



**CASTLE DOUNIE,
NORTH KNAPDALE FOREST
ARGYLL**



**An Archaeological Evaluation
Data Structure Report**

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Summary

The evaluation within the entranceway at Castle Dounie dun has confirmed that the original, unusually large entranceway had been narrowed by a modification on the w side of the passage. The modification would appear to have been undertaken while the dun was under occupation as the lower passage wall of the later modification was sealed by a distinct accumulation of midden-like material. As such collected samples and a recovered metal pin or nail may provide dating evidence for the latest occupation of the dun.



Entranceway prior to rubble removal

Acknowledgements

Particular thanks go to Andy Buntin of the Forestry Commission and Mary Anne Buntin for their help on the site, and to Ann Smart for proof reading the report.

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1. Introduction

This report outlines the results of evaluation work undertaken at Castle Dounie Dun prior to the realignment of the access path to the monument. At present the access path brings the public onto the site over the E dun wall and this has caused some stone displacement. In order to prevent future wall deterioration the access path is to be realigned entering the site from the N through the original entrance. In order to facilitate this work the evaluation of the archaeology within the entranceway was undertaken. The work was undertaken by Kilmartin House Museum and funded by the Forestry Commission. The Evaluation took place between 23rd-27th June 2011 and the site code used was CAS 11.

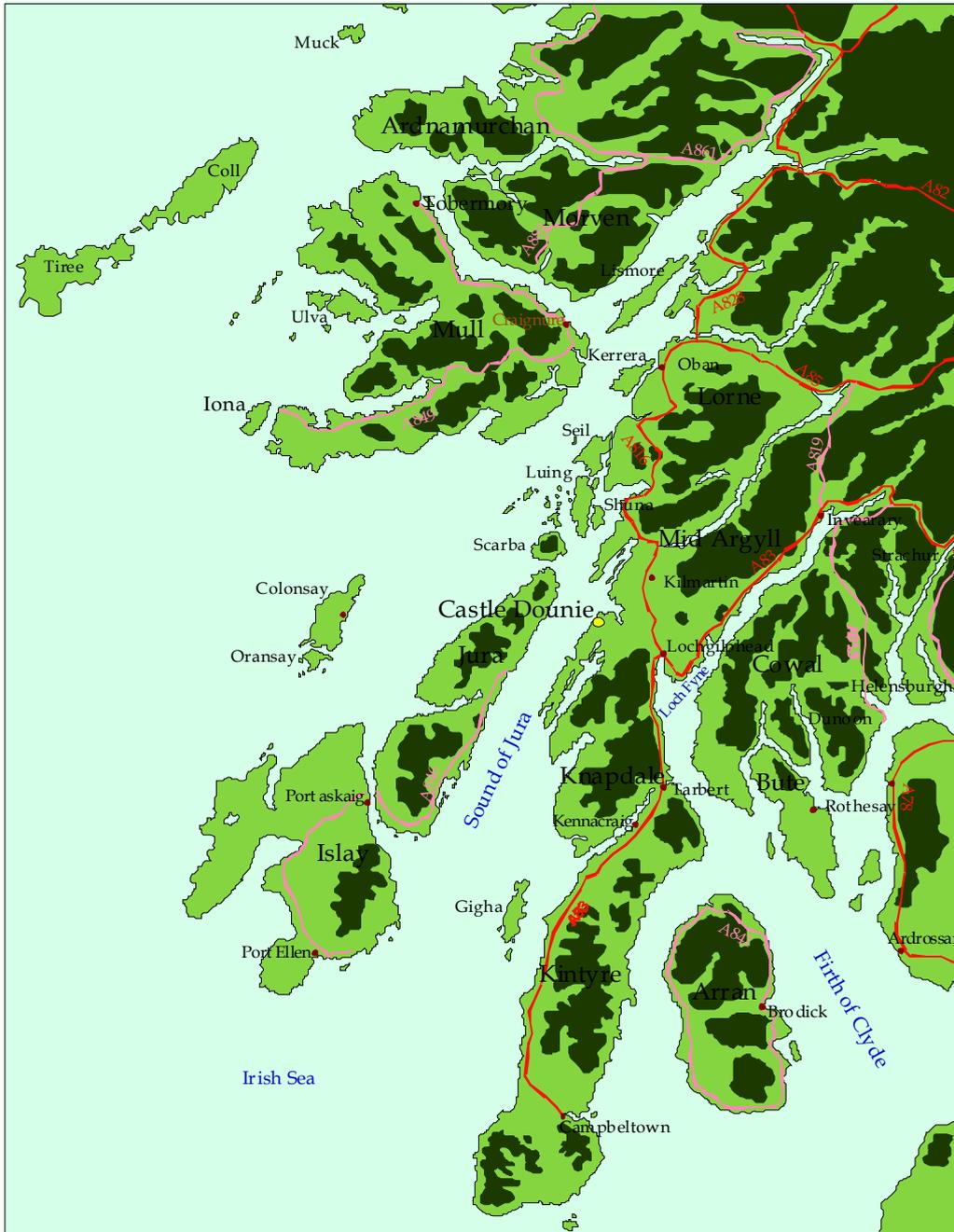


Figure 1: Location of Castle Dounie in Argyll

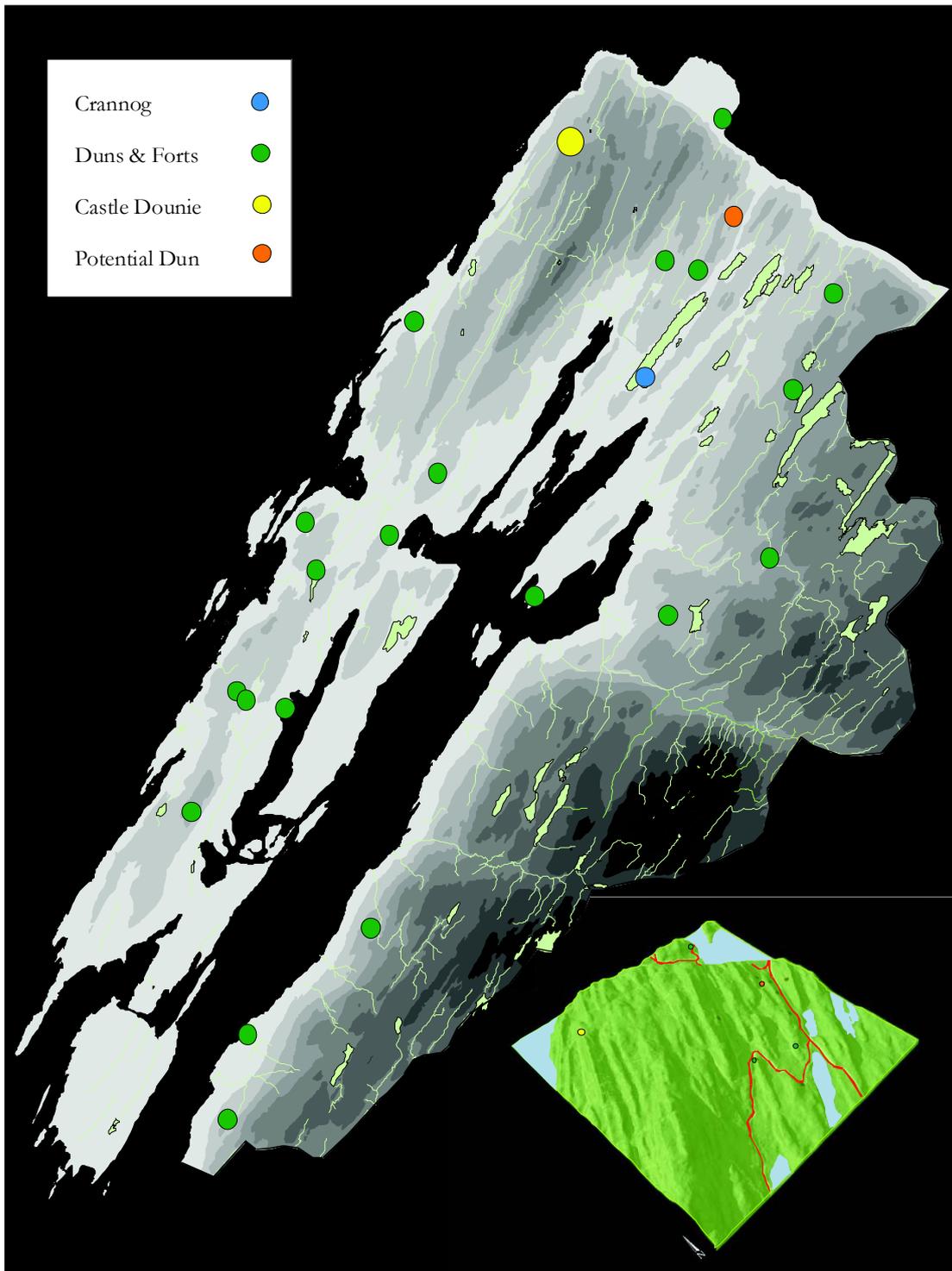


Figure 2: Dun Location in North Knapdale

2. Site Location and Description

The site is located within North Knapdale Forest, which lies at the north of North Knapdale Parish and is bordered on the west by the Sound of Jura. Loch Crinan and the Crinan Canal demarcate the forest area to the north. The dun is a Scheduled Ancient Monument (No 10091, NR79SE13) and occupies a natural knoll on a ridge known as Creag Mhór, (centred NGR NR 7674 9323). The ridge affords impressive views over the Sound of Jura to the W and the W end of Loch Crinan to the N. Access to the site is gained along a forest track that approaches the site

from the NE. The underlying geology consists of banded epidiorite-chlorite schist covered by peat and clay based soils.

The dun has previously been described by the Royal Commission and a summary of the dun and their description of the entrance is reproduced here. The dun has an irregular plan and measures 18m by 14m. The internal area of the dun is essentially featureless but several chambers appear to have been incorporated within the wall construction on the E and S sides. *‘The well preserved entrance lies on the NNE; originally it measured 2.1m across, unusually broad for an entrance passage, but was subsequently reduced to a width of 1m by a stretch of inferior walling attached to the W side of the passage.’* (RCHAMS 1988). The dun is one of 21 forts and duns that are currently recorded in North Knapdale and form one of the densest concentrations of these types of monument in Scotland.

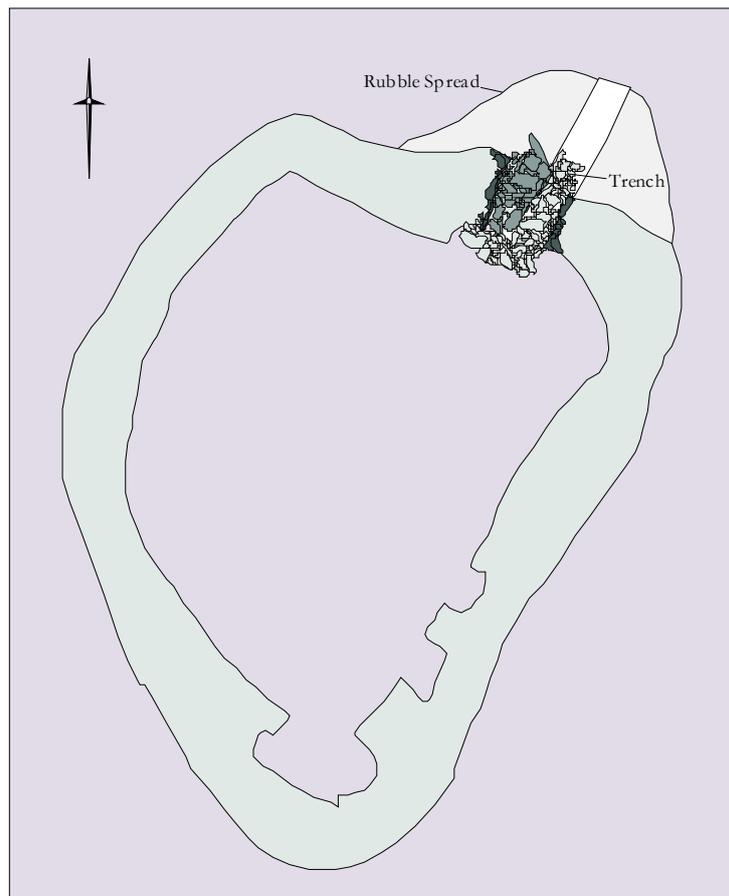


Figure 2: Dun and location of Trench (after RCHAMS)

3. Methodology

The Evaluation primarily involved removing the vegetation cover from the rubble within and to the immediate N of the entranceway. The rubble within the entranceway was then removed down to the first significant archaeological horizon or to stable rubble, the later left in situ. Geo-textile was laid over the exposed archaeology within the entranceway and this was stabilised with previously stripped vegetation. The removed rubble was stacked to the NE of the entrance and this could be used in future path construction. Plans were drawn at a scale of 1:20 and elevations at 1:10 (see Appendix 5). A photographic record of the work was maintained and a full list of photographs appears in Appendix 3.

4. Evaluation Results

Natural bedrock was encountered at the NE of the entrance passage and along the base of the E passage wall. The E wall [005] appeared to have been directly constructed on bedrock, at least in the parts where this relationship could be observed. The surface within the rest of the passage comprised of a mixture of schist blocks and smaller schist fragments which at the N levelled up natural dips in the bedrock. Some blocks were lain E/W across the entrance passage and these may have been crude steps, effectively revetting surface material on their higher (S) sides.

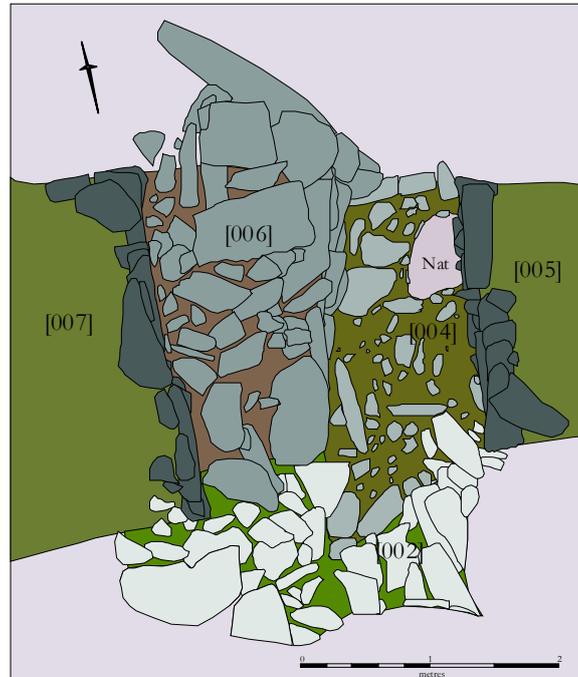


Figure 4: Surface [004] in Entrance Passage



Entrance Passage from S

As noticed previously, the W side of the entrance passage is formed by a later modification or narrowing seen with wall [006]. Part of the surface revetting at the N of the entrance appeared to run under this later passage wall, although it is possible the collapse of this wall at its N end may mask the true relationship.

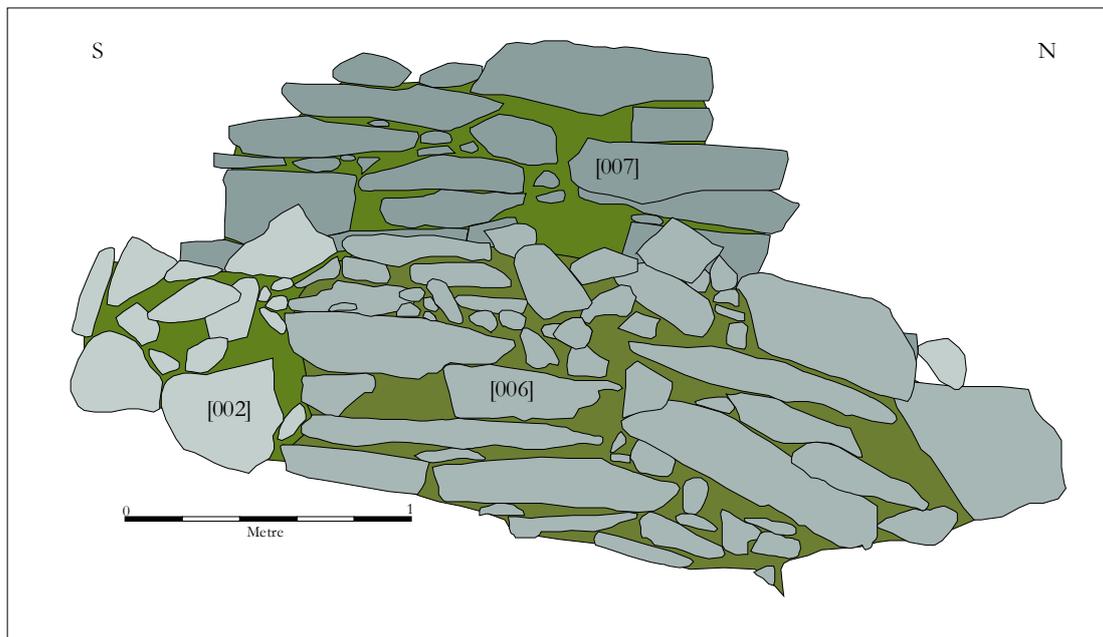


Figure 5: Western side of Entrance Passage



Collapsed Wall [006] from NE

If this part of the surface does indeed run under the wall then it is possible that it relates to the earlier passage alignment as represented by wall [007]. While the N and E edge of passage wall [007] could be traced with ease, its S edge was less clear. It may be that this edge has collapsed in antiquity, although seen through the collected rubble at the S side was what appeared to be a hollow within the stone-work and it may be there is a more complicated arrangement on this side. Lying between and over some of the stones forming the passage surface was dark organic deposit [003] that contained charcoal and burnt bone. Two flints along with a possible iron pin

were also recovered from this deposit. The deposit was later than both the passage walls and the upper surface and is likely related to the later occupation of the dun.

Embedded into this deposit was the lowest wall collapse or tumble [002] that filled the entranceway. Within the entrance passage the collapse was up to 0.50m in depth, and this collapse was traced for at least 5m beyond the entrance to the N. The area to the N was cleared during the evaluation as the ground dropped away in what appeared to be regular ridges which might have represented outer wall or step lines. This however, proved not to be the case and the removal of the vegetation cover revealed a mass of tumbled rubble.

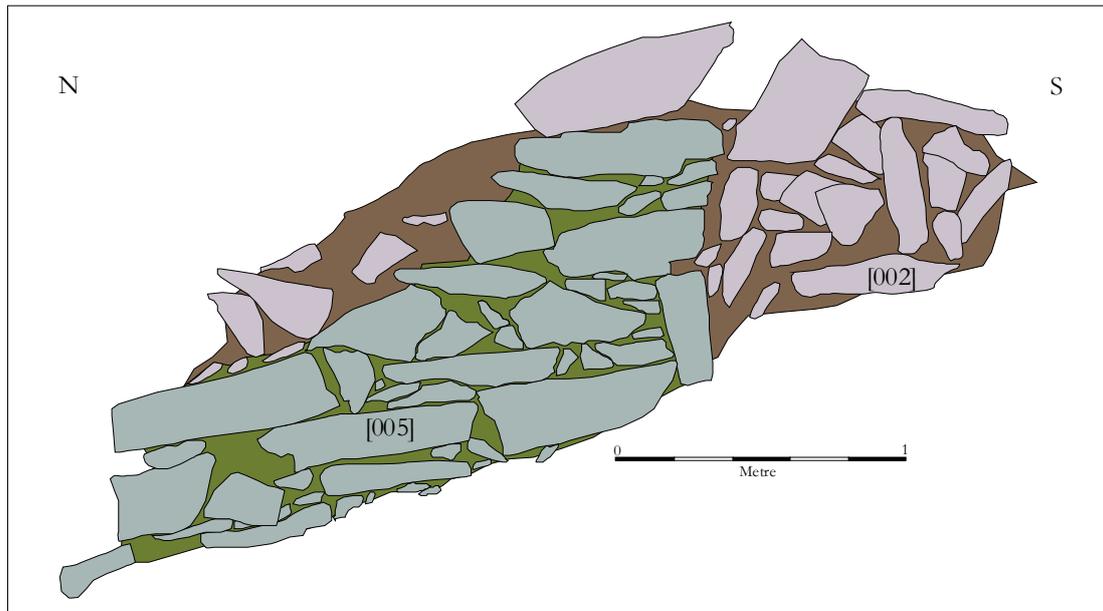


Figure 6: Eastern wall of Entrance Passage



East Wall [005] from SW

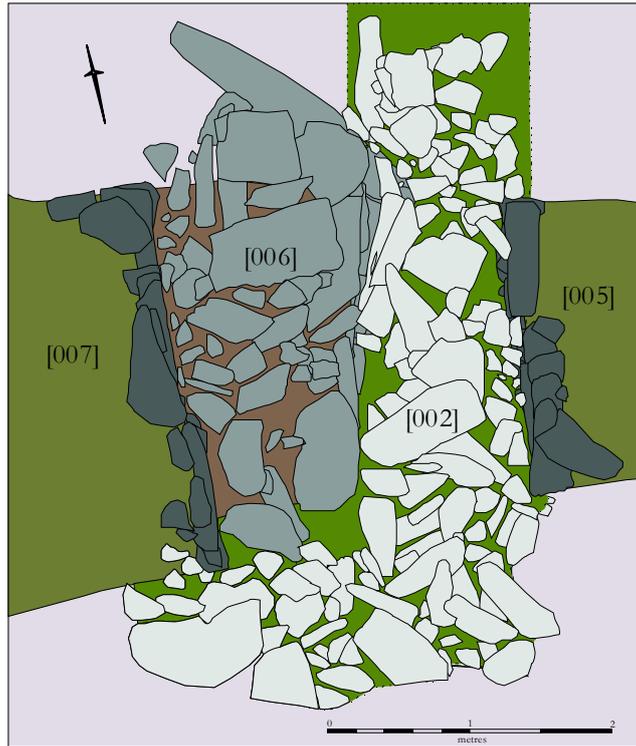
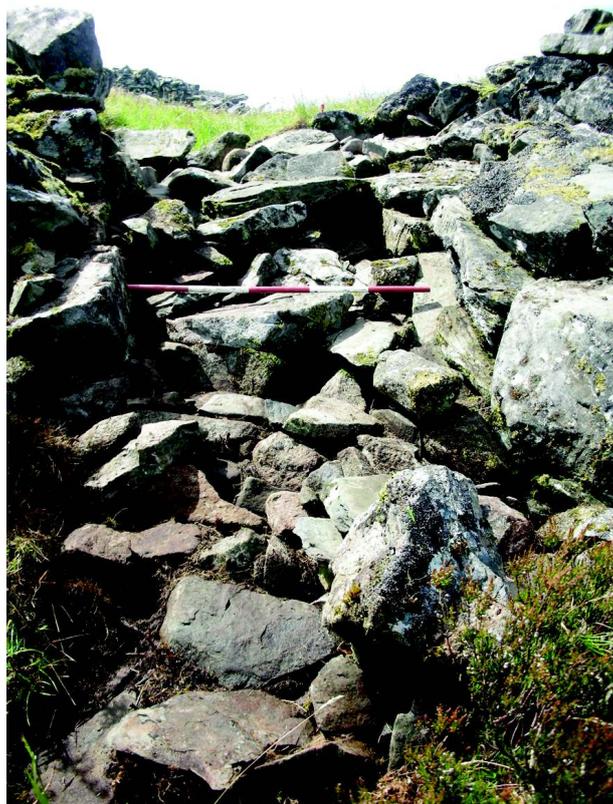


Figure 7: Rubble collapse [002] in Entrance Passage



Rubble [002] in Entrance

5. Recovered Artefacts

Three small finds (SF) were recovered from the probable occupation deposit within the entranceway [003].

SF1 Flint Mid grey flint fragment with angular facets.

SF2 Iron pin? or nail. Badly degraded and broken in two pieces.

SF3 Flint. Mid brown (tan) flint with attached cortex, possibly a core.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This brief evaluation has confirmed that there are at least two phases of entrance construction, within the entrance passageway which was narrowed from its original form. The width of original entrance is unusually large, at 2.10m, when compared to other duns where entrance widths can be established. Worth pointing out perhaps is that the entrance of the dun at Ardefuir, which is visible from Castle Dounie, compares at 2.0m.

The modification of the entrance would appear to have happened while the dun was occupied given that the later W passage wall was sealed by what would appear to be occupation or midden material that had accumulated the entrance. The date of this later occupation is open to question given that no immediately diagnostic finds were recovered, although what may be an iron pin may give us some indication. The bulk sample of the occupation deposit contains carbonised plant remains and it is recommended that this is processed with a view to obtaining a C14 date. Although any dating is likely to belong to the later use of the site it will add to a growing corpus of information on dun sites in North Knapdale. The recently excavated site at Balure has produced a date of between 2120-1970 BP while the dun site at Barnluasgan is currently awaiting dating results (Regan & Webb forthcoming). It would be of value to incorporate any dating results from this evaluation within the forthcoming publication.

The walls of the dun appear to be generally robust but some consolidation might be deemed necessary, if, as proposed, this becomes the public entrance onto the site. The mass of rubble seen to the N of the entrance passage also was partially uncovered during this phase of work and while this was not excavated it is still possible it still masks earlier built features.



Consolidated Trench

7. References

RCAHMS 1988 *The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. Argyll: an Inventory of the Monuments: Argyll, Volume 6: Mid-Argyll and Cowal, Prehistoric and Early Historic Monuments*. Edinburgh.

Regan & Webb (forthcoming) Two Argyll Duns, Excavations and Barnluasgan and Balure, North Knapdale

Appendix 1: Context Descriptions

[001] Topsoil. The vegetation cover consisted mainly of moss, lichens and grass, with lesser amounts of bracken.

[002] Layer. Collapse/demolition, mainly consisting of epidiorite blocks tumbled into entranceway and to the north of the entrance. The largest block measured 1.60m x 0.50m x 0.20m.



Rubble at N of Entrance

[003] Layer. Dark grey brown humic silt within entranceway over and within surface [004], the deposit included occasional burnt bone and charcoal fragments (including hazelnut shell fragments).

[004] Surface. Entrance surface, comprising of schist slabs and rubble levelling over natural bedrock. Several stones appear to lie E/W across entrance passage and may be intended as crude steps, largest stone 0.35m x 0.15m x 80mm.



Cleared Entrance from S

[005] Wall. Eastern wall of entranceway, measuring 2.00m wide and standing up to 1.05m in 7 undisturbed rough courses. Constructed using mainly large angular schist blocks with smaller fragments used as levelling/hearthing material. (largest block measured 0.80m x 0.36m x 0.20m)



East side of Entrance Passage [005] from SW

[006] Wall. Western wall forming later entrance blocking/narrowing. Constructed from angular schist blocks the wall measured 2.70m long but this was distorted by the collapse of the N end of the wall material, the original length likely between 1.80m-2.0m. The remaining wall stands up to 0.75m high in 5 rough courses (largest block measured 0.95m x 0.27m x 0.20m).



Later West side of Entrance Passage [006] from SE

[007] Wall. Original W side of entrance and constructed from angular schist blocks the wall measured 2.0m long and stands up to 1.60m high in 10 rough courses (largest block measured 0.87m x 0.30m x 0.23m).



West side of Entrance Passage [006] in front of [007] from SE

Appendix 2: Context List

CAS 11	[001]	Topsoil
CAS 11	[002]	Rubble
CAS 11	[003]	occupation
CAS 11	[004]	Surface
CAS 11	[005]	E Entrance Wall
CAS 11	[006]	W Entrance Wall
CAS 11	[007]	Early Entrance

Appendix 3: Photographic List

Photo No	Context	From	Description
1		N	Pre ex
2		S	Pre ex
3		NE	Pre ex
4		S	Pre ex
5	[002]	S	Pre ex
6		S	Pre ex
7		W	Pre ex
8		W	Pre ex
9		W	Pre ex
10	[002]	S	rubble
11	[002]	W	rubble
12	[002]	N	rubble
13	[002]	N	rubble
14	[007]	E	wall
15	[007]	E	wall
16	[006]	E	wall
17	[005]	NW	wall
18	[002]	E	rubble
19	[002]	E	rubble
20	[002]	N	rubble
21	[003]	S	surface

22	[006]	E	wall
23	[003]	N	surface
24	[004]	S	surface
25	[004]	N	surface
26	[004]	S	surface
27	[004]	S	surface
28	[004]	W	surface
29	[004]	W	surface
30	[004]	S	surface
31	[004]	W	surface
32	[006]	NE	wall
33	[005]	NW	wall
34	[005]	NW	wall
35	[004]	N	surface
36	[005]	SW	wall
37	[006]	SE	wall
38	[006]	SE	wall
39	[006]	SE	wall
40	[004]	N	surface
41	[004]	N	surface
42		N	entrance
43	[004]	W	surface
44	[004]	W	surface
45	[004]	S	surface
46	[004]	S	surface
47	[004]	E	surface
48	[004]	E	surface
49	[002]	N	rubble at N
50	[002]	W	rubble at N
51	[002]	W	rubble at N
52	[002]	NW	rubble at N
53		N	consolidated trench
54		S	consolidated trench

Appendix 4: Finds List

Context No	Small find No	Material	Quantity	Description
003	2	fe	1	pin?
003	1	flint	1	worked flint
003	3	flint	1	worked flint
003		soil		sample 1

Appendix 5: Graphic List

Graphic No	Scale	Plan/Section	Context	Notes
1	1:20	Plan	[002]	Trench Plan
2	1:20	Plan	[003]	Surface
			[004]	
3	1:10	Elevation	[005]	W Entrance wall
4	1:10	Elevation	[006]	E Entrance wall
5	1:10	Elevation	[007]	Early Entrance

Appendix 6: DES Entry

LOCAL AUTHORITY:	Argyll and Bute
PROJECT TITLE/SITE NAME:	Csatle Dounie, Archaeological Evaluation
PROJECT CODE:	CAS 11
PARISH:	North Knapdale
NAME OF CONTRIBUTOR:	Roddy Regan
NAME OF ORGANISATION:	Kilmartin House Museum
TYPE(S) OF PROJECT:	Archaeological Evaluation
NMRS NO(S):	NR 79SE13
SITE/MONUMENT TYPE(S):	Dun
SIGNIFICANT FINDS:	Two flint and a possible iron pin
NGR (2 letters, 6 figures)	NR 7674 9323
START DATE (this season)	June 2011
END DATE (this season)	June 2011
PREVIOUS WORK (incl. DES ref.)	
MAIN (NARRATIVE) DESCRIPTION: (May include information from other fields)	An archaeological evaluation was undertaken within the entrance passage of Castle Dounie dun prior to the realignment of the access path onto the site. The evaluation has confirmed that the original, unusually large entranceway had been narrowed by a modification on the w side of the passage. The modification would appear to have been undertaken while the dun was under occupation as the lower passage wall of the later modification was sealed by a distinct accumulation of midden-like material. As such collected samples and a recovered metal pin or nail may provide dating evidence for the latest occupation of the dun.
PROPOSED FUTURE WORK:	Post evaluation analysis and Watching Brief on path construction
CAPTION(S) FOR ILLUSTRS:	
SPONSOR OR FUNDING BODY:	Forestry Commission, Scotland
ADDRESS OF MAIN CONTRIBUTOR:	Kilmartin House Museum, Kilmartin, Argyll, PA31 8RQ
EMAIL ADDRESS:	museum@kilmartin.org
ARCHIVE LOCATION (intended/deposited)	The archive will be deposited with Kilmartin House Museum and copies of the report lodged with WoSAS SMR, the NMRS, the Forestry Commission and OASIS database