

ACCORD collaboration with the Ardnamurchan Community Archaeology Group: Summary Statement of Social Value

Co-Authored by the Ardnamurchan Community Archaeology Group and the ACCORD project.
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Introduction

The ACCORD team worked with the Ardnamurchan Community Archaeology (herein ACA) group from the 8th to the 10th of August 2014. The project was based in Kilchoan, West Ardnamurchan in Argyllshire. Together at Camas Nan Geall we recorded and modelled three headstones in a graveyard and a standing stone with Early Medieval carvings adjacent to this graveyard, and in the nearby town a gravestone in the Kilchoan Parish Churchyard, Kilchoan. We used the techniques Reflectance Transformation Imaging (RTI) and photogrammetry (for more information on these technologies please see the overarching ACCORD project overview page). This document provides information about the context of this work. There is a brief discussion of the historical value of the monuments with reference to wider sources. The main focus of this document is to describe the social value of the Ardnamurchan landscape and monuments recorded as part of ACCORD for the Ardnamurchan Community Archaeology group and wider community. Social value refers to a collective attachment to place that embodies meanings and values that are important to a community or communities (Jones and Leech 2015: paras 1.5 and 1.6; see also Johnston 1994 and Byrne et al. 2003). The role of 3D recording and modelling in expressing the value of the monuments, and in creating value, is also summarised. Quotes and opinions in this document were expressed during focus group meetings held at the beginning and end of the co-production process.

The ACA group

The group consists of 6 mutual friends who officially formed in September 2013 after taking part in an Adopt-a-Monument surveying workshop. Prior to that members of the group engaged with the Ardnamurchan Transitions Project (herein the ATP) in partnership with Archaeology Scotland's Adopt-a-Monument scheme (with the universities of Manchester and Leicester, and with CFA-Archaeology) which has been working in the area over the past 9 years (http://www.butstillitmoves.com/atp/Ardnamurchan_Transitions_Project/Home.html). Membership is open to anyone and is free. Everyone in the group lives locally around Kilchoan, many of whom are retired. Individuals in the group defined themselves as "incomers" in the Focus Group and do not recognise themselves as "real locals", since all members in the ACA have moved to the area in their adult life and have no genealogical ties to Ardnamurchan.

A main aim of the ACA is to put more archaeological sites on Ardnamurchan's map. The group have been documenting heritage sites on the Ardnamurchan Peninsula, the geographical limit of their group activities, for over 5 years and have added over 100 sites to the archaeological record. Records are deposited with the Highland Environmental Records, appearing on Pastmap (<http://pastmap.org.uk/>). Members also take part in archaeological activities and workshops organised through the ATP. Active member Jonathan Haylett keeps two blogs where he posts about the group's activities and his own personal interests of Ardnamurchan's clan history, local fauna and wildlife (<http://www.clanmaciain.com/maciain/> and <http://kilchoan.blogspot.co.uk/>).

Wider Landscape Setting

Ardnamurchan has seen relatively little archaeological excavation and research compared to other regions in Scotland. There are few published archaeological surveys of the area; notable ones

include Henshall's 1972 survey of chambered cairns, a general RCAHMS survey (RCAHMS 1980) which covers Northern Argyll and a survey focused on Norse place-names in the area (Bankier and Digney 2007). To date, ACA have made a notable contribution to recognising previously unmapped archaeological sites on the peninsula. Trackways, probably ancient, and William Bald's map 'Ardnamurchan and Sunart the property of Sir James Milles Riddell, Bt.', published in 1806 and now held by the Ardnamurchan Estate, direct the group's exploration through the landscape (Fig.1).



Figure 1: Detail from the 1806 Bald map held in the Ardnamurchan Estate showing the bay Camas Nan Geall, here written as 'Camusangaal'.

Significance and social value

The group's self-defined status as "incomers" meant that an "emotional commitment [in relating with the heritage in Ardnamurchan] is not there", according to one member of the group. Certain members of the group even questioned their "right" to record the local heritage as it was felt that it was "their [i.e. the real-locals'] history...no ours"; therefore due to a relative lack of lived experience of the landscape the group did not feel that they had ownership over the heritage in Ardnamurchan. A "real local" was defined as "someone who is born here and has been here for generations, or who had some [of their] upbringing" here.

The group therefore expressed the relationship with their local landscape in objective terms. However, it was evident that in fact they did have a strong emotive relationship with the landscape and that this was significant in individuals' ongoing identity construction. All expressed the pleasure and excitement "like a game!" of exploration. This is a place-making activity for all the individuals in the group, an attempt to claim belonging to Ardnamurchan. Investing in the intellectual pursuits of archaeological survey, discovery and research is therefore attractive to all members. Furthermore, the focus of the group is on the deep past. As became clear there were sensitive reasons related to their identity as incomers for why the recent past, generally defined as post-clearances, was out-of-bounds for the group, especially the past which is in living memory. In order to preserve an

acceptable distance with the heritage being studied, the group chose to model a Prehistoric and Medieval site as part of ACCORD.

The group felt a responsibility to preserve, communicate and inspire interest in the overlooked heritage of Ardnamurchan. They are not only doing this for themselves but also for the benefit of the wider community; taking on a “stewardship” role as “custodians” of the local heritage. The group also voiced how Ardnamurchan is a “community at risk” and recognised the potential economic regeneration benefits that investing in culture and heritage could bring by “taking [archaeology] away from the fuddy duddy”.

There was also a sense that the group felt disenfranchised from their heritage by the lack of having a museum in Ardnamurchan and hence the removal of original artefacts to national museums; in particular they were referring to the Viking boat burial discovery made in 2011 (<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/uk-scotland-highlands-islands-15333852>) and its 2014 inclusion in the ‘Vikings!’ exhibition in the British Museum. Although a wonderful display which brought Ardnamurchan’s rich past to wider attention, they desired for the objects to be returned to Ardnamurchan. This is significant, since it was felt that the original in its landscape setting allows a connection to be felt with people in the past, thus creating an authentic experience.

The main reason for taking part in ACCORD was the desire to add a technique to their toolset which would enable the recording of sites efficiently without professional involvement. As it has clearly become evident, autonomous practices of knowledge-making is ultimately a place-making endeavour for members in ACA, and it was generally felt that ACCORD would give them a sense of ownership over the results and ultimately, a sense of belonging constructed through Ardnamurchan’s heritage.

The ACCORD Project monuments

Monuments at Camas Nan Geall and Old Kilchoan Parish Kirkyard were chosen for recording as part of ACCORD. Significantly, these places were appropriate for the group to record because they did not play an obvious role in contemporary local society and had an association with a distant past not within living memory. Therefore, as “incomers” to the area members in the group felt they could legitimately work on these sites (for reasons outlined above) as part of an active process of place-making, seeking belonging through Ardnamurchan’s heritage. Additionally, both the sites appealed to one member’s personal research interests on the rival clans of the Campbells (whose headstones are at Camas Nan Geall) and the Maclains (whose graves are in the Old Kilchoan Parish Churchyard) on which he blogs about here <http://www.clanmaciain.com/maciain/>.

Camas Nan Geall (NGR NM 56039 61858)

Located on a fertile plane at the bottom of Ben Hiant is Camas Nan Geall which translates from Gaelic to ‘Bay of the Strangers’. Here there is a westwards facing late medieval burial aisle, built very close to a prominently positioned standing stone probably erected in the Neolithic/ Early Bronze Age and embellished in the Early Medieval period (included in Ian Fisher’s 2001 survey of Early Medieval sculpture in the West Highlands and Islands). There is a general site entry for Camas Nan Geall on Canmore (Canmore ID 22350), while the stone has a separate Canmore entry, also referred to as the Cladh Chiaran cross-slab (Canmore ID 318537). Both the standing stone and burial site are in the same Scheduled Monument listing protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (list number 7783). A Bronze Age burial cairn, remains of an Iron Age fort and post-medieval remain are also located in the surrounding area.

We recorded the standing stone using photogrammetry. It was embellished on one face with relief carvings within a plane border in the Early Medieval period; a cross and associated bosses, above

which is a lamb (or other beast, on Canmore listed as a dog) and then an equal armed cross. The carved face looks westwards out to the Atlantic sea. We recorded this in 3D using the technique photogrammetry; the carvings, and especially the equal armed cross became much more apparent after 3D recording.

Immediately behind the standing stone is a small enclosed graveyard with low eroded plaster wall, known to be the 18th Century burial site of the Campbells of Ardsignish. This site is in an exposed condition and has been disturbed. There are approximately 8 headstones propped up against the interior of the northern wall of the enclosure, three of which we recorded on the same bright sunny afternoon using RTI. The three headstones were chosen because of their probable link to the Campbell clan. The first RTI record was of a headstone with skull and crossbones, to the left of which is an hourglass or agricultural tool (it is not clear which). The technique enhanced the carvings, but no other details were revealed. The second RTI recorded a crucifixion scene on a different headstone dated 1737. The technique revealed a halo surrounding the head of the Christ, and another carved details to the right of the head (a possible 'C' for Campbell? Or crescent moon) and a reeded pilaster to the right of Christ's body. Facial features and details in the loincloth were also enhanced. The third headstone recorded was of a Campbell family crest with initials 'A C', bringing to attention details in the trumpet spirals alongside the crest and illuminating the clenching fist holding a dagger or scroll.

Kilchoan Parish Kirkyard (NGR NM 48507 64046)

Above the village of Kilchoan is the "tranquil" and "special" Old Parish Kirk and Kirkyard, now in ruins. Today the kirkyard is maintained but not in active use- worshippers attend the 'new' church in the heart of the village. The group wanted to create an enhanced record of the condition of particular graveslabs, which could also be sent to experts to confirm their identification. The Kirk dates back to the 12th/13th Century, but was rebuilt throughout history. There is a site entry on Canmore (Canmore ID 22130) and it is listed as a Scheduled Monument protected under the Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act 1979 (list number 7824). Of interest to the ACA group was one of two 14th/15th Century rectangular carved graveslabs with carved relief a 'Berlinn' ship, below which may be a cavalry scene, thought to mark the grave of a Maclain (rivals of the Campbells). It was in an exposed condition partially covered in moss.

RTI was used to record this graveslab; the result illuminated difficult to see details in the carvings, however it is still unclear what they fully represent.

The impact of 3D modelling and recording

The group had not previously used 3D modelling or recording technologies to document or explore their heritage; although three members were familiar with 3D visualisation and models from previous voluntary or professional work. There was a general feeling that "modern technology can be scary" and "not normally my scene". Frustration at being "totally ignorant of the actual process" was expressed. Preservation, recording, monitoring erosion, promoting and increasing accessibility to monuments were all noted as opportunities which could arise from creating digital 3D visualisations.

In accordance with the ACA's relationship to heritage as described above, their approach to the technologies used were primarily expressed as pragmatic. The ACCORD results did not therefore replace the original, but were instead treated as objective analytical tools; their realism, quality and accuracy "enhancing what's there" were highly valued. It was expressed that there is always "something magical about the original", whereas in a replica there is no tactile or physical connection back to the people who made it, "they make you want to touch it [the original]". There was a shared feeling that authenticity is located in the original in its landscape setting.

Co-production of the records was described as “good fun!” and generated a strong sense of ownership within the group, but “with ownership comes responsibility” and indeed the group have now taken over care for the monuments at Camas Nan Geall from the Ardnamurchan Estate. Since the ACCORD project, the group have continued to use photogrammetry (for example <http://kilchoan.blogspot.co.uk/2014/10/branault-standing-stone-in-3d.html>). Additionally, the group have set-up a Facebook page; they hope social media “will help us get our message out to those who are interested in Ardnamurchan's rich history.” A statement on their facebook page reads:

“Following our recent course on digital imaging, group members are now buying the necessary software so we can record local sites and thus make them more accessible to those who can't get out there and see them. We're now also able to upload data on the many sites we're finding directly to the national database, using Archaeology Scotland's 'Discovery and Excavation in Scotland' site. Another responsibility we've taken on is to maintain the site at *Camas nan Geall*, above, working with the Ardnamurchan Estate.”

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