iron Age phase dating perhaps as early as C5th BC (Mackie; 1963b, 1974, 1997).

Decorated Hebridean pottery has also been recovered from Dun Mor a' Chaolais, Dun Boraige Mor and Dun Nighean all on Tiree, ceramics from the latter two studied by Piggot (Beveridge 1903; Piggot 1952). More recently work has also been undertaken at Tirefour broch on Lismore with the results awaiting publication (Stoddart; 2007, 2008).

### **Enclosures**

The term enclosure is a broad one, encompassing earthworks and crop marks as well as stone built enclosures that, apart from the thickness of their walls, could be classified as duns or forts. The recently excavated example at Barnluasgan is just such an example, where the walls of the later 'enclosure' proved to be no thicker than the underlying dun (Regan & Webb: 2006, 2007). Apart from the enclosure at Barnluasgan, which was occupied between the C2nd BC-C1st AD and might anyway sit more comfortably in the dun category,

few of these sites have been dated or indeed excavated and while they might belong to the Iron Age could equally belong to other periods.

### **Enclosed Settlement Sites**

The recently uncovered settlement site at Midross near Loch Lomond has been putatively dated to the Iron Age, this consisting of up to seven roundhouses within what may be a surrounding pallisaded enclosure ditch (Beckett 2005). The superimposed roundhouses at Ardnadam are also likely of Iron Age date and the published report postulated that the dyke that surrounded the site was also constructed in this period (Rennie 1984).

### **Unenclosed Settlement Sites**

The most obvious remains of potential Iron Age settlement outside of enclosures are hut-circles and platform sites. The majority of hut-circles comprise a single circular or sub-circular wall ring, which can be constructed from earth or stone or more likely a mixture of both. The RCHAMS in its compilation of the Argyll inventories noted that many hut circles were likely associated with relic field systems such as those recorded at Druim Mór on Oronsay, which were defined by a series of earthen dykes (RCHAMS 1984). The few hut circles that have been excavated show that these structures originate in the 2<sup>nd</sup> millennium BC and can continue in use until the 1<sup>st</sup> millennium BC (Stevenson 1984; Ritchie 1997). However it does seem highly probable that some hut circles belong to a later period and recently what is likely Iron Age pottery was recovered from the evaluation of two hut circles at Bheinn Bheag on Colonsay, although these await radio carbon dating (Regan 2012).

Less easy or impossible to discern as earthworks are the remains of post built roundhouses, which may originally have had upstanding remains, these subsequently the victim of later agriculture or settlement activity. The remains of two roundhouses were excavated on Tìree in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century at Coniag and Balevullin (Beveridge 1903; Mann 1906; MacKie 1963). Other Iron Age roundhouses have been uncovered at Ardnadam (12m- 12.5m dia.) and Bruach an Druimein (7.5m-10m dia.) the later dating to the C4<sup>th</sup>- C1<sup>st</sup> BC (Rennie 1984, Abernethy 2008). Recently a large Early Iron Age roundhouse structure (14m dia.) was uncovered at Glennshellach and another roundhouse structure (9m dia.) was excavated at Midross (Ellis pers. comm.; Maguire, Becket & Rennie 2005). What seems increasingly likely to be a roundhouse platform has been partially excavated at Carnassarie, this producing pottery and midden deposits dating to C4<sup>th</sup>-C2<sup>nd</sup> BC (Ellis 2008). Six roundhouses have also recently been excavated at Dunstaffnage and, although these as yet await dating, will significantly add to our understanding of this type of structure in Argyll (Ellis 2013). The roundhouses at Bruach an Druimein, Ardnadam and Glennshellach are located in areas that also have evidence of occupation from other periods perhaps hinting at settlement continuity. This also appears to be the case at the sites at Tormore, Ardnave, Achnasavil, Killellen and Kilninian which also have evidence of Iron Age occupation amongst that of other periods (Barbour 1978; Ritchie & Welfare 1984; Siggins & Carter 1994; Ritchie 2005, Ellis pers. comm.).

### **Crannogs**

Fifty one crannogs have been identified in the Argyll area, although few have been subject to excavation, the notable exception being the crannog at Loch Glashan where radio carbon dates and recovered artefacts indicate that the site was occupied between C5 AD, at the end of our period, to the C9<sup>th</sup> AD (Crone & Campbell 2006). However it has been estimated that the majority of crannogs were likely constructed between the C9<sup>th</sup> BC-C2<sup>th</sup> AD (Crone 1993). Radio carbon dates suggestive of Iron Age occupation or construction have been obtained from two other crannog sites in Argyll; a C4<sup>th</sup>-C2<sup>nd</sup> BC date was obtained from a

wooden pile at Loch Ederline, while a similar C4th-C1<sup>st</sup> BC date was obtained from Eilean Ban in Loch Frisa on Mull (Cavers & Henderson 2005; Holley 1994d). At Lochan Dughail crannog, recovery of a cannell-coal bracelet, a perforated stone disc, and a small clay crucible from the brief excavation undertaken in 1890 likely indicate that this was occupied in the Iron Age period although the site was reused in the medieval period (Munro 1893). A rotary quern was recovered from a crannog at Loch Quien although this only suggests occupation of that site after the C3<sup>nd</sup> BC (Cavers 2003). A small excavation at a crannog in Loch a Bhailidh, South Knapdale, uncovered charcoal and ash deposits along with some bone but produced no other artefactual evidence (Munro 1893).

### **Caves, Rock Shelters and Burial**

Several cave sites in the region have shown evidence of occupation or use in the Iron Age. At Dunagoil midden deposits within the cave below the vitrified fort were excavated in 1913 the recovered artefacts suggesting a similar date of use as the fort (Mann 1915; Marshall 1915). Evidence of Iron Age occupation was also uncovered within two rock shelters on Inchmarnock, the primary occupation deposits dating to the C4th BC (Lowe 2008). The discovery of decorated pottery, probably dating to the Iron Age, was reported from a small cave near Dun Hynish on Tiree with pottery also reported from caves at Ardmore and Allt Dubhaig (Beveridge 1903; Mithen, Coles 1958; Pirie & Smith 2006). An intact early Iron Age pot from Uamh Ur on Colonsay is unusual and possibly significant, although the exact nature of its recovery remain unclear, although this cave system also contained what appear to be several occupation deposits (Symington Grieve 1880). Recovered artefacts from Keil cave, which was excavated between 1933 and 1935, suggest occupation in the C4<sup>th</sup> AD and after (Ritchie 1967). A fragment of samian, along with artefacts from later periods, was excavated from the St Columba's cave near Ellary (Campbell; 1962, 1959, 1973; Campbell & Young 1973). Given their ubiquity across Argyll and its islands it would be surprising if some other caves and rock shelters were not used in the Iron Age period.

The remains of several inhumations were recovered from the excavation of MacArthers Cave, Oban in the late 19<sup>th</sup> century and were subsequently dated to between the C5<sup>th</sup> - C3<sup>rd</sup> BC (Anderson 1895; Saville & Hallen 1994), these being rare examples of Iron Age Burial in Scotland. Recently excavations at Dunstaffnage uncovered an infant inhumation in a cobble built cist, this associated with an irregular row of fire-pits and a cobble pathway. The pits have been interpreted as funerary pyres located along the edge of wet ground and recovered carbon dates suggest use in the Late Iron Age (C. Ellis pers. comm.).

### **Future Work in Argyll; Illuminating a Black Hole**

As mentioned above Argyll has previously been described as being a black hole in terms of modern archaeological research (Haselgrove *et al.* 2001). Future work on the Iron Age in Argyll should incorporate many of the Scotland wide research recommendations recently outlined by Scottish Archaeological Research Framework (ScARF) although these are perhaps too comprehensive to repeat here (ScARF 2012).

What seems self evident is that, apart from a few stray finds, the vast bulk of evidence we have for Argyll's Iron Age comes from excavation whether antiquarian, later research or commercial projects. As a field archaeologist it probably comes as no surprise that I would argue that it is equally self evident if we wish to add to the picture and attempt to address some of the ScARF research recommendations, more excavation work needs to be undertaken.

Sample excavation of previously unexcavated sites would provide a means of obtaining a primary-stage analysis of the Iron Age settlement sequence in Argyll, essentially evaluating the existing resource of which just under 7% have had some sort of archaeological investigation. From this basis potentially informative sites could be targeted for more extensive excavation, employing the now wide ranging analytical techniques available to the modern excavator. This would address many of the long perceived problems such as the lack of internal chronologies for enclosed sites and would provide more robust stratigraphic and dated frameworks on which to hang associated artefacts.

As elsewhere in Scotland, Argyll has informative Iron Age assemblages from several sites that in many cases lack chronological definition. Most of these come from previously excavated sites and, as recently suggested by Alexander among others, would warrant re-examination providing a dating framework whereby the existing archival and artefactual material could be re-interpreted and synthesised using scientific techniques not available to the original excavators (Alexander 2012).

Site specific excavation of course would need to be accompanied by more intensive survey of areas surrounding them; indeed it could perhaps be argued that survey work should always precede any excavation. The incorporation of landscape and waterscape analysis when examining sites might give us better insights into the continuity of settlement and perhaps shed light on the nature and chronology of enclosure and field systems and their relationship to potential Iron Age structures.

This said it is clear from the results of rescue and commercial archeology that there potentially remains a large 'invisible' settlement component in the Iron Age, as perhaps in other periods, which has now to be considered when trying to model any demographic and settlement patterns. The recent excavation of several groups of roundhouses belonging both the traditionally demarcated Bronze Age and Iron Age periods in Argyll, may give us important insights into the possible chronological relationships between the development and use of the roundhouse and the building of forts and duns. However to do this more of the later need to be investigated with the hope that more of the former come to light.

The recent analysis of glass dumbbell beads mentioned above show how current scientific techniques can shed light on the origin and manufacture certain artefacts, while accompanying study of their distribution show a distinct bias in western Scotland the Isle of Man and Ireland, perhaps indicating intra regional contact in the late Pre-Roman Iron Age.

Within Argyll there appears to be regional differences by the presence/absence of decorated Hebredean pottery, these differences possibly reflected in the apparent absence of broch and wheelhouse architecture in much of Argyll. Pottery however does occur on sites where decorated wares are absent and these perhaps need to be studied as a group to see if any broader typologies can be teased out. These patterns if real need much more work while other artefact groups could equally stand modern synthesis and re-evaluation.

New research work along with information that will undoubtedly continue to be produced by commercial archaeology will allow broader regional patterns to be discerned across Argyll in the Iron Age, whereby the region can be better compared to more exhaustively studied regions in Scotland and elsewhere.





Table 1: Excavations of duns, forts and brochs in Argyll

Site Name	Type	Location	First Excavated	Other Years	References
Torr a' Chaisteil	dun	Arran	1873		MacArthur 1973
Dun Mac Sniachan	fort	Lorn	1873	1874	Smith 1875
Dun Boraige Mor	broch	Tiree	1880		Piggot 1952
Dun Mor Vul	broch	Tiree	1880	1962-4	MacKie 1974, 1997
Suidhe Chennaidh	dun	Lorn	1890		Christison 1891
Leccamore/South	dun	Lorn	1890	1892	MacNaughton; 1891, 1893
Dun an Fheurain	dun	Lorn	1895	1950, 1963	Anderson 1895a; Ritchie 1974
Dun Nighean	dun	Tiree	1881		Sands 1882
Dun na Cleite	dun	Tiree	1881		Sands 1882
Ardifuir	dun	Mid Argyll	1904		Christison 1905
Druim and Duin	dun	Mid Argyll	1904		Christison 1905
Duntroon	fort	Mid Argyll	1904		Christison 1905; Craw 1930; Lane & Campbell 2000
Dunadd	fort	Mid Argyll	1904	1905, 1929, 1980-1	Christison 1905
Kingcross point	dun	Arran	1910		Balfour 1910
Dunagoil	fort	Bute	1913	1914-15, 1919, 1925	Mann 1915; Mann 1925; Harding 2004b
Dun Breac	dun	Kintyre	1914		Graham 1915
Clachan Ard	dun	bute	1933		MacCallum; 1959, 1963
Eilean Buidhe	dun	Bute	1936		Maxwell 1941
Kildonan Bay	dun	Kintyre	1936	1937-38	Fairhurst 1939; Peltonberg & Hood 1979; Peltonberg, Barnetson & Turner 1984
Rahoy	dun	Ardnamurchan	1936	1937	Childe & Thorneycroft 1938
Ugadale	dun	Kintyre	1939		Fairhurst 1956
Dunan nan Nighean	dun	Colonsay	1949		Piggot 1951

Dun Cul Bhuirg	fort	Iona	1957	1958-59	Ritchie & Lane 1980
Balloch Hill	fort	Kintyre	1957	1958-9, 1970	Peltenburg 1982
Dunagoil Little	fort	Bute	1958	1959-61	Marshall 1964; Harding 2004b
Dun Scalpsie	dun	Bute	1959		MacCallum; 1959, 1963
An Caisteal	dun	Mull	1960	1964	Fairhurst 1964
Dun Beag Vault	dun	tiree	1962		Mackie 1963b
Kildalloig	dun	Kintyre	1963	1964-5	Bigwood 1964
Creag a Chaisteal	fort	Mull	1964		Betts; 1959, 1964
Dun Fhinn	dun	Kintyre	1966	1967-9	Bigwood 1966
An Dun	dun	Lorn	1967		Betts 1969
MacEwans Castle	dun	Mid Argyll	1968	1969	Marshall 1982
Dun Aorain	dun	Lorn	1970		RCHAMS 1975
Dun Mhic Choigil	dun	Kintyre	1976		Hedges & Hedges, 1977
Dunollie	fort	Lorn	1978		Alock & Alock 1978
Eilean Rìgh I	dun	Mid Argyll	1982		Brown & Currie 1987
Eilean an Duin	fort	Mid Argyll	1983		Neike & Boyd 1990
Loch Glashan	dun	Mid Argyll	2003		Henderson & Gilmour 2011
Park Dun	dun	Lismore	2004		Stoddart forthcoming
St Moluags Chair	dun	Lismore	2004		Stoddart forthcoming
Tirefour	broch	Lismore	2005		Stoddart forthcoming
Barnluasgan	dun	Mid Argyll	2006	2007	Regan forthcoming
Barnagad	dun	Mid Argyll	2007		Regan 2007
Balure	dun	Mid Argyll	2008	2009	Regan forthcoming
Castle Dounie	dun	Mid Argyll	2011		Regan 2011

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