

Recent discoveries on Tom na h – Airidh, north of Rhu, Argyll.

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Abstract

A walkover survey on part of Tom na h – Airidh, north of Rhu in Argyll, records a previously unknown lime kiln and associated quarry and possible hut, a bomb crater, shooting butts and reservoirs.

Introduction

The uplands to the north of the village of Rhu have been known for sites of cup marked stones and a dun, the former are now considered to be natural cups and not of anthropogenic origin. The area of the ridge between Glen Fruin and Gareloch is part of the upland surveys project by NCAS and is an ongoing project, the following sites are now recorded, some of which have not previously been notified.

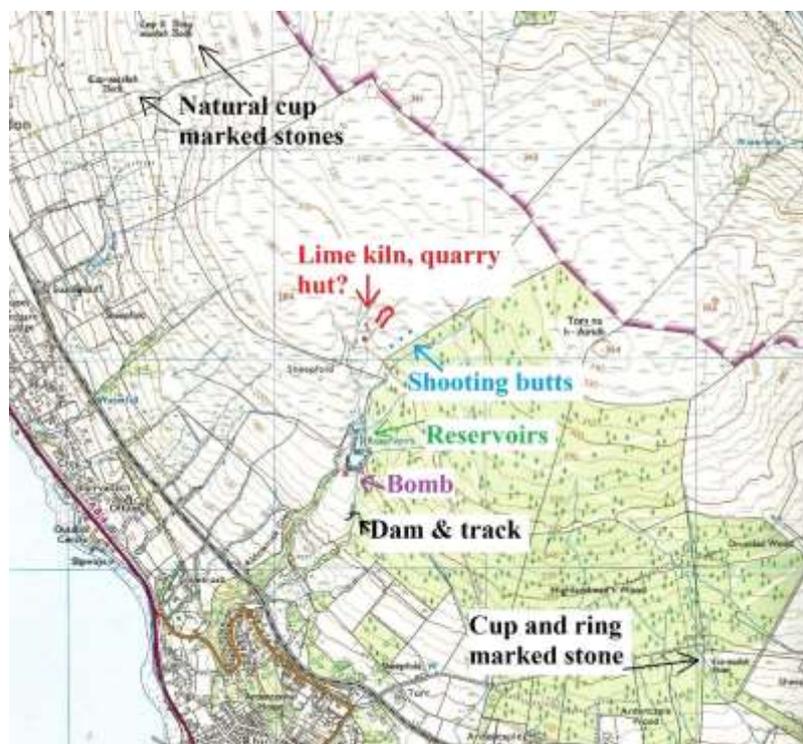


Fig 1. Showing various sites. The cup marked stones to the NW are considered to be natural while that to the SE is prehistoric.

Report

NS 27318 85435. 190m OD Bomb Crater. Pl 1.

An apparently isolated bomb crater measuring 11m in overall diameter and 2-3m deep, it has a surrounding round topped bank 0.5m high and 2m broad and has steep internal sides.

It is assumed that the crater has been formed by a discarded German bomb during the Greenock blitz in 1941. Its proximity to the old Rhu reservoir could be taken as a deliberate attempt to destroy it, but given that only a single bomb has fallen, it seems unlikely that it is anything other than a jettisoned bomb left over from the Greenock attack. Aerial photographs of the Cardross area show bomb craters dispersed over a wide area, and several fell on the village resulting in much damage and fatalities.



Pl 1. Bomb crater in front of dam.



Pl 2. The main reservoir.



Pl 3. The upper reservoir.



Pl 4. Track to older reservoir.

NS 27376 85288. 170m OD Old dam and access track. (Pl 4)

An old stone built dam has formed a reservoir on a tributary of the Aldownick Burn. The dam wall has been breached but has measured c4.5m wide on its upper flat topped surface, the facing wall has been c6m high and the dam depth perhaps in excess of 3m. Running from it to the SW is a prominent track leading around the flank of the hill for 70m.

It may be that this water supply was a private one for Ardenconnel House and estate, prior to the construction of the public water supply reservoir upstream from it.

NS 27624 86062, 27586 86036 & 27583 86037. 260-280m OD. Shooting butts.

Three of a series of shooting butts built with turf and fairly well preserved and clearly defined, were recorded. They measure c6m in overall diameter by >1m high internally. Each

has a gap in its bank and forms a gully running downhill, these are the entrances. The butts run roughly parallel with a fence line.

Two other similar but poorly preserved shooting butts lie below this series, one is at NS 27482 85917, they appear to form another line of butts.

Centred NS 2740 8560 190-210m OD Public water reservoirs. Pl's 2 & 3.

On the Aldownick Glen are three reservoirs which were formerly the public water supply for the village and surrounding community of Rhu. The reservoirs do not appear on the 1st ed OS map of 1863, but they are given along with a filter house lower down the hill as "Row Water Works" on the 1899 OS map. On the 1923 map, the entire complex is repeated but this time the legend reads "Dunbarton County Council Water Works". The reservoirs but not the filter house are given on current OS maps and described simply as "Reservoirs".

The main reservoir has been created by excavating the rear side into the hill face and the construction of steep sided embankments on three sides. The central reservoir is slightly smaller while the third and upper is the smallest, it has had an earthen embankment which is now breached, beside it is an overflow structure built with stone blocks.

At NS 2710 8520 the filtration tank is now ruinous and clearly unused, the old tank wall is breached and beside it is a chlorine water treatment house, possibly built around the 1960's but also becoming ruinous.

NS 27391 86138. 260m OD Lime burning kiln. Pl 5.

A prominent turf covered lime burning kiln is seen as a bowl shaped ring bank of 7m in overall diameter, by 1.5m deep, the bank height externally being 0.5m high and 2m wide. There is a gap in the circuit on the NE side assumed to be the flue, it faces the unnamed spring course there. A small sondage was cut into the internal face and showed heat reddened rock assumed to be the internal facing of the kiln, and coal fragments were also noted.



NS 27449 86117 265m OD Stone piles and hut?.

To the north of the kiln are two small piles of quarried stone, partially vegetation free and measuring c4m in diameter by >1m high. A more amorphous and smaller pile lies between them, this one is covered in grass. One sample taken showed a weak reaction to acid indicating the presence of lime, while most of the stone is comprised of chunks of schistose rock with much quartz.

Lying just above these piles at NS 27448 86144 is a rectangular shaped turf building measuring 7m by 5m overall and >1m deep internally. A gap in the grass covered banks seems to indicate an entrance on the SW long side. A large boulder lies at one end. The building is assumed to be a hut, similar to many shielings, but this is more likely to be associated with the nearby lime working.

Centred NS 27582 86222 270-280m OD Quarry. Pl's 6 & 7.

A quarry extends up the most part of an unnamed upper tributary gully of the Aldownick Burn, the assumption being that it is a limestone quarry associated with the kiln lower down the hill face. On the SE side there is an amorphous grassy hut? Measuring 5m by 4m, indicated by low banks. Extending down the upper side of the quarry gully on the SE side is a prominent gully which appears to be dug, rather than being natural in origin. Halfway down its length there appears to be a causeway or dam? Across it. The ditch is uniform in its size and shape for its entire length unlike the natural spring gully on the NW side of the quarry, it is clearly visible on satellite imagery of the site, and the other features given here may be also be seen, but more faintly.

To the NW and in the furthest tributary in that direction exposures of rock may be seen, if any of these are attributable to quarrying, or are quite natural is uncertain.

The geology of the area is shown on the OS [geological] map; Drift Edition, Glasgow, Sheet No 30, (Fig 2) and is described in the BGS Memoir: Geology of Greenock district (Paterson et al 1990). From this we can see that the limestone in the area is part of the sequence running through the hill from Duirland Farm in Glen Fruin, and where there are a series of both clamp and pots kilns, and quarries which were worked for both lime burning and for the extraction of graphite (Mitchell et al 2003 and Ward forthcoming).

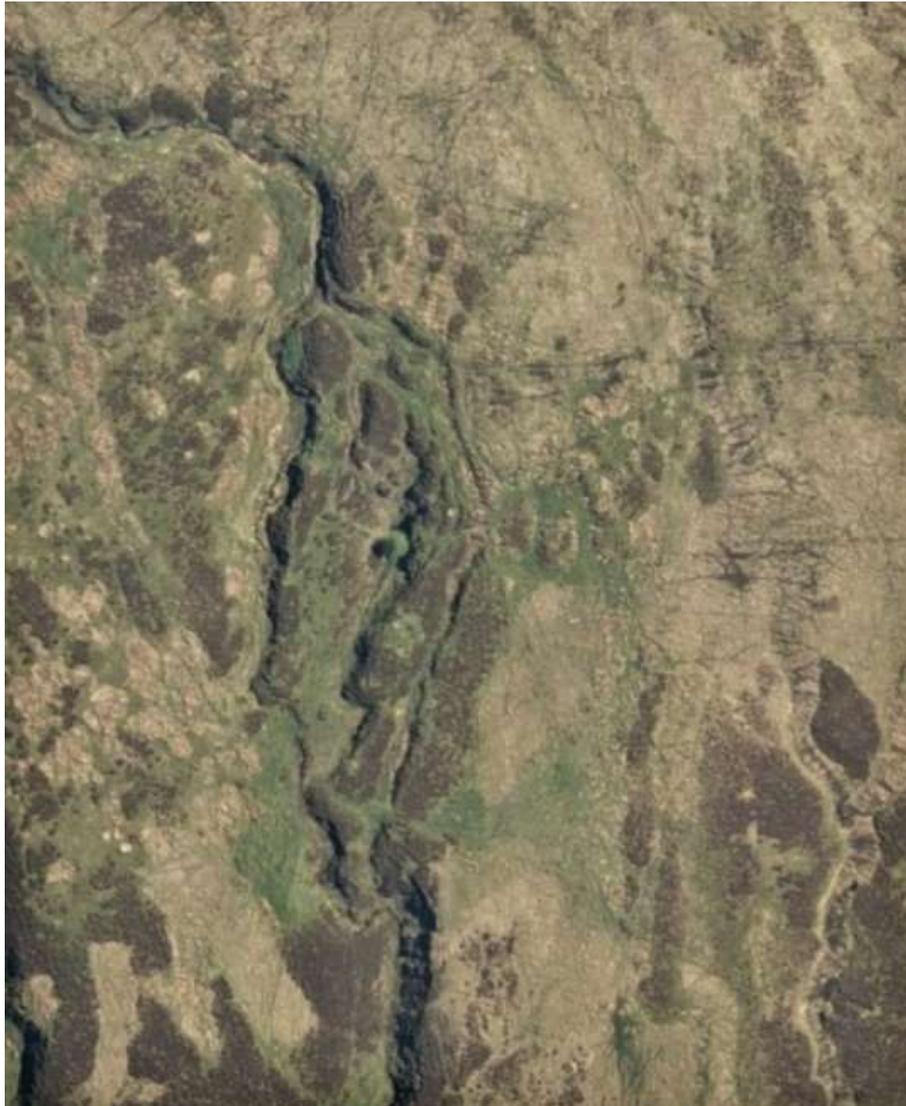
The principal geology is a rock called 'Dunoon Phyllite', a pre Devonian age metamorphic slate containing thin bands of limestone, it is exposed in Glen Fruin and also in the whole of Aldownick Glen and its tributaries higher on the hill. It is now shown that the limestone was being burned using coal for fuel in at least one pot kiln (above). The two rock piles may be the result of extracting the limestone from the parent rock of phyllite and schist, leaving the gangue material there, the smaller pile between may be primarily the extracted limestone waiting to be burned?

References

Mitchell & Drew, J & E. (2003) Duirland Burn, above Glen Fruin (Rhu parish), limestone and graphite workings, D&ES, Vol 4, 2003, 39.

Paterson, IB, Hall, HIS, and Stephenson, D. 1990. Geology of the Greenock district. *Memoir of the British geological Survey*, Sheet 30W and part of Sheet 29E (Scotland).

Ward T, forthcoming. *Survey and excavations in Glen Fruin, Argyll*. North Clyde Archaeological Society.



Pl 7. Screenshot of quarry and gully (RHS), Google Earth.

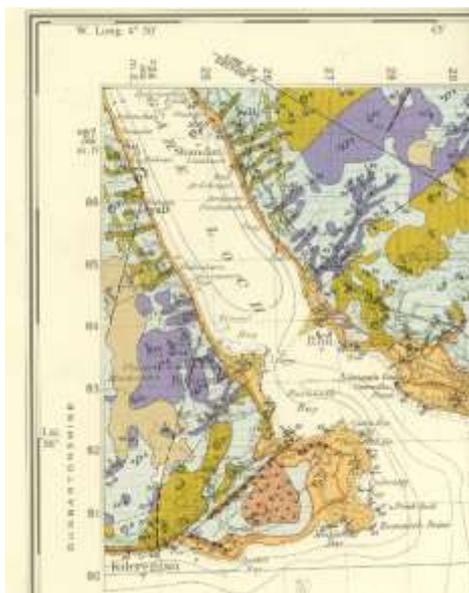


Fig 2. Part of OS [geological] map; Drift Edition, Glasgow, Sheet No 30. Showing in purple the Dunoon Phyllite deposits on each side of the Gareloch and extending into Glen Fruin.