

ACCORD collaboration with the Tarbet Isle Dig Project: Summary Statement of Social Value

Co-Authored by members on the Tarbet Isle Dig Project and the ACCORD project.
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Introduction

The ACCORD team worked with a group who were involved in archaeological excavations on Tarbet Isle, north Loch Lomond, Argyll and Bute, on the 21st and 23rd of November 2014. The excavations were instigated by two individuals, Peter McFarlin and Preston McFarland, and led by professional archaeologist Heather James who works for Northlight Heritage. Together we modelled the medieval building remains under excavation on Tarbet Isle and a 1612 dated plaque built into the exterior wall of Luss Church, located on the east coast of Loch Lomond. We used the technique of photogrammetry (for more information on this technology please see the 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 monuments recorded as part of ACCORD for the group involved in the Tarbet Isle excavation. 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 modelling in expressing pre-existing values attached to the plaque, in communicating their work on Tarbet Isle, and in creating and adding 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 Group

Five individuals who were volunteering on excavations at Tarbet Isle, Argyll and Bute, took part in this ACCORD project. The Tarbet Isle excavation took place from the 14th to 24th of October. The ACCORD project took place on the final few days and aimed to work with the group to record the site and other objects regarded of significance. The team included the excavation director, Heather James, from Northlight Heritage, the two instigators of the project who had travelled from the USA to excavate here, and two amateur archaeologists; one of whom is a member of the Hidden Heritage group based in nearby Arrochar, Argyll and Bute, and another who is a member of ACFA (the Association of Certified Field Archaeologists). The group had met each other through taking part in the excavations and did not know each other well prior to this, except for the two Americans who were close friends, having met through the Clan MacFarlane Society <http://www.clanmacfarlane.org/>. The two Americans had financed the excavations in order to research their clan roots and history in the “heart of MacFarlane country”. The mission statement of the Clan Macfarlane Worldwide society, which has over 700 members, is:

“to explore, document, preserve, and share the history, heritage, and traditions of ancient Clan MacFarlane, and to serve as a connection for all MacFarlane Clan and Sept descendants worldwide.”

Historical significance and social value

Tarbet Isle is a small natural island in Loch Lomond and Trossachs National Park, Argyll and Bute. The island is owned by the Luss Estates. It has a strong association with the powerful MacFarlane clan who may have used this place as a small stronghold and watchtower to warn the clan of movement along the visible shores and the Loch. The Island has become a focus for an active engagement with MacFarlane clan history for the two Scots-Americans who funded the excavations. Taking part on an excavation in the heart of “MacFarlane land” was in essence a place-making process and search for belonging for these two individuals; as one of the Americans stated “I’m a MacFarlane”. Through genealogical research he can trace his family back to Ulster, Ireland and then to Edinburgh, Scotland. Furthermore, there was a strong emphasis on Scotland as a homeland within his family. The other American member of the group has had his DNA tested which supports a genealogical link “to MacFarlane Clan chiefs and the original Lennox Earls”. For both men, who may in fact be distant relatives, experiencing the “romantic” setting of “MacFarlane land” and investigating the medieval history of the clan, created a tangible connection to their ancestors.

For these Scots-American members of the group, the ACCORD technologies offered a means to capture the sense of “being there”. It was also felt that they would also enable others in the Clan MacFarlane Society back home in the USA to connect to their ancestors remotely. The act of co-production was very important, as the experience of capturing the process of excavation strengthened their tangible link, whilst creating a sense of “pride”. Creating results together on Tarbet Isle supported a desire to establish familial-like connections across the MacFarlane clan, past and present. In this regard other manifestations of the MacFarlane Clan’s heritage, such as burial memorials and the Luss Church plaque are also a significant area of interest.

For others in the group, with no demonstrable genealogical link to the ancient MacFarlane clan, the opportunity to take part in an archaeological excavation was the prime motivation. The other two volunteers who participated in the ACCORD project were sisters and both experienced archaeological amateurs, motivated by the thrill of discovery and enjoyment of the archaeological process. Both have had training in field archaeology and are members of ACFA (the Association of Certificated Field Archaeologists <http://www.acfabaseline.info/>) including an active involvement in University-led archaeological research projects. The sister who lived locally to Tarbet was also interested in the medieval story of the MacFarlane clan, which is the dominant historical narrative for the area.

The ACCORD Project Sites and Monuments

The following section describes the sites and monuments that were recorded during the ACCORD project.

Tarbet Isle (NGR NN 328 054) has its own entry on Canmore (ID 130013), the national inventory of Scotland’s monuments maintained by the Royal Commission for the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland. The island is not a Scheduled Monument and is not in guardianship of Historic Scotland. There have been no previous recorded excavations here. The Canmore entry describes the remains of a building approximately 14m north to south and 5.5 m east to west, with walls about 0.8m thick and up to 0.5m high, with two rooms and a landing point. It is suggested that these are foundations for walls of turf or timber, and further suggested it is possible one of these rooms may have been a watchtower. Pont’s 1527 dated map illustrates a two-storey structure on the Isle (ibid.). The excavations had revealed the foundations of the walls, and those in trenches 2 and 4 were modelled as part of the ACCORD work. It was not possible to create a model of the whole site under excavation due to vegetation coverage. While the excavation director was interested in

the techniques from the point of view of contributing to the archaeological record, others felt the models could be significant as a means to capture the labour invested in exploring Tarbet Isle.

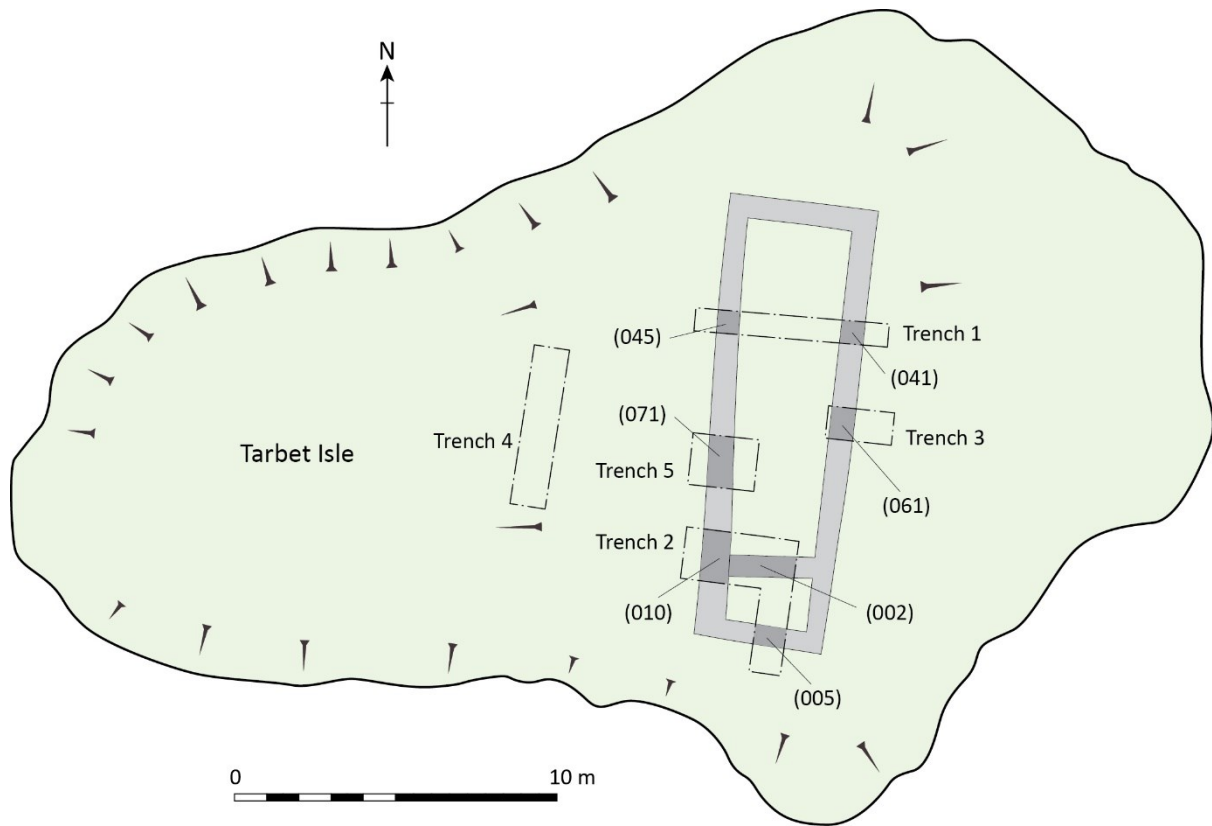


Figure 1: Map, after F Baker (FIRAT Archaeological Services) who conducted excavations in 2004 on the neighbouring mainland opposite the Tarbet Hotel. This updated map shows the presumed building outline on Tarbet Isle based on topographical survey and the excavation trench locations. (James 2014)

Luss Church John MacFarlan Plaque (NS 36100 92865). The plaque recorded as part of ACCORD is dedicated by the 17th Laird John MacFarlan, and is built into the northern external wall of Luss Church, also known as St Mackessog's Church of Scotland and Burial-Ground, located in Luss village, east coast of Loch Lomond, Argyll and Bute. The church has its own Canmore entry (ID 42529) but this does not explicitly mention the plaque. The church and burial ground (with Lych gates and boundary wall) is Category B Listed Buildings and therefore recognised as a site of regional importance and as representative of a particular architectural style. A church may have stood here as early as the 13th Century. The church you see today dates to 1875 and is a typical example of gothic architecture, which succeeds a church built post-reformation, and then again rebuilt in 1771. Gravestones in the churchyard are listed as scheduled monuments (listing index number 2461), therefore protected under the guardianship of Historic Scotland. These include two early medieval cross-slabs, an 11th Century hogback carved stone, gravestones from the 17th Century onwards and war memorials. The graveyard is still in use.

This plaque was therefore recognised by the group as an important symbol of the MacFarlane clan's stronghold in the area. Preston McFarland outlines the significance of recording this plaque for him and has conducted some extra research, published on the ACCORD blog

<https://accordproject.wordpress.com/2015/01/22/after-deathe-remains-vertex-by-preston->

[mcfarland/](#). Quoting Sir William Fraser (a 19th Century historian who wrote two impressive volumes on the clan history of the area) (Fraser 1869: 56), it is written that:

“The present church [at Luss] encloses a portion of the ground on which was the vault or place of interment of the MacFarlanes of Arrochar [located nearby Tarbet, north of Loch Lomond, Argyll and Bute]. Of this vault the only fragment that now remains is a stone which originally formed part of it and which has been built into the north wall of the present church. It bears the following inscription:

HERE IS THE PLACE OF BVRIAL

APPOINTIT FOR THE LAIRD

OF AROQVHAR BUILDIT BE

JHONE MACFARLAN LAIRD

THAIROF 1612

EFTER . DEATHE .

REMAINIS . VERTEW .

MEMENTO . MORI .

J . M . 1612 .”

The plaque is now rather abraded and worn and was modelled using the technique of photogrammetry in order to create a permanent record. The group, especially those with MacFarlane clan roots, were also keen to create a model which they could take home with them and 3D print, in order to further solidify their tangible and spiritual connection to the homeland of the MacFarlane’s.

The Impact of 3D Modelling and Recording

The individuals involved in this ACCORD project had not previously engaged practically with the digital techniques used. However, one participant works in the field of Computer Science back home in the USA, and was thus familiar with the principles of photogrammetry.

The photogrammetric results were met with exclamations of “phenomenal” and “exciting”! One person even described the three-dimensional models “as good as the real thing”. Indeed, for the group and especially those who expressed a strong sense of a MacFarlane identity, the results captivated an essence of the original site or monument. For them, the record was an authentic piece of MacFarlane heritage, successfully capturing a sense of “being there”. The ability to take these results with them was valued, as souvenirs which enact memories of a place and experience, so crucial to their own identity. Once back home in Utah, Preston McFarland got a 3D print made using the co-produced photogrammetric model of the John MacFarlan plaque at Luss Church (see his published blog post). For Preston “printing the 3D model was more about being able to share it with people... I have a strong sense of love for that land and its history and I want to imbue that with all my kin. I've been able to visit and see these places first hand. For the thousands who haven't and won't, they're limited to viewing documents and or having a conversation with someone like myself

who has been there. Now, I'll be able to place in their hand the best approximation there is, while they can even 3D print their own." Making the digital tangible again was therefore highly valued as an authentic means of sharing and communicating their common, but remote, heritage with people.

Furthermore, it was expressed by one Scots-American in the group that "this is really about creating a permanent record. Imagine the resource our progeny, in the millenia to come, will have if every site of interest [connected to the MacFarlanes] was properly modelled." The 3D records were valued by the Scots-Americans as an inheritance for future generations who claim MacFarlane descent.

Other values expressed by the group were the engaging qualities of the results which "stimulates" interest and are therefore useful for the promotion of heritage sites, whilst perhaps engaging a younger audience. It was also noted that, due to their geographical remoteness from Scotland, and more specifically the homeland of the MacFarlane clan in Argyll and Bute, the models could be used for "virtual tourism" by members of the Clan MacFarlane Society in the USA. Unfortunately, the results were not deemed very successful as creating a useful archaeological record because of the partial nature of the modelling. Individuals in the group are confident in exploring the use of photogrammetry in their future work and have remained in contact with the ACCORD team.

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