

Ardnamurchan Transitions Project Season One, 2006:



Interim Report

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Background to the project

Research into the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods in Western Scotland has been intensive over the last few decades, and concerted programme of excavation and survey have seen our knowledge of these periods increase significantly. However the Ardnamurchan Peninsula remains a relatively understudied area within Western Scotland for all of these key periods. As such, the Ardnamurchan Transitions Project (ATP) aims to investigate the transitions between the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age in the area through a combination of site specific excavation and wider survey work (Cobb and Richardson 2005a). This work will not only increase knowledge about the peninsula itself, but also aims to set it in its wider regional context. Of the sites from this period on the peninsula, the chambered tomb of Cladh Aindreis (figure 1) has been identified as

potentially significant. Until now this site has only been subject to basic survey work, which noted the irregular cairn shape, and suggested that this had been subject to some modification over time. It is in taking up these initial issues that this research project places one of its main aims; to establish the form and chronological sequence of the cairn and chamber. To achieve this, the project hopes to conduct several seasons of work on the site (Cobb and Richardson 2005b), which will include a geophysical survey of the cairn, test pitting, excavation and a rigorous dating programme. As no specific radiocarbon dates have been established for the Ardnamurchan peninsula (figure 2) from the Mesolithic or Neolithic, this is also a crucial element of our study. A further geophysical and palaeoenvironmental survey of the wider Swordle Bay (figure 3) will also seek to establish the extent and impacts of prehistoric activity in the bay and, and clarify the palaeoenvironmental setting of the site.

Overall research programme

The project represents a joint venture between Hannah Cobb and Phil Richardson, two current Archaeology PhD students at the Universities of Manchester and Newcastle. Whilst the significance of the peninsula has been identified through our doctoral research, this study stands alone as a separate, long term project of research which we intend will both inform but also extend well beyond the scope of our doctoral research. As well as simply examining the peninsula within its regional context our research is also driven by a series of wider themes. By focussing on the question of transition, this project hopes to challenge and explore the nature of the transition from hunting and gathering to farming, and the rigidity of our own modern preconceptions that surround interpretations of this transition. By moving beyond site based syntheses, it is our intention to challenge the orthodox picture of prehistory as a series of separate 'periods' where objects and remains are divided into functionally determined types. This is not to wholly reject such schemes, but rather it is the intention of this project to significantly challenge the basic nature of these conceptions and to demonstrate that used uncritically such concepts are rooted in older, modernist philosophies (Richardson 2005). Although in some ways our aims reflect traditional research agendas in archaeological investigation, we are also particularly concerned with exploring the potential of such research excavations to

provide and develop innovative vocational training for undergraduate students. Most research excavations work on a limited remit that often use unpaid undergraduate labour for largely menial tasks, and critically such projects rarely situate any field practice within its theoretical context. Consequently students frequently find it hard to reconcile the outcomes of their compulsory fieldwork activities with the general theoretical aspects that they are taught in the classroom. We believe that this is not only detrimental to archaeology as a discipline, but to the personal development of undergraduate students. Indeed positive excavation experiences can provide vital life skills to undergraduates whether or not they intend to continue in archaeology after having graduated from university. Consequently we hope to involve as many undergraduate students as possible on this excavation with the specific aim of providing clear and varied vocational training. Through such training we hope to empower all undergraduates, by giving them positive training in a number of transferable skills, whilst at the same time integrating critical theoretical issues, which they might not otherwise address on more traditional excavations (Cobb and Richardson forthcoming a & b).

The Ardnamurchan Transitions Project has the following key overall aims:

- To investigate evidence for the Mesolithic, Neolithic and Bronze Age periods on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, and the processes of transition between each.
- To significantly contribute towards increasing the knowledge of the prehistory of the peninsula in general and to situate this within a wider regional context.
- To clarify questions raised by Henshall (1972) regarding Neolithic tomb typology on the peninsula in relation to its wider regional context
- To encourage local community interest in the prehistory of the area and to develop local interest in archaeology in general.

- To develop practical methodologies which integrate and situate core theoretical questions within archaeological practice.

The aims for the project will be met through the following overall objectives;

- To excavate a possible multi-period site (Cladh Aindreis, Swordle Bay, nr. Ockle) to explore tomb typology and chronology.
- To provide the first radiocarbon dates for the peninsula to support knowledge of tomb type and peninsula.
- To survey the Swordle Valley by topographical Electronic survey and random test pitting/ small scale excavation to situate the site of Cladh Aindreis within its localised context and provide further palaeo-environmental data about the site setting.
- To survey the other two chambered tombs on the peninsula for comparison with Cladh Aindreis.
- To identify further sites from the periods under study through rapid walkover survey and some small scale excavation (Cobb and Richardson 2005c).
- To disseminate information about the project and its findings to local community groups.
- To provide opportunities for local community members of all ages to engage in the excavation process.
- To explore sites from the periods under consideration using a series of alternative methodologies, including Quick Time Virtual Reality (henceforth QTVR) and further experiential forms of recording.

Site location

The first area investigated was the site of the chambered cairn, Cladh Aindreis (NGR: NM 5470 7076 centred - see Figure 2), and Swordle Bay (figure 3), in which it is situated. Following a rapid walkover survey of Swordle Bay and Desk Based Assessment an evaluation of potentially significant features out with the scheduled area of the chambered cairn was undertaken. The second area of fieldwork involved a rapid coastal reconnaissance of the coastal area at Sanna Bay, Ardnamurchan (NGR: NM 4455 6900 centred, - see Figure 2).

Description of the monument

The chambered tomb of Cladh Aindreis (figure 1) has not been excavated, although it has been severely robbed. However, it was surveyed in 1962 by Henshall as part of her work *The Chambered Tombs of Scotland* and features in the second volume of this, published in 1972, classified as a Clyde type chambered cairn. The site was also visited by the Ordnance Survey in 1970, although the entry noting this visit on the RCHAMS record for the site, simply corroborates Henshall's observations, and on visiting the site today it is clear that these observations still largely apply nearly 30 years on. A description is given below.

Cladh Aindreis (see QTVR film) is situated in a central and commanding position at the mouth of a river valley, on a terrace immediately above the flood plain and aligned north-west – south-east (chamber aligned east - west). The adjacent river runs north-south approximately 30m to the southwest of the tomb and the valley goes on to slope down into what is a gentle and sheltered bay, with the current high watermark approximately 200m to the north-north-west of the cairn. Eigg and Rhum are clearly visible, straight ahead to the north and north-north-west, and so is the closer Island of Muck to the north-west. Looking south, inland, from the cairn, the watershed of the valley can be seen, and beyond these a number of the major peaks in the area.

The cairn is 47m in length, from south-east to north-west, and is an unusual shape (an oblong with a roughly circular bulge to the south-east), which Henshall suggests may be the result of robbing in some areas and additions to the cairn in others (figure 1; Henshall 1972, 315). Situated within the south-east end is the chamber, which is rectangular in plan and its general dimensions are 3m x 0.8m. The chamber is delineated by upright slabs (most of which exist, although several look to have leant and been displaced to some extent), and is divided into two compartments (*Ibid*). Interestingly, Henshall notes that “shells have been found in rabbit-scrapes in the cairn” (*Ibid*).

History of Research

The sum of recent work on the peninsula is the basic survey of the three chambered cairns identified as part of Henshall’s seminal study of the chambered tombs of Scotland, the small scale excavation of a lithic scatter in the early 1980s and the excavations in the 1990s of the Mesolithic site of Risga in Loch Sunart by a team from the University of Glasgow. Consequently our knowledge of the early prehistory of the area and the key transitions from hunting and gathering to farming and metalworking is limited.

However this small amount of work, and the continuous finds that have resulted from the informal survey work of a number of local amateur enthusiasts, suggests that the current paucity of knowledge does not reflect the true record. Indeed in the light of recent research which has stressed the mobility of the prehistoric populations of the area, and the geographical position and central location of the peninsula between the northern and southern Inner Hebrides, it seems likely that this area could have played an important role during critical periods of early prehistoric change in Western Scotland. The project is intended to run for five years in the first instance and will use a combination of site specific excavation and wider survey work to find new material from the periods and to provide a detailed investigation of some already known sites.

One of the authors (HC) examined part of the peninsula as part of an MPhil Dissertation concerning wider western Scotland (Cobb 2005). Only four sites were visited on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula as part of this. Indeed, none of the Ardnamurchan sites visited in the study have been excavated (although the island of Risga, which could not be visited due to its situation in Loch Sunnart, between Ardnamurchan and the Morvern Peninsula, was extensively excavated in the early 1900s, and was re-excavated in the late 1980s). Compounding this is the fact that the three Mesolithic sites visited are simply observations of surface scatters of lithics and shell midden material by early antiquarians and passers by, rather than the remains of sites documented through detailed field survey. Accordingly, no radiocarbon dates are available for any of the sites, and the observations that can be made about them are relatively limited, rendering this section briefer than any of the others. This said, however, some clear trends were still observed. Crucially, all of the sites have a relatively unrestricted view (figure 4), with less than half of the view restricted in all cases. All have clear views of the sea to the north and north-west, although it is not possible to see out to the open sea from Kentra, only over the extensive sea loch that is Kentra bay.

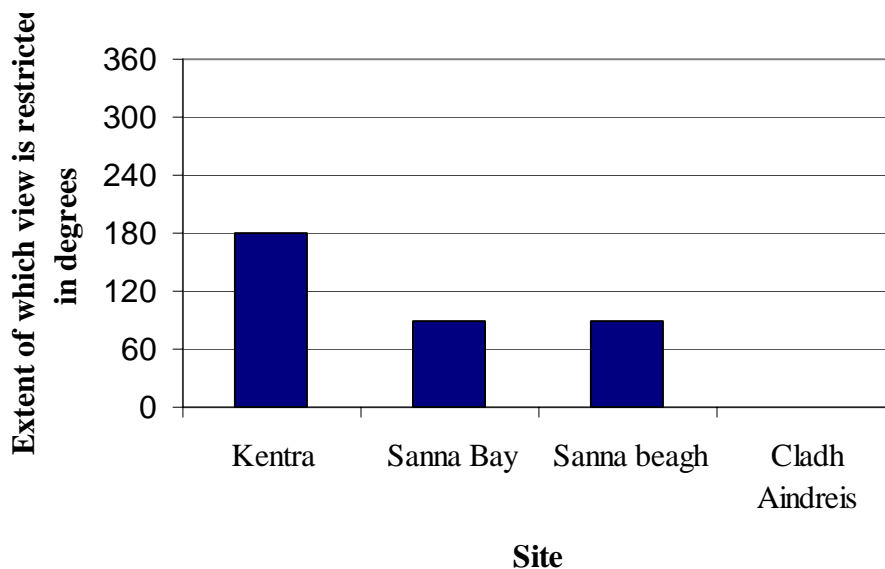


Figure 4: The extent to which the views from each site are restricted, on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula.

The sites of Sanna Bay and Sanna Beagh were probably intervisible (figure 5). Whilst two shell middens were recorded in the 1920s however, their precise locations were not noted, and as a result these are now covered by the more recent dune formations in the bay. Thus any assumption of their intervisibility relies on earlier accounts, rather than the authors observations, and as such remains tentative. One factor that is worth noting, however, is that of the lithics that have been found at Sanna Bay and Beagh. Several were made of Bloodstone, the raw material only available from Rhum, and the bay affords clear views out towards the Small Isles of Rhum, Muck and Eigg. Sanna bay is also locally acknowledged as a great source of Cowrie shells (which have been found pierced in many of the shell middens at Oban, on Oronsay, and the nearby site of Risga) and is an important point for whale watching. It is also worth noting that the white sands of the bay are also well renowned landmarks for sailors (Lethbridge 1927).

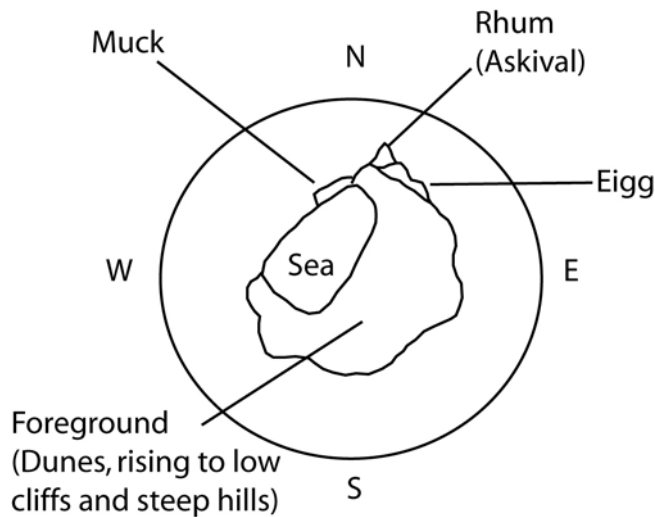


Figure 5: Panorama, views from Sanna Bay

The one Neolithic site visited on the Ardnamurchan peninsula, Cladh Aindreis, had not been excavated, although two aspects of it are worth noting here. Firstly the site is aligned south-east – north-west, and in this sense aligns almost perfectly with the island of Muck. Secondly, and potentially crucially, it has been observed that quantities of shell have been revealed in the cairn by rabbit scrapings (Henshall 1972). This indicates that Cladh Aindreis may be similar to sites such as the chambered tomb of Crarae, on the Kintyre peninsula, which had substantial shells deposited at the front of its chamber

(Scott 1961), and the sites of Carding Mill Bay and Raschoille Cave in Oban, where Neolithic bones were placed on top of Mesolithic middens. At the present time, however, little more can be said of the sites in the Ardnamurchan peninsula.

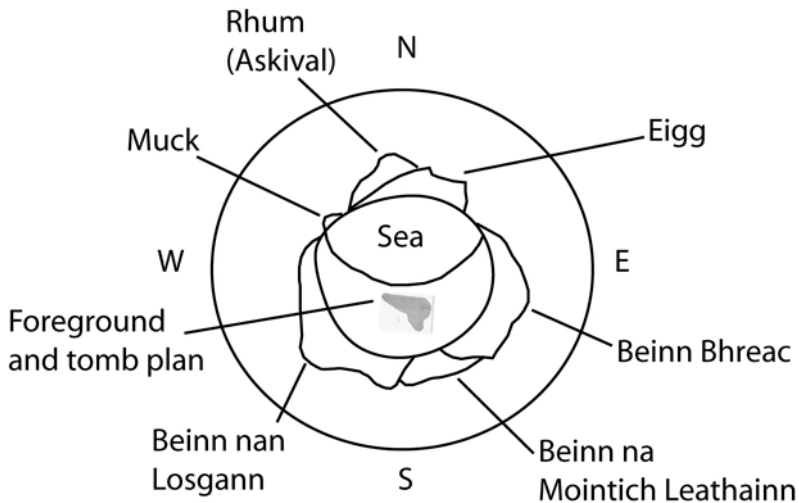


Figure 6: Panorama, views from Cladh Aindreis

Aims and objectives for 2006 season

The aims of the work undertaken in season one, 2006 were:

To evaluate the nature of preservation and chamber construction at the site of Cladh Aindreis.

- To evaluate the extent of contemporary activity undertaken in the unscheduled forecourt area at the chambered cairn of Cladh Aindreis
- To identify and evaluate the extent, condition, character, quality and date of any surviving archaeological remains within the wider Swordle Bay area, to establish their future vulnerability and conduct appropriate excavations.
- At Sanna Bay, and in its surrounding area, to identify and evaluate the presence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any surviving archaeological remains within the coastal erosion faces and dunes contained

within the bay area, and to establish their future vulnerability and assess the need for appropriate excavations.

- To examine the typological and experiential relationships between Cladh Aindreis and the other Neolithic chambered tombs on the peninsula.
- To use the outcomes of the above evaluative aims in order to develop a comprehensive proposal for future intrusive and non-intrusive investigation at Cladh Aindreis, and for further survey and excavation work within Swordle Bay and the wider peninsula.
- To establish links with the local community and to begin to develop local interest in the prehistory of the area and in archaeology in general.
- To develop practical methodologies which integrate and situate core theoretical questions within archaeological practice.

These aims were to be met through the following objectives:

- To identify through survey, and record the presence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any surviving archaeological remains within Swordle Bay.
- To establish the future vulnerability of any surviving archaeological remains within Swordle Bay.
- To conduct appropriate excavations to assist in meeting the above two objectives.
- To excavate, record and assess the nature of any surviving archaeological remains out with the scheduled area of the chambered cairn within the area to the south of the chamber, which may have represented a forecourt area.

- To assess the nature and condition of the scheduled chambered cairn without undertaking invasive archaeological works in order to make proposals for future work.
- To undertake a rapid walkover survey of Sanna Bay and the surrounding area to identify, record and interpret the presence, extent, condition, character, quality and date of any surviving archaeological remains within the coastal erosion faces and dunes contained within the bay area, and to establish their future vulnerability and assess the need for appropriate excavations.
- To disseminate information about the project and its findings to local community groups.

Excavation methodology

Following consultation with Historic Scotland all Bracken was removed from the Chambered Cairn area using a strimmer and by hand in order that the current shape of the cairn may be ascertained. All artefacts were retained for analysis and bulk soil samples were recovered on a judgmental basis.

A walkover survey was carried out of the entire Swordle Bay area and Sanna Bay, within the limitations of access and health and safety, this included a landward strip of 100m and where practicable, an examination of the intertidal zone. A key element of the reconnaissance survey was a detailed walk over survey of the immediate areas around the chambered cairn of Cladh Aindreis. This was undertaken in order to identify related sites and areas of archaeological importance. Through these walkover surveys selected sites within Swordle Bay were identified for further investigation, through test pitting and excavation. A further two sites were encountered at Sanna Bay.

Excavation results

Numbers in bold in the following sections correspond to contexts listed in Appendix 1 of the Data Structure Report (DSR) (Richardson and Cobb 2006). The remains of a

Chambered Cairn lie within the v-shaped inlet valley Swordle Bay approximately 250m from Swordle Bay House. This cairn is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument (SAM) and as such all works were conducted out with the SAM area.

Within Swordle Bay three areas containing archaeological deposits were recorded (figure 3). Trench one contained a small stone cairn which sat upon the first layer of subsoil beneath the present turf line. A further two features were cut into the natural black gravel subsoil. Area two was a small sub-circular cairn both sat upon and abutted by natural alluvial beach gravels. Finally a feature cut into the natural beach gravels was encountered eroding of a dune face along the shore line.

Trench One was placed with special care due to this SAM area. The co-ordinates of the scheduled area were identified using a GPS. In order to allow for potential errors produced by the GPS equipment a 5m 'buffer' zone was allowed between these points and trench one, in order that there would definitely not be any works conducted within the SAM area. As such, at the site of Cladh Aindreis itself, the extent of the cairn and surrounding area was removed of all foliage and the cairn was planned and relevant parts of the structure were photographed (figure 1). No diagnostic finds were noted within Trench 1 although a broken flint blade was found in the upper subsoils, with retouch on both sides of its proximal end. Large quantities of quartzite, both in chipped form and as river rolled pebbles, were found within all contexts. Some tiny flint waste flakes possibly representing debitage were also found.

Trench 1 (figure 7) - Phil Richardson, Hannah Cobb and Oliver Harris

- **Small Cairn**

In the north of the trench a small stone cairn was discovered immediately below topsoil (figure 8). This stone measured 3.7m long x 2m wide x 1.16m deep. It consisted of medium to small sub-angular rocks [004], some of which showed signs of being water

rolled. These stones were tipped, showed no signs of being structural and were surrounded by a loose silty soil [005]. Only the western portion of this stone mound was removed. These excavations revealed a light reddish brown sandy silt old ground surface (OGS) 011. This OGS is stratigraphically above the natural subsoil [008] into which the two pit features were cut. Thus 011 appears to represent an extent of the original turf line and subsoil upon which these stones were placed. Given this it is presumed that this 'cairn' represents much more recent 'robbing' activity at the site of Cladh Andries, and may even represent the spoil removed from around the chamber.

▪ Pit Features

Beneath these upper deposits a stained gravel surface was found into which two pits were cut. One was amorphous in shape, and possibly represented two pits, but disappeared into the trench edge towards the scheduled area, and so their extent was not established. Another was sub-oval and had been repeatedly re-cut and subject to burning activity. The sub-oval pit represents two phases of activity (figure 7 & 9). A larger pit 1.6m long x 1.1m wide x 0.2m deep [015] represents the first phase of activity. This feature contained a compact, stained and humic layer at the base 019. This may suggest that it had been lined with turf or other organic matter. The pit was also lined by a series of small stones around the upper edge [021]. The principal fill consisted of a dark blackish brown sandy silt which contained much charcoal and ash. The upper portion of the feature [028] silted up after going out of use. Some time after the larger feature silted up another smaller pit was dug into it [020]. In this case the pit was lined by large stones in a smaller sub-oval setting [022]. This pit contained a compact lower fill [016] which also contained lots of charcoal. Above this a loose grey black fill which contained large quantities of charcoal and carbonised wood. Again the upper fill consists of a silting action [009]. The similar nature of these two features suggests that they represent similar reuse of the same feature albeit time enough to allow the larger pit to silt up occurred between activities. No artifacts were recovered from the feature although a sample for radiocarbon dating was recovered from context 012.

A more amorphous pit [014] (figure 7 & 10) was present in the north-west of the trench this consisted of two fills; the lower, a silting action [013] was overlain by a silty gravel upper fill [010]. This feature would also appear to have been re-cut by [026] which whilst consisting of similar fills did represent a change in the nature of the cut. The exact proportions of this feature were not able to be defined as only a portion of the feature was present within the trench. No artefacts were recovered from the feature.

Trench 2- Phil Richardson, Hannah Cobb and Maria Magill

A small 1m x 2m test pit was opened on top of a small knoll to the east of the cairns chamber. The cairn itself faces SE-NW, and approximately 20m from the front of the cairn material there is a small knoll where the ground rises. This effectively acts to enclose the forecourt area at the front of the cairn. This was excavated in order to define the nature of this knoll. Topsoil was removed to a depth of 0.24m down onto a mid-orange brown sandy gravel. No archaeological remains were encountered.

Swordle Bay - Phil Richardson, Hannah Cobb and Al Curtis

On the fore shore a feature was noted eroding out of an exposed dune face. This feature was sealed beneath a layer of white brown sand [203], sealing this was an old turf line [204]. These layers represent were in turn sealed by a wind blown sand layer [205] and the current turf line [206]. The feature was 2.3m long x 0.82 deep and survived to a length of 1.1m. It consisted of a single fill of a blackish grey silty gravel [202]. The edges of the cut were difficult to ascertain as the gravel edges were extremely similar to the fill and thus they were mixed. The fill [202] contained large amounts of charcoal and pieces of burnt wood. Furthermore, finds included modern pottery and a small piece of wood with paint still on it. The feature is therefore interpreted as a modern fire pit. This dual build up of sand followed by turf lines must represent rapid dune build up processes since, as stated above, feature 201 does appear to be of modern origin. Two worked flints were discovered on the coastal edge of fill 202, however, these appear to be residual, either re-deposited when the feature was back filled or washed into the feature by tidal action. A second possible feature turned out to be nothing more than discolouration of the natural sand deposit on the extreme of the dune face.

Small Cairn and Lazy Beds - Phil Richardson, Hannah Cobb and Al Curtis

A small trench was opened to the WNW of the cairn, on a lower terrace of the Swordle River. Here a small area of lazy bed cultivation was observed to be respecting a discrete circular stone area, which appeared to be artificially raised above the natural lay of the land on its western (river facing) side. An L-shaped trench measuring 6.9m long x 1m wide was opened to investigate the nature of this structure and to examine its relationship with the surrounding cultivation. Excavation suggested that this was a small circular cairn set into the beach gravels (figure 11). There was no stratigraphical relationship between the lazy beds and cairn material which appears to respect the position of the cairn. The cairn was made up of small to medium water rolled cobbles [302], the excavation trench revealed a setting of three up right stones [303] which were set on edge and may represent structural evidence. However only ¼ of the structure was revealed in excavation in an area that may possibly have been subject to more recent robbing activity. Only one possibly diagnostic find was made, and this was an iron rove. This has been sent away for further analysis. Consequently little can be said about the age and purpose of this structure at present, however it will be fully investigated in season 2.

Sanna Bay Survey

As well as the main excavation work around Swordle Bay a rapid walkover survey assisted by members of the Moidart Heritage group, was undertaken at Sanna Bay, at the west of the Peninsula, and within the hills to the south of Sanna Bay, in the area between Portuairk and Grigadale. Sanna Bay has a large shifting dune system in which finds from the Mesolithic to the Viking period have periodically been noted, including a series of possible multi-period middens in the 1920s (Lethbridge 1927). Most recently a series of prehistoric flint and pottery finds have been made by local expert Jim Kirby and other members of the Moidart Heritage Group. Additionally a possible shell midden has been noted around the Grigadale area, perhaps relating to caves in the peak of Sgurr nam Meann (pers com. J. Kirby).

A rapid walkover survey of these areas found little material, however 2 buried land surfaces revealed by dune blowouts that has previously been identified by Jim Kirby

were revisited. At one of these a spread of shells and a piece of flint were noted (NM 44523 69297). At another (NM 44621 69276) a series of eroding land surfaces could clearly be seen within the dune blow out and two different types of pottery were found in these; a burnished piece that is probably medieval and a more rough piece which is likely to be later prehistoric. This area will be given a further detailed examination future seasons.

Discussion and preliminary interpretations

Within the Swordle Valley our objectives in 2006 were to undertake a small scale evaluative survey of the lower valley and undertake as much evaluative work at the site of Cladh Aindreis without breaking the ground in the scheduled area. This work was conceived for two reasons; to assist in developing a detailed excavation strategy for future seasons and to provide a preliminary contribution towards the wider project aims of establishing the date, form and chronological sequence of the cairn and chamber. Additionally a clear objective was to begin to define the boundaries of the monument, it's relation to other sites within a 2km radius, and to record the palaeoenvironmental setting of the site. As such, at the site of Cladh Aindreis itself, the extent of the cairn and surrounding area was removed of all foliage and the cairn was planned (figure 1) and relevant parts of the structure were photographed.

In the forecourt of the tomb, outside of the scheduled area, a trench was opened (Trench 1) in which robbed material from the cairn was identified in the upper subsoils. Beneath these upper deposits a stained gravel surface was found into which two pits were cut. One was amorphous in shape, and possibly represented two pits, but disappeared into the trench edge towards the scheduled area, and so their extent was not established. Another was sub-oval and had been repeatedly re-cut and subject to burning activity. A compact, stained and humic layer at the base of this pit suggested that it may have been lined with turf or other organic matter. A sample of carbonised wood was recovered from this pit and has been sent away for radiocarbon dating. 100% of the excavated material from both of the pits was taken for sampling and wet sieving. It has been hypothesised that the surface into which these pits were cut is the surface upon which the cairn may also have

been built, although we were unable to establish this without SMC. No diagnostic finds were noted within Trench 1, although a broken flint blade was found in the upper subsoils, with retouch on both sides of its proximal end. Large quantities of quartzite, both in chipped form and as river rolled pebbles, were found within all contexts. Some tiny flint waste flakes possibly representing debitage were also found.

By clearing all foliage from the cairn structure it became clear that it may not simply represent the 40m long roughly trapezoidal shape that Henshall identified in 1972. Instead, from the shape of the cairn material surrounding the chamber, the cairn has the appearance of a round cairn which was later modified by the addition of a tail to make a trapezoidal long cairn (See Figure 1). However the trench has been severely robbed and robbed cairn material has been redeposited largely around the chamber area, which may enhance the appearance of this area as a circular cairn. Additionally a robber trench, approximately 10m x 20m appears to have been placed about halfway between the chamber and the end of the cairn material. This trench may further enhance the appearance of an original circular cairn around the chamber. However due to its location within the cairn material this robber trench may actually provide a valuable tool for addressing the question of the construction phases of the cairn.

Out with the immediate cairn area 3 further trenches were opened. The cairn itself faces SE-NW, and approximately 20m from the front of the cairn material there is a small knoll where the ground rises. This effectively acts to enclose the forecourt area at the front of the cairn. As such a 1m x 2m trench (Trench 2) was placed on top of the knoll, in line with the chamber, to investigate whether the knoll was natural and if it represented any form anthropogenic activity. Excavation showed that this knoll was natural and no cultural material was found in the subsoils.

Another trench (Trench 3) was opened to the WNW of the cairn, on a lower terrace of the Swordle River. Here a small area of rig and furrow field system was observed to be respecting a discrete circular stone area, which appeared to be artificially raised above the natural lay of the land on its western (river facing) side. A trench was opened to investigate what this structure was and examine its relationship with the surrounding rig

and furrow. Excavation suggested that this was a small circular structure set into the beach gravels, and respected by the rig and furrow. However only ¼ of the structure was revealed in excavation in an area that may possibly have been subject to more recent robbing activity. Only one possibly diagnostic find was made, and this was an iron rove. This has been sent away for further analysis. Consequently little can be said about the age and purpose of this structure at present, however it will be fully investigated in season 2 (Cobb and Richardson 2006).

On the western side of the Swordle River a rapid walkover survey of the beach area was undertaken. This also included further investigation of a series of burnt pits that could be seen in the eroding beach section. Excavation of these found one to be empty and one to contain a flint scraper and broken flint blade. However the context in which these were found was clearly mixed as modern pottery and flakes of paint were found below them. It is likely that these pits represent very recent activity. A more detailed walk over survey of the bay is intended, however, and further investigation will be undertaken of a cave in the far west of the bay.

As well as the main excavation work around Swordle Bay and the lower Swordle Valley, a rapid walkover survey assisted by members of the Moidart Heritage group, was undertaken at Sanna Bay, at the west of the Peninsula, and within the hills to the south of Sanna Bay, in the area between Portuairk and Grigadale. Sanna Bay has a large shifting dune system in which finds from the Mesolithic to the Viking period have periodically been noted, including a series of possible multi-period middens in the 1920s (Lethbridge 1927). A rapid walkover survey of these areas found little material, however 2 buried land surfaces revealed by dune blowouts that has previously been identified by Jim Kirby were revisited. At one of these a spread of shells and a piece of flint were noted. At another a series of eroding land surfaces could clearly be seen within the dune blow out and two different types of pottery were found in these; a burnished piece that is probably medieval and a more rough piece which is likely to be later prehistoric. This area will be given a further detailed examination future seasons.

Publication plans and future work

Season 1 proved highly successful for the Ardnamurchan Transitions Project and all objectives for the season were successfully met. As such we now have a detailed excavation strategy for the site of Cladh Aindreis, and clear plans for future survey work both in Swordle Bay and Valley and on the rest of the peninsula (See ATP 2007 Project Design, Cobb and Richardson 2006). Additionally we were highly successful in forging connections with local groups and individuals, largely due to the success of the site open day, and the enthusiasm and kindness of local groups and individuals. The open day was held on the 6th August 2006 and 22 groups attended (ranging in size from 2 to 9 people). As well as many people expressing an interest in coming to volunteer in future seasons, we have also become involved with a local schools and community project entitled “A year in the life of Ardnamurchan” which will structure some activities around our work in Season 2. We have also been invited to speak about the project to the Moidart Heritage Group in February 2007, and to the wider community in the Kilchoan Community Centre during our second season of work in summer 2007. We have also been invited to make use of a local study centre, which will provide an opportunity to engage local groups in further archaeological work. Furthermore through the contacts we have made we have been informed about a number of sites and area that are not recorded by the SMR which we hope to investigate in further seasons of work.

Season two will take place between 17th June and 9th July 2007 and will aim to clarify and expand upon the information provided here. Detailed recommendations for a further course of action, both at the cairn and around the peninsula are clearly laid out within the ATP Project Design 2007 (Cobb and Richardson 2006).

Post-excavation

Sample processing, artefact and ecofact analyses, a programme of C14 dating and publication of the results from this fieldwork will be undertaken to provide a more conclusive picture of this site.

Archiving and Finds Disposal

The project archive, comprising all ATP record sheets, plans and reports, will be deposited with the National Monuments Record of Scotland on completion of fieldwork and any relevant post-excavation analyses. Finds will be subject to the Scots Law of Treasure Trove and Bona Vacantia, and will be reported to the Queen and Lord Treasurer's Remembrancer for disposal. Appropriate conservation of finds will be conducted before disposal.

Dissemination of Information

A brief summary of the archaeological results will be submitted for inclusion in *Discovery and Excavation in Scotland*, 2006. Two short articles on our findings will be published in *Scottish Archaeological News* and *PAST*, the newsletter of the Prehistoric Society (Cobb and Richardson in press; Cobb and Richardson forthcoming). A paper was presented at the 2006 EAA conference regarding teaching methods used. A paper will be given in February 2007 to the Moidart Local History Group regarding our work. A website has been set up and information will be continually updated at this site. The address for this is <http://ardnamurchantransitionsproject.googlepages.com/>

Notes and acknowledgements

The Ardnamurchan Transitions Project would like to thank the Ardnamurchan Estates for permission to conduct archaeological works. We would also like to thank Oliver Harris and Al Curtis for their generous help as staff and also all students and volunteers whose contributions to the project were invaluable. The field work was generously funded by The Prehistoric Society, The Council for British Archaeology Challenge Fund, The Students as Partners Fund (through the University of Manchester), The School of Historical Studies, University of Newcastle and The University of Manchester. We would also like to thank all the local individuals and groups, such as Jim Kirby and The Moidart Heritage Group, who gave up their time in order to talk to us and show us some of the

peninsula. This was not merely of tremendous importance to us but of great benefit to the students who were shown things and heard discussions that they would not have been privy to without the engagement of these local groups.

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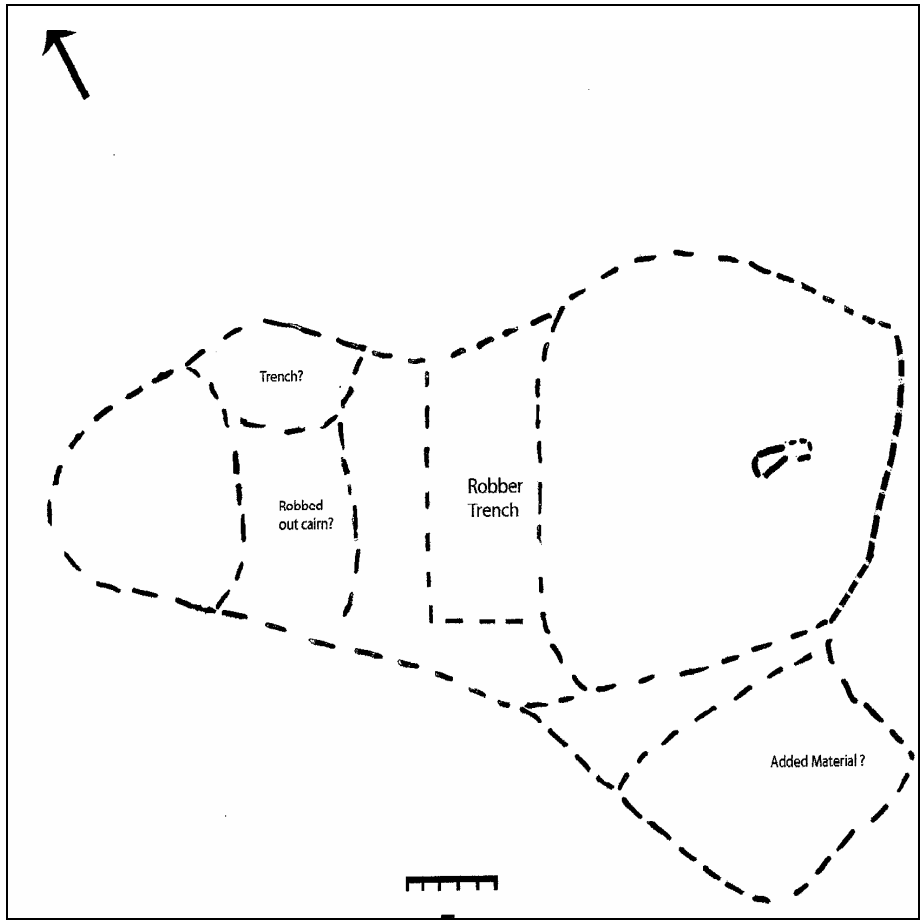


Figure 1: Plan of Cladh Aindreis showing Location of Robber Trenches. 1:75, scale = 5m

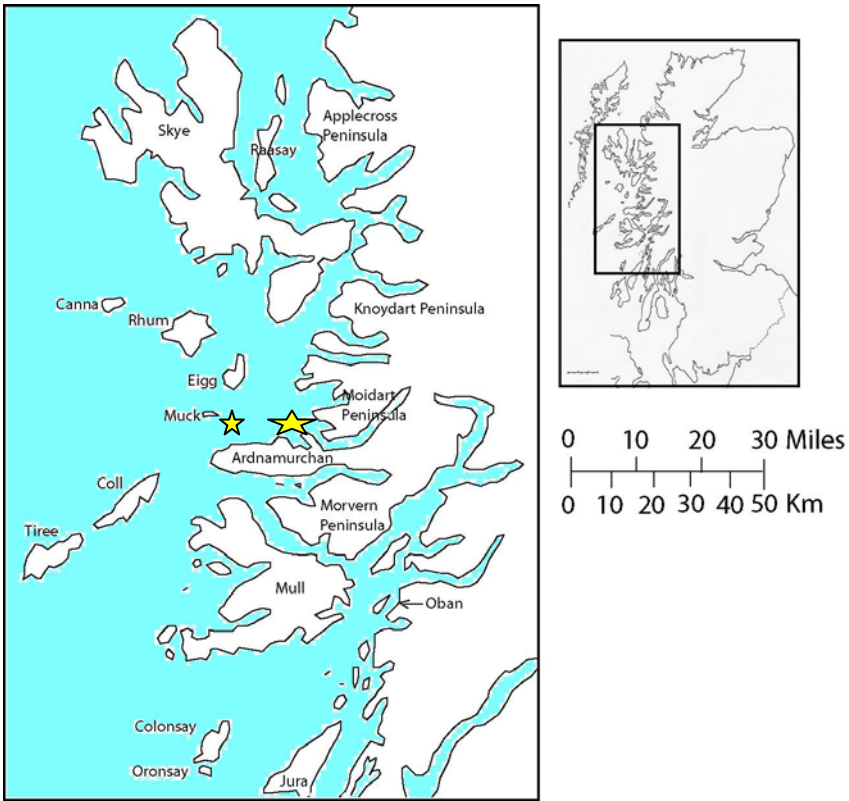


Figure 2: Locations of sites - Cladh Andreis is larger star, Sanna Bay is smaller star