

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the results of an archaeological field evaluation undertaken at the site of the ruinous farm steading of Lower Kiltyrie near the N shore of Loch Tay, Perth & Kinross Council having granted planning consent to construct a new dwelling house on the site of the farmstead (Planning Application reference number 07/02660/FUL). On the advice of its archaeological advisers, Perth and Kinross Heritage Trust (PKHT), the council attached two conditions relating to the implementation of a programme of archaeological investigation prior to the start of this development. One was for a standing building survey on any substantial remains that will be affected by the development. The other was for an archaeological evaluation within the environs of the farmstead to determine whether there was any evidence of a settlement predating its presumed 18th-century foundation.

The project was undertaken with the agreement of the site's owners, Graeme and Pauline Anderson and their agent, Robert Stevenson, and was carried out in the context of National Planning Policy Guidelines 5 (Archaeology and Planning) and in accordance with a Written Scheme of Investigation (WSI) which had been agreed between the council, PKHT, Mr Stevenson and Scotia Archaeology. Sam Scott undertook the standing building survey on 25th February 2008 and John Lewis completed the evaluation between 6th and 10th March 2008.

THE SITE

The site is centred on NGR: NN 6305 3633 and located in rough pasture near the N shore of Loch Tay, some 8km E of Killin. The ground slopes down from the A827 road through rough grazing and sparse woodland towards the shore of the loch. Lower Kiltyrie is midway down the slope and is one of several farmsteads and townships dating from pre-Improvement times, or soon after, that litter the N side of the loch. Its visible surviving remains comprise five ruined buildings and two enclosures which are depicted on a 1769 survey by John Farquharson and the first edition Ordnance Survey 6-inch map of 1867.

In 2000 and 2004 the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland (RCAHMS) undertook brief surveys of Lower Kiltyrie (Monument Number NN63NW 44) although the buildings were only sketched at that time. RCAHMS numbered the buildings BLOO 1180 (termed Building B by the client), BLOO 1181 (Building C), BLOO 1182 (Building E), BLOO 1183 (Building A) and BLOO 2049 (Building D). The new house is to be built directly over the remains of some of these buildings, extending some way to their NE.

PROGRAMME OF INVESTIGATION

The evaluation was the first stage of a programme whose principal objective was to determine whether the farmstead stood on the site of an earlier settlement or was the continuation of one. This possibility was investigated through the excavation of a series of exploratory trenches, distributed throughout the site. In addition, a standing building survey was undertaken on the only structure (BLOO 1180) whose remains were relatively substantial. It was understood that should the results of the evaluation prove significant, they would be used to develop a strategy for further investigation. However, if no remains of archaeological importance were identified, this phase of work was likely to facilitate the discharge of the archaeological planning condition on the development.

The standing building survey

This small farm survived as the remains of five buildings and two enclosures. The principal building (BLOO 1180 or Building B) was a byre dwelling and is the subject of this detailed description. It measured 18.6m by 5.7m externally with fragmented wallheads standing to a height of 2m at both gables with the joining longitudinal walls rarely rising beyond 0.5m. The E gable stood to just above wallhead height, most of the wall having collapsed into the interior of the building. The W gable survived to its full height of 4m from the hearth of a fireplace to the apex of the wall.

The walls were of drystone, random rubble construction with internal bonding of clay and lime mortar pointing which had completely weathered out. Several features survived in the W gable, including a press at its S end, a central fireplace with flue and an attic window towards its N end. At ground-floor level in the fragmented S wall, where it adjoins the W gable, were the remains of a window jamb and cruck recess which formed the internal reveal of this window. There appeared to be a corresponding cruck recess in the N wall although it was less well defined. Protruding from the outside face of the W gable, midway up the wall, was a 'thack stane', an anchor for a rope securing the roof thatch.

There were two openings at the base of the S wall. The wider one, midway along the wall, gave access to the byre and the dwelling area. Projecting into the byre area from the internal E jamb of this opening was a slab, set on edge and in line with the terminus of a drainage channel known colloquially as a 'grip' (OE *grype*), a section of which was exposed by excavation (see below). The slab is interpreted as the remains of a byre trevis. The second opening, which was less well defined, may have been the entrance to the byre or, more likely, the outlet from the grip.

A short distance W of the doorway was another edge-set slab which may have been a fireplace back plate set against a transverse partition dividing the byre from the living area. There would have been a hanging lum above such a feature although clearly no evidence of one survived at Lower Kiltyrie. However, there did not appear to be enough working space for a swy within the fireplace in the W gable, suggesting that the living area had been divided into two compartments, the 'but' and 'the ben', the former being the daily living space roughly equivalent to a modern kitchen and the latter the best room. Such an arrangement can be seen at the restored longhouse at Moirlannach, Killin, only a short distance from Kiltyrie.

There were two enclosures attached to the farmstead: a small one to the W of Building A; and a larger one (43m E/W by 15m wide) which sloped gently downwards on the S side of the site. A slight ridge ran E/W across the large enclosure which was probably a stackyard.

The archaeological evaluation

The total area of the proposed development is some 6200m² although the construction of the new house is likely to disturb an area of only about 2000m², of which 5% (100m²) was investigated archaeologically. This was achieved by excavating a series of slit trenches throughout the site, using a 5-tonne tracked excavator. A toothless ditching bucket was used throughout, with the exception of Trench 7 across the access track to the site and another (Trench 11) against the N wall of Building B where large quantities of rubble were expected.

Trenches 7 and 11 were each 1m wide, the remainder being 1.5m wide (the width of the ditching bucket).

In addition, a small hand excavation was undertaken within Building B in order to expose a stretch of the 'grip'.

Trench 1

Trench 1 was located 6m E of Building A and measured 8.5m N/S. Topsoil was 0.35m deep at its N end, deepening to 0.5m further S. It overlay boulder clay which included many stones at the S end of the trench.

The glacial till varied in colour throughout the site, ranging from grey to yellow, orange and occasionally pink.

Trench 2

Measuring 6.5m E/W, Trench 2 was located a short distance to the N of Trench 1 and roughly in line with the N wall of Building A. Topsoil was only 0.25m deep and sat directly on glacial till.

Trench 3

Trench 3 ran eastwards a short distance from Trench 1 and measured 8.5m E/W, the topsoil being 0.3-0.4m deep.

Trench 4

Trench 4 was located just E of Building B and measured 9.5m E/W. Topsoil was 0.5m deep except at the W end of the trench where bedrock was encountered at a depth of 0.4m.

Trench 5

Located on the W side of the small enclosure to the W of Building A, Trench 5 measured 6.5m N/S. The topsoil had a maximum depth of only 0.2m and probably never had been ploughed. The ground was very wet in this area and the trench soon filled with water.

Trench 6

Trench 6 measured 6.5m N/S and was located near Building A, within the small enclosure. As in Trench 5, the topsoil was only 0.2m deep and gave onto glacial till except at the N end of the trench where the remains of a cobbled surface were uncovered. There was no clear edge to the cobbles, suggesting that some of them had been robbed.

Trench 7

This small trench, measuring 3m N/S by 1m wide, was cut across the track that leads into the site. It was opened to determine the make-up of the track which comprised 0.3m of yellow and grey clay and pebbles (redeposited subsoil) set directly over topsoil.

Trench 8

Trench 8 was located towards the W end of the large enclosure on the S side of the site. It measured 8.5m E/W and contained only 0.2m of topsoil which sat directly on boulder clay.

Trench 9

This trench, which measured 6m N/S, was opened to determine whether a slight ridge running E/W through the large enclosure was natural or man-made in origin. Glacial till was uncovered throughout the trench at a depth of 0.2m and it was clear that the ridge was a natural feature, probably marking the edge of glacial scouring.

Trench 10

Trench 10 was opened at the E end of the large enclosure and measured 5.5m E/W. It contained 0.2m of topsoil which sat directly on glacial till.

Trench 11

Trench 11, measuring 3.5m E/W and 1m wide, was opened against the outside face of the N wall of Building B to determine whether this building stood over the remains of an earlier one. The wall trench was 0.35m deep and cut into boulder clay 0.2m below ground level, the foundations being vertical and clearly a single build.

Building B

Limited hand-excavation was undertaken within Building B where a 1.3m-long segment of the 'grip' was exposed. This feature was 0.3m wide, 0.2m deep and had stone sides and a base comprising slabs of schist. It is believed to have debouched through a small opening at the base of the building's S wall, towards its E end.

A slab of schist uncovered between the doorway in the S wall and the presumed fireback is taken as evidence that at least the residential part of the building was floored with stone.

CONCLUSIONS

There was no evidence to suggest that the farmstead of Lower Kiltyrie predated the presumed mid-18th-century date of its standing buildings. Although the origins of some settlements of similar character predate the 18th century, it might be expected that at places such as Lower Kiltyrie, where stone is plentiful, some physical evidence would still survive. It might also be expected that some trace of rig and furrow would be visible around the farmstead although none is visible at ground level in the vicinity of Lower Kiltyrie or at Barra Liath (NN63NW 45), a similar and probably contemporary settlement some 200m further E, where a corn-drying kiln would have processed grain from several farms.

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