

## **The history and survey of Alderigan settlement in Argyll.**

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### **Abstract**

*A typical West Highland abandoned settlement was surveyed as part of North Clyde Archaeological Society [NCAS] fieldwork projects and its history as far as is known is given.*

### **Introduction**

Alderigan settlement is located at NS 2600 9672 (Fig 1), the site is given on OS maps and is on Explorer 364, Loch Lomond North, 1: 25,000 series. It is located at 140m OD and lies on the east side of a prominent ridge, aligned NE/SW; Sròn Mallanach. The site lies to the west of the West Highland Railway, on the north side of Allt Derigan burn, and is surrounded in woodlands. The site is within MOD land.

It is one of a series of such settlements in the area of interest of NCAS which the Society hope to investigate further by excavation and establish the true nature and date of such sites in this part of Argyll. Several other comparable sites along the eastern shore of Loch Long were also surveyed courtesy of MOD (Pl 1).

### **Survey.**

The site consists of a single long building (Pl 2 & Fig 2), another building, shorts lengths of walling and a tiny kiln. Few features are visible on the main building which, like most such structures, is choked with moss covered stones.

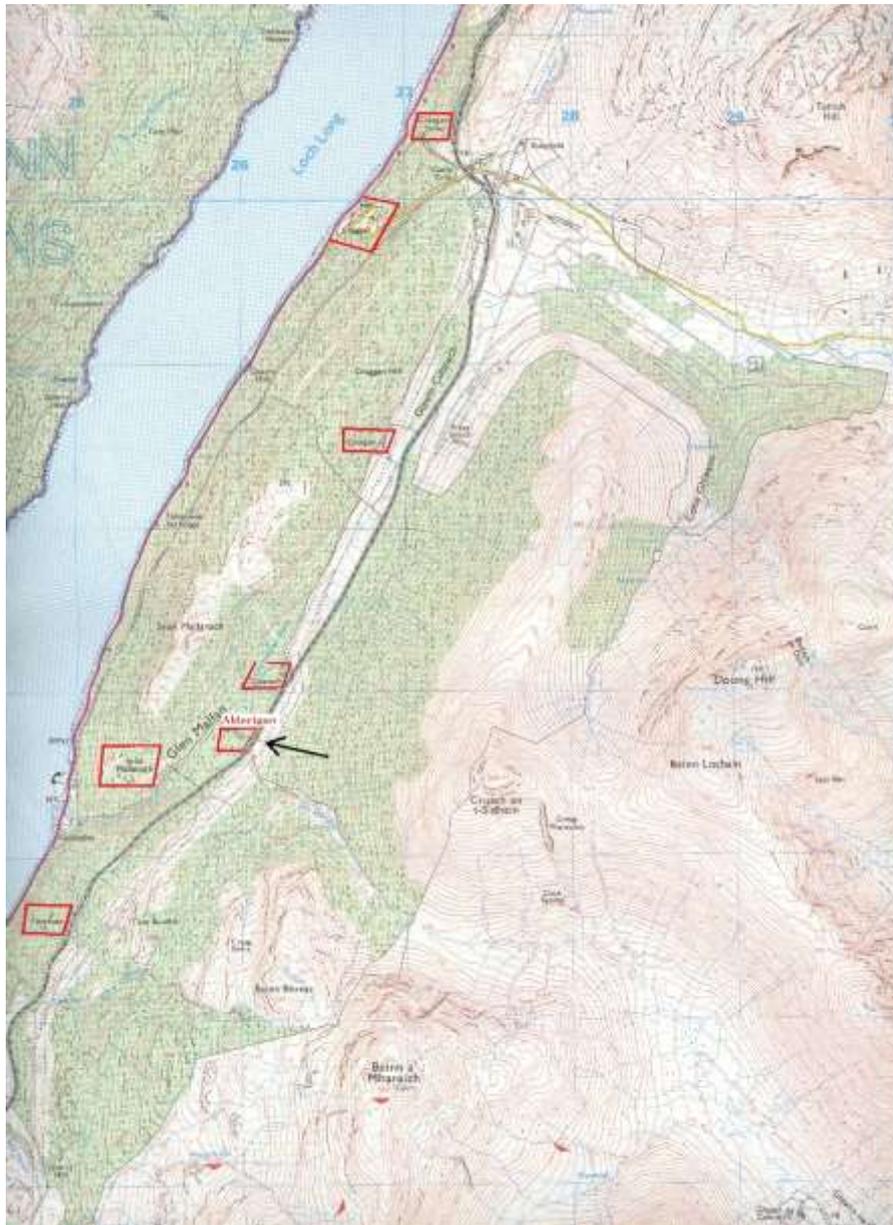
The long building measures 20m by 5m in total size, with walls c0.6m wide, and is divided into three chambers, described here from the upper end; A room measures 5.5m by 3.8m wide, the entrance is visible centrally placed in the long north wall. An area of 1.2m by 2.5m made with a secondary wall is clearly of late construction and is likely to have been a lambing pen. The central room is 6m long by 3.8m wide, it has an entrance of the south long wall and a vertical joint in the north wall indicates a phase of building. The lower end room is also 6m by 3.8m but no other detail is seen, however, an elevated area extending from the gable of 1.5m is choked with rubble. Superficial rocks have been re-laid on the various walls which survive to only about 1m in height.

Another structure of about 3m square lies 4m from the upper room of the main building, there are no other details.

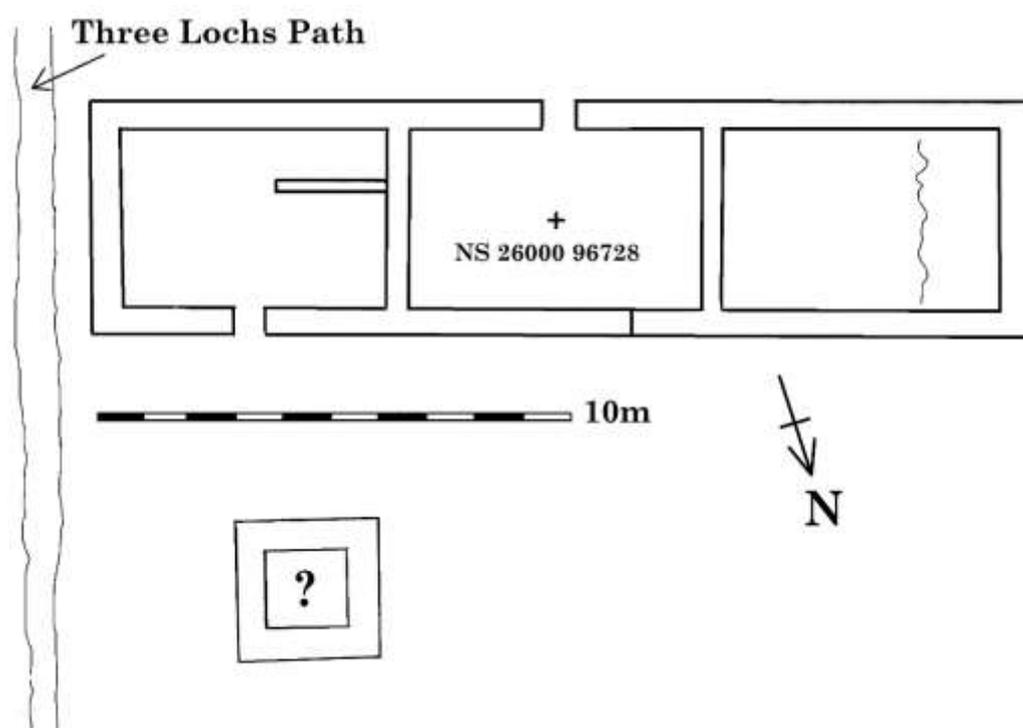
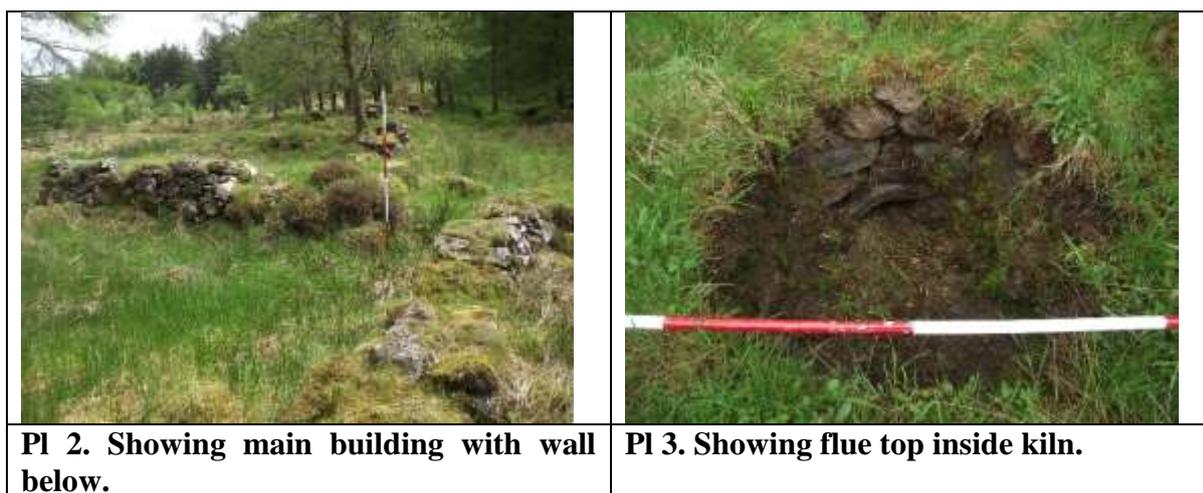
A sinuous 15m length of low walling lies beside the burn at the SW corner of the main building and 1.5m from it.

The Three Lochs Path runs along the upper end of the building.

At NS 26046 96709 and on the north side of an unnamed spring course which joins the Allt Derigan Burn beside the main building, is a small kiln (Pl 3). The upper edges of the neatly built structure measure 1.2m by 1m making it slightly oval in appearance, it is 0.5m deep as seen. However, the upper side of a flue is visible within the bowl-shaped kiln which is typically built against a slope, in this case the burn bank, to avail of wind draft into the flue. There is no scarcement within the structure to indicate a floor, nor is there any indication of heat within the structure. A 7m length of curving wall against the bank and downstream seems to delineate a pathway to the kiln from the house below.



**Pl 1. Site location.**



**Fig 2. The main building.**

**History.**

## ALDERIGAN

**Note:** **Alderigan** takes its name from the **Alt Derigan**, a tributary stream of the Mallan burn, beside which the remains of the settlement are located. The Gaelic name translates as “red burn”, almost certainly derived from the iron-stained colour of the water.

### TIMELINE FOR ALDERIGAN

**1694** The Hearth Tax returns for Luss Parish show that there is one house having a single hearth at AULDLINERGAN, the householder being a Duncan McFarlan

**1707** A registration of tailzie, refers to Ann Colquhoun or Grant, heiress of Luss, and gives a long list of properties, including AULDLEURGAN

**1729** Sir Ludovic Colquhoun of Luss is confirmed as heir to a long list of properties, including AULDLEWERGAN

**1745** The settlement is depicted on Edgar's map as ALD- DUIRGAN. Unusually for the normally accurate Edgar, it is shown on the wrong side of the Alt Derigan (i.e. the south, instead of the north, bank).

**1757** ALDERIGAN is one of 10 properties in the area to be leased to John Campbell of Lagwine, a large-scale sheep farmer. The current lessee is named as Archie White.

**1774** A charter issued by Sir James Colquhoun in favour of James Colquhoun, advocate, his eldest son and heir gives a long list of properties, including ALDUIRGAN

**1776** Ross's Estate map, drawn up for Sir James Colquhoun, shows cultivated land stretching as an unbroken tract from Alderigan, to Calanach, the adjacent settlement to the north. The map appears to show one building at Alderigan and two at Calanach.

**1776** A list of farms on the lands comprising Luss Estates makes no mention of Alderigan but does list the nearby Callanach.

**1781** Donald Wattie in Murligan, and Agnes White in ALDUREGAN, submit their names with the intention to marry, as recorded in the Arrochar Old Parish Registers.

**1844** A Luss Estates rental states that Alderigan, along with Prestelloch and Stronmallanach, are believed to have once been owned by a Baron McAuslan (Note that in a Dumbarton County Valuation of 1657, Baron McAuslan's lands are listed as valued at £80 in the Parish of Luss, out of a total valuation of £2234

## DISCUSSION

There is something of a puzzle with Alderigan, in that although it clearly was in existence at least as far back as the Hearth Tax returns of 1694, it does not seem to feature in Luss Old Parish Registers (LOPR's) (1698-1854), nor is it mentioned in sources like the Glasgow Commissariat records (1547-1800), or the Abstract of Argyll Sasines (1617- 1780). It is not altogether unique in that respect, although for such a long-established place, it is certainly noteworthy. As implied in the Timeline, almost all of the references that do exist relate to land transactions on the part of the feudal superiors. This situation is in stark contrast to the neighbouring settlement of Culanach, which is mentioned frequently in various sources, including the LOPR's. Why then should this be so, especially in relation to the lack of entries in the LOPR's?

The Old Parish Registers (OPR's) are an indispensable tool when studying local history: often they are the only guide that exists as to who was living where, prior to modern records, such the 10-year Census returns, from 1841 onwards. However, the OPR's are focussed first and foremost on births and baptisms. Marriages too are fairly well covered, but in general not so systematically, and where they do feature, the specific location of homes is not always given. Records of deaths for many parishes are often very patchy, if indeed they are recorded at all. It can thus be seen that some people would effectively be invisible as far as the OPR's

are concerned, examples being single persons, couples without children, or at least not having any at a particular place, families or persons not adhering to the established church, and so on.

Even so, the complete lack of information from this source is curious. Alderigan was in existence at least as far back as 1694, while Luss Parish has a better run of OPR records than other nearby parishes such as Row, Arrochar and Rosneath, starting as they do as far back as 1698. It is true that a number of the records in the LOPR's are too faint or smudged to make out, certainly in microfilm format, but on the whole, that cannot constitute a major factor. Sometimes, especially in more remote settlements, parents failed to have births recorded at the time, but usually in such cases, they eventually appear as part of a "catch-up" exercise, albeit sometimes recorded some years after the event(s), a surprising outcome at a time when the Church is often thought of today as being omnipresent.

There might perhaps be other explanations for the silence in the records. Is it possible, for example, that Alderigan was abandoned soon after the Hearth Tax returns of 1694? It is true that the settlement name appears in land transactions in the Timeline above well after that date, but might that stem purely from the use of anachronistic terminology on the part of the legal profession?

On the other hand, as revealed above, when Campbell of Lagwine obtained a tack of Alderigan in 1757, we are informed that the sitting tenant was Archie White. So obviously there was someone there at that date. We also know that in 1781, the Arrochar OPR's record the betrothal of Agnes White in Alduregan and Donald Wattie in Murligan, which suggests the White family were either still there at that date, or at least had been there not long before.

It does seem likely that the lands of Alderigan reached the stage where they were subsumed under the much more prominent adjacent settlement of Cùlanach, once the seat of the McAuslans of Cùlanach, who styled themselves "Barons". In 1776, an inventory of farms then owned by Luss Estates makes no reference to Alderigan, in contrast to Cùlanach. Further, Ross's Estate map, drawn up around the same time, depicts cultivated land stretching continuously between the two places, lending support to this interpretation. It is possible that although Alderigan is not listed as among the farms in 1776, it was still inhabited, but not as a farm, which could explain its absence. (People by the name of White are listed a little later at other places, where their livelihood is given as that of handloom weaver). Even so, the lack of entries in LOPR's prior to that date still presents something of an enigma. Is it possible that births/baptisms/marriages were always ascribed to Cùlanach, even when Alderigan was inhabited? However, comparison with other places suggests that the records are generally faithful to specific places of residence.

In seeking to answer the puzzle over lack of evidence of human occupation at the site, at least in terms of existing records, it may well be that only ARCHAEOLOGICAL EXCAVATION could provide evidence, or otherwise, of when people actually lived at Alderigan.

### **Discussion.**

The main building probably forms a house byre and it may be, because of its seemingly isolation, part of the nearby settlement of Cùlanach, however that is speculative. The tiny kiln is interesting principally for its small size, and it is presumed to be a corn drying kiln. The historical research shows occupation throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> C and little after it, this site is deemed a good example where archaeological investigation could verify if occupation continued into the 19<sup>th</sup> C.

### **Acknowledgement.**

NCAS are grateful to Mr Ricky Mackenzie, Training Safety Officer, Greenfield Camp, MOD, for permission to carry out this survey on active MOD land.