



## **CRAIGGLASS COMMUNITY EXCAVATION**



*Project Report  
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## Summary

*The project was initiated as part of the Dalriada Festival with the aim of introducing the local community and children in particular to the experience of an archaeological excavation. The site chosen was a building within the now abandoned settlement of Craigglass that was last occupied in the 1960's. The excavation trenches were placed in order to establish the function of a building, which from map evidence was shown without a roof in 1900. The excavation indicated that the building was a byre, at least in its later phase and the area was subsequently used as a midden after the building had gone out of use.*

## Acknowledgements

The excavation team would like to thank the organisers of the Dalriada Festival for their help. Particular mention must go to several bodies and individuals that were crucial to the organisation of the excavation; The Forestry Commission and their staff, without whom none of this would have been possible, Sheila Clarke from Historic Scotland and of course all the individuals that helped excavate the site.

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## Introduction

The archaeological investigation at the former settlement of Craigglass was a collaborative excavation initiated as part of the Dalriada Festival. The specific aim of excavation was to introduce the public and children in particular, to the practicalities of a 'real' excavation through active participation. The excavation took place over two Festival Weekends in September 2004 and June 2005. The excavation was supervised by two professional archaeologists Roddy Regan (Kilmartin House Museum) and Heather James (GUARD). Apart from its nature as a deserted settlement the location of the excavation was principally chosen because of its proximity to the core of activities organised as part of the Dalriada Festival at Cairnbann, with easy access to the site by forestry track.

## Location and Topography

The abandoned settlement of Craigglass (centred NR843901, Figure 1) lies in the Parish of North Knapdale, south east of Cairnbann and is situated on a hillside overlooking the Crinan Canal (25-50m AOD). The site slopes down from south to north with the buildings sited on various rises within the generally uneven ground. The site is within an area of open grazing by cattle. The surrounding vegetation consisted of low scrub with bracken, grass and reeds, with much of the ground wet or marshy.

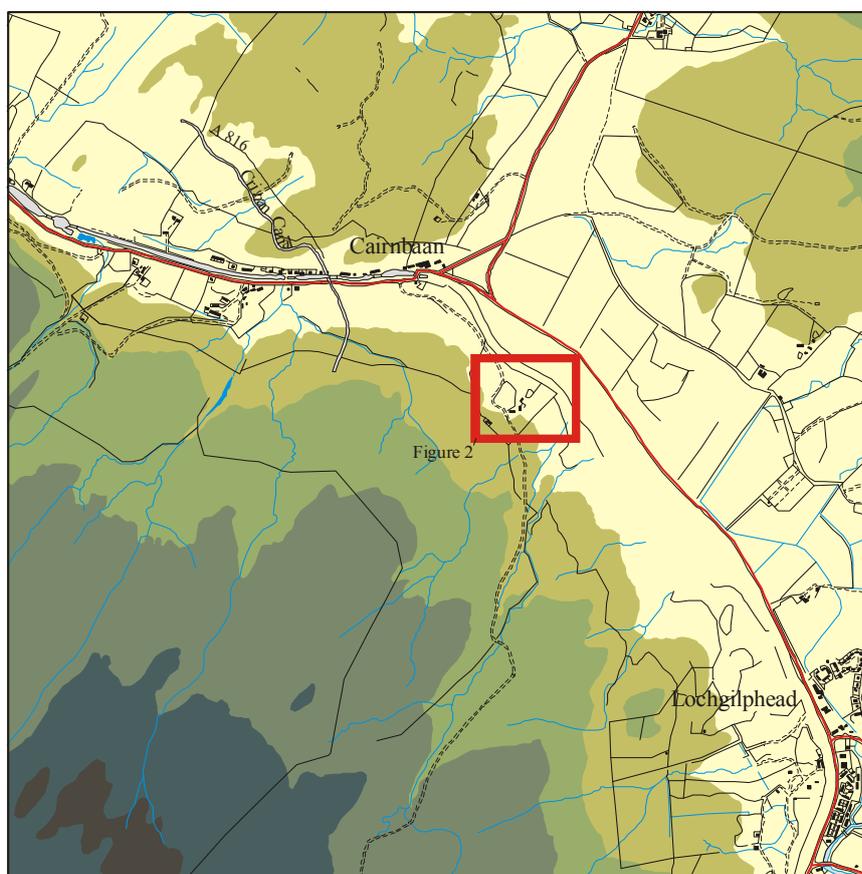


Figure 1: Location of Craigglass

## Archaeological and Historical Background

The settlement of Craigglass and its associated sheepfold are respectively listed as Sites No. 457 and No. 454 on the Forestry Commission's database. Much of the background archaeological information is based on previous survey work undertaken by Heather James on deserted settlements in the parishes of Knapdale, Kilmichael Glassary and Kilmartin (James 2003).

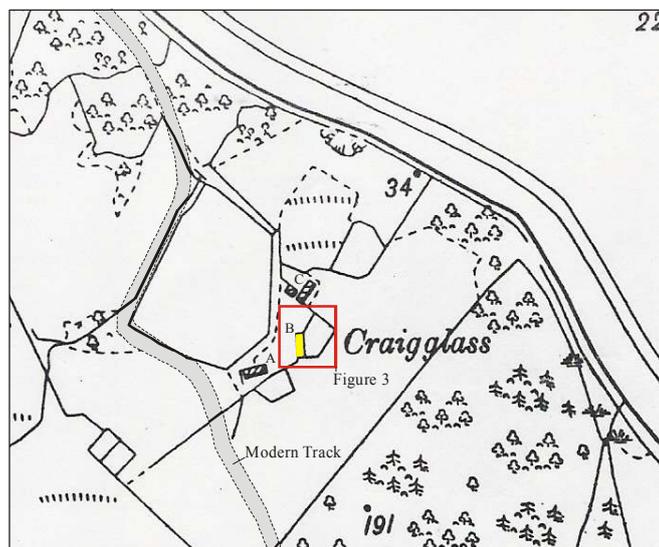


Figure 2: Craigglass as Depicted on the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map (1900). (The excavation centred on Structure B shaded yellow)

The dwelling buildings at Craigglass were particularly substantial in their construction.

**Structure A** - This rectangular structure measured 12.6 m by 5.7 m (internally) with lime mortared walls 1.2 m thick and 0.7 m high. The structure was divided into two unequal rooms. The larger east room had a doorway in the north wall and the west room had two doorways in the north and south walls.

**Structure B** - This rectangular structure measured 14.3 m by 5.6 m (internally) with walls up to 1.0 m high. There was a wide doorway (3.2 m wide) in the east wall. This was probably a barn with an attached enclosure.

**Structure C** - This rectangular structure measured 15.6 m long (the width was not measured). The walls are lime mortared, 0.65 m thick and up to 2.0 m high, with cement and pebble dash applied to the exterior. The structure was divided into two unequal shaped rooms; the north-west room (5.2 m long) had a fireplace and a splayed window in the north-west gable, a doorway and splayed window in the north-east wall. The south-east room (9.7 m long) had a fireplace and a window in the south-east gable, two windows in the north-east wall, a blocked door and a window in the south-west wall. Some of the splayed windows still had wooden frames in place. The fireplace in the gable had a large lintel stone and an iron chimney pipe within it. Evidently, this structure was a dwelling. The sheepfold is in good condition with walls of stone and pebbly cement. There are settings for two iron cauldrons (one is *in situ* and the other is lying just outside the fold to the north) and a sheep dip channel. The bricks are marked with 'CALEDONIA'.

A search of the grazing land in the vicinity did not reveal any other possible structures.

### *Historic Maps*

A 'Chreigglash' is shown in the Bleau Atlas of 1663. This settlement, however is depicted lying south of 'Kilmore' (Kilmory, Lochgiphead) and lying near the shore of 'Loch Gilb' and thus may not be refer to our site. A settlement is shown lying below the hill of 'Craig Glass' on General Roy's military map of 1748. The map depicts the site as four buildings or steadings and would appear to be surrounded by an enclosure wall. The settlement is named as 'Craiglas' by the time of Langland's map of 1801, and is depicted as lying south of the Crinan Canal. The site is shown as four roofed structures, two enclosures and a sheepfold on the 1<sup>st</sup> edition OS map (Argyllshire CLX). By the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition OS map (1900) the central building appears unroofed. Three smaller walled enclosures shown with a larger enclosure lying to the west of the structures, the sheepfold is still shown extant.

### *Documentary References*

A sasine of 1636 refers to "4 merk land of Daltinable, Craiglassie and Gortenzeorne [Gortenagour] all in Knapdale .....given ....to Gothred ...M'Alester, apparent of Tarbert, on a charter by Archibald M'Alester, Captain of Tarbet, as superior, the lands having been forfeited from deceased Allan M'Lachlan of Dunamuck and his brother, Donald M'L. of Dail" (No 561, Campbell 1934, 180). Apparently Allan McLachlan was convicted in 1636 of theft from Gilchrist M'Laertei at the mill at Dunamuck, in 1633. The sasine was witnessed by "Donald M'Cowll chaird [smith] in Craiglassie, and Duncan M'Donell V'Cowll chaird there".

A sasine of 1654 refers to the "2 merk land of Craiglaslie" [Craiglass] "and Gortanorne" in favour of Ronald MacAllester Captain of Tarbert (No 830, Campbell 1934, 274).

A further sasine of 1668 refers to lands in Knapdale apprised from Ronald M'Allaster, Captain of Tarbert, for a debt of 4,706 merks, including "Craigleith [Craiglasly – now Craiglass]" (No 1452, Campbell 1934, 470).

## Methodology

Structure B was chosen for excavation as it appeared to have been abandoned earlier than the other structures of the settlement as suggested by its unroofed condition in 1900, with Structures A and C shown as still roofed at this time.

Although the dimensions and wide doorway of Structure B suggested this was perhaps a barn the possibility of it being an older building was also suggested by the relatively denuded nature of the structure. On a more practical level, Structure B also stood on drier ground (on a rise) and appeared not to have obvious rubble collapse/infill.

Plans of the excavated trenches were drawn at 1:20, with excavated/revealed deposits recorded on pro-forma context sheets. A photographic record of the excavation was also maintained. Finds were processed and stored within Kilmartin House Museum. The site code used was CRG 04 for the 2004 excavation and CRG 05 in 2005.

The practicalities of the excavation were fairly straightforward, with the topsoil/turf lifted by hand and thereafter the soil removed by trowel.

## Results

In the 2004 an area through the presumed doorway of the structure was excavated, Trench 1, which measured 5m by 1.30m, when fully excavated (Figure 3).

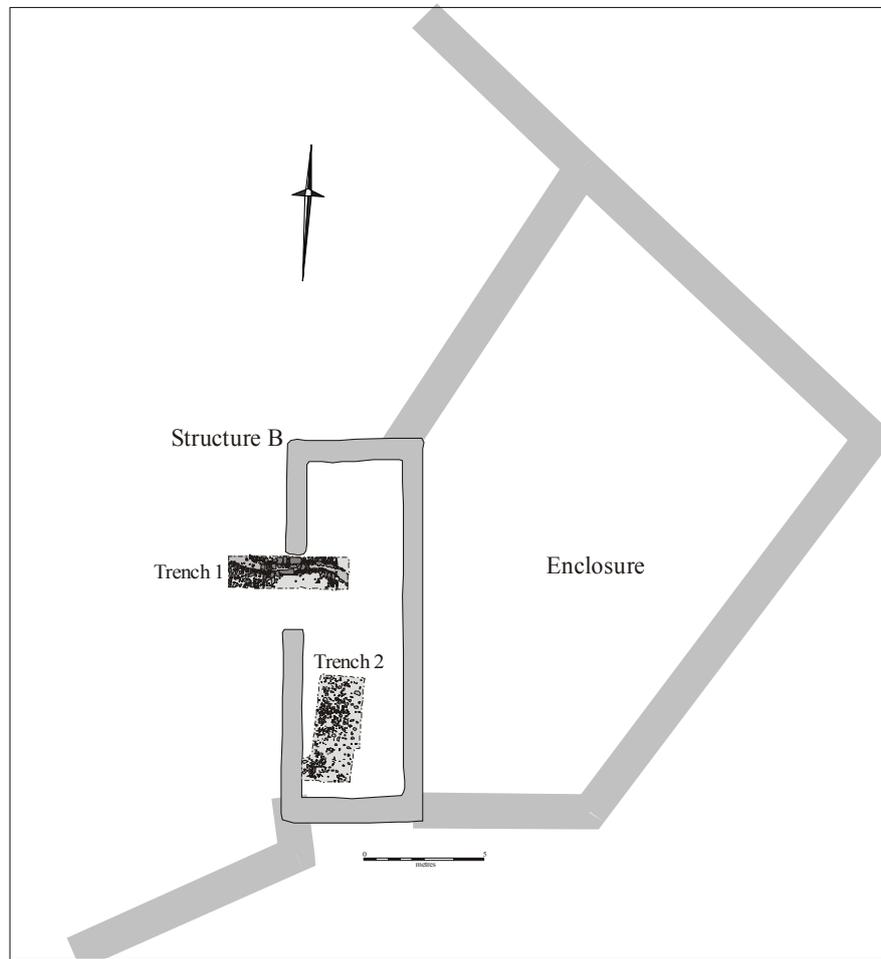


Figure 3: Location of Trenches

The topsoil, deposit (001) consisted of grassy turf and some dark brown humic loam interlaced with numerous roots. (001) varied in depth between 0.10m and 0.26m. Immediately under the topsoil was deposit (002), a dark brown silty loam (peaty).

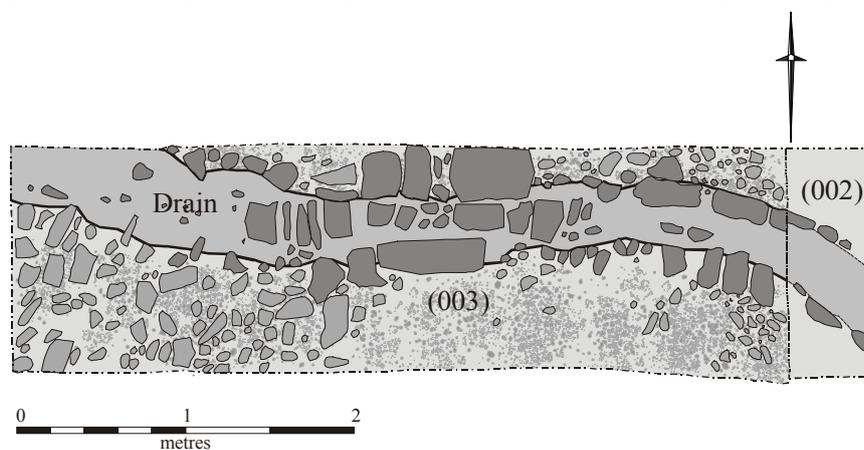


Figure 4: Trench 1

This deposit was slightly darker grey within the drain (003), although no real difference within the overall deposit was noted. Deposit (002) was deepest where it lay within the drain, being up to 0.25m deep. This deposit contained numerous pottery fragments with less prolific glass, tobacco pipe fragments and iron objects. Cobbled surface and associated drain (003) was sealed by deposit (002). The surface in the main consisted of roughly lain fragments of limestone/schist set in a red brown matrix of burnt clinker or schist. The maximum size of stone used was 0.80m x 0.26m x 0.15m, the larger stones being utilised within the sides of the drain along the threshold/doorway line. The drain formed an elongated 'S' shape from east to west, curving south within the internal space of the building (Figure 4). Some basal stones remained '*in situ*' lying flat along the base of the drain, the drain measuring up to 0.60m wide and 0.25m deep. Structure B (004), is partially described above, externally the building measured 16.50m long and 6.20m wide, with the walls up to 0.95m thick, with faced stone used in the surviving corners.



Figure 5: Trench 1

The surface and drain seemed a good level to end the 2004 excavation given the limited time, the recording was then completed and the trench backfilled.

The 2005 excavation concentrated on the southern end of the building, in order to establish whether the building had been formerly divided into byre/living areas. The presence on established hawthorn and large collapsed boulders meant a rather irregular shaped trench was established, Trench 2 (Figure 3). Trench 2 measured 4.50m by 2m, with the south western side of the trench abutting the western wall of the structure.

As with the 2004 excavation, similar deposits were encountered in this southern end of the building. Directly beneath the topsoil (001) lay deposit (005) a dark grey brown silty humic loam. As with deposit (002) from 2004, with which it probably

equates, (005) contained relatively large quantities of pottery and glass fragments along with numerous iron objects. The presence of iron slag in this deposit perhaps suggests on-site metalworking was taking place and if not in this building at least nearby. Small fragments of leather were also recovered from this deposit. Bone fragments were noticeable by their absence, this perhaps attesting to the acidic nature of the soil. This artefact rich deposit lay over a disturbed floor surface (006). The surface comprised of fragments of angular limestone/sandstone within a matrix of clay and crushed stone, suggesting the floor material derived from quarrying. A small sondage was cut into this surface material which was at least 0.15m deep, although the base of the deposit was not reached.

## Conclusions

Generals Roy's map appears to show that a settlement existed at Craigglass by the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. However, Bleau map depicts a settlement of 'Chriegglass' existing at least a hundred years earlier, this further evidenced by lands named in sasines from that period. Bleau's map of Knapdale was based on Timothy Pont's work of the late 16<sup>th</sup> century, and this was concerned with depicting as many known settlements in any area than detailed geographical accuracy. It is then entirely possible that then depiction of 'Chriegglass' within the Bleau work is the result of an erroneous reading of Pont's earlier work. If so then the settlement may well date back to the 16<sup>th</sup> Century. This said no traces of settlement prior to the 19<sup>th</sup> century were evidenced during the excavation.

However, the excavation seemed to confirm the suspicions that the targeted building was indeed a barn at least in the later part of its existence. The wide entrance, along with a rough cobbled surface and the existence of a ground drain, suggested this was the case. While the drain indicated the building was used for housing livestock, the west facing and relatively exposed prospect of the doorway also indicated any prevailing wind could have been utilised in cereal processing.

Very little in the way of internal rubble existed within the walls of the former structure and the walls themselves appeared to have been heavily robbed. If the building went out of use as a barn before 1900, as is suggested by the cartographic evidence, then the stones from the building would likely have been utilised elsewhere. The existence of large ashlar blocks of limestone lining the side of a burn west of the structure possibly indicated where much of the stonework went. The disappearance of a barn and the maintenance of the sheep pen within the settlement perhaps suggested the demise of cattle rearing and or cereal growing in favour of a more sheep based agricultural regime, a pattern repeated elsewhere within farms of the time. Most of the artefacts found above the barn surface would appear to have been deposited after the building had gone out of use and indeed after it had been reduced as a local source of stone. Much of this general midden material must have derived from the nearby structures that continued to be occupied well into the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as the now vacant plot of the barn was used a dumping ground. Most, if not all the pottery would appear to belong to the late 19<sup>th</sup> and earlier 20<sup>th</sup> century period.

## References

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Langland, G. & Son. 1801 Map of Argyllshire. (National Library of Scotland. EMS:s.326)

Pont, T. MS maps by Timoty Pont, c.1590, in National Library of Scotland

Roy's Map 1747-55. Military Survey of Scotland (original in the British Museum)

## Appendix 1: Finds Assemblage

No attempt has been made in this report to study the artefacts beyond quantification and quick assessment. In all, 2720 artefacts were recovered from the site (weighing over 28.4kgs). The combined totals of deposit (002) and (005) have been added as they represent the same midden deposit. The majority of the assemblage consisted of pottery and glass fragments, respectively comprising 46% and 43% of the total by number.

### *Pottery*

The pottery assemblage consisted of 1256 sherds weighing 9.55kgs. The bulk of the assemblage 72% (903 sherds weighing 3.3kgs) consisted of industrially refined earthenwares, bone china and porcelain including cups, saucers, bowls, plates and jars. Just over 61% of these sherds were glazed white, cream or pearl wares with no applied decoration, with coloured wares making up the rest of the assemblage. The majority of the decorated fragments (210 sherds) had blue and white designs rendered both by hand application and transfer print. Only 25 sherds within the assemblage had polychrome designs. The rest of assemblage consisted mainly of salt-glazed stoneware storage vessels that accounted for 35.6% of the total (452 sherds weighing 5.83kgs). Brown glazed earthenwares accounted for 73 sherds, including fragments of a teapot and a perforated strainer. 28 fragments of a highly decorated black glazed vessel were also recovered. 5 sherds of coarse unglazed red earthenware vessel/s were also present, these probably plant pot fragments. Other ceramic objects were 4 fragments of china/porcelain dolls head/s and a glazed ceramic marble or stopper.

### *Glass*

1180 fragments of glass were recovered from the excavation (weighing 2.9kgs). The assemblage mainly consisted of fragments of bottles, jars and phials, although fragments of window glass, bowls and drinking vessels were also present. The bulk of the glass was clear (985 fragments, 83%) with smaller quantities of green, blue and red/brown glass also present (respectively; 112, 9.5%, 60, 5% and 18, 1.4%). A glass marble was also recovered.

### *Metal*

The majority of the metal finds were small-corroded iron lumps, although some of the larger or less corroded objects were identifiable. In all 261 separate metal objects or fragments of objects were recovered (weighing over 12.4kgs). The bulk of the recognisable objects consisted of iron nails or staples. Other recognisable objects were hooks, a chain, a spike, fragments of a fire-grate, a horseshoe, a bucket handle and a possible crank handle.

Several non-ferrous items were also recovered from the excavation including part of a tin/lead vessel, 3 lead machine/plumbing seals, a small lead moulded decoration and a copper fragment from an oil lamp.

### *Other Finds*

Two stamped stem fragments of clay tobacco pipe were recovered from the excavation along with a slate stylus, 1 piece of iron? slag and a folded horn pin. 13 pieces of ceramic drainage pipe (10 of these glazed) and 13 fragments of ceramic building material, probably brick fragments, were also present within the finds assemblage.