

Dun Aod from the *Jamie*
Mòine Mhòr



FSM.

The KIST 42

T H E K I S T

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of Mid-Argyll

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A CHANGE AT THE TOP.

KIST, which first appeared in 1971, reached Number 40 last winter. The first three issues (long out of print) were amateurish indeed - badly laid out, ill-typed and scant of material although only 16 or 20 pages had to be filled. It must be said in fairness to the editorial sub-committee that each contained some original research. KIST 2, for example, had a short note on unrecorded sites near Tarbert contributed by F.S.Mackenna, FSA, FSAScot.

KIST 4 was markedly different - a handsome cover-drawing a re-organised title-page, and text packed with interest. From thenceforward all material was gathered (sometimes by 'hot pursuit'), typed, delivered to and collected from the printer, maps and figures drawn (or if by others, re-drawn to suit), and all but four covers designed and drawn by one skilled Editor. The fame of KIST, and with it the reputation of our Society, is now worldwide thanks to the exertions of Dr Mackenna. That he found time for this, among his work for the RNLI, his lectures on English porcelain (on which he is an international authority) and the single-handed creation of a spectacular garden, is matter for astonishment, especially when we remember that he had 'retired' in 1957 after a distinguished career in medicine.

Now 'F.S.M.' has decided to 'retire' again, to enlarge his rhododendron collection and to produce, we hope, many more of his magnificent landscape paintings. 'KIST without Mackenna' is almost unthinkable; we wish Mrs Clark every success and promise our help, but to the man who brought KIST to such a level we can scarcely find words to express our gratitude. On your behalf I say a very warm THANK YOU.

M.C.

For 17 years KIST has had a nonpareil among editors. The new editor cannot but feel apprehensive. However, as readers will notice, a familiar hand has drawn the cover, familiar initials adorn an illustration and a familiar name heads one contribution. In addition Dr Mackenna has been most generous in supplying help and advice. With this support, and the support of contributors, there is good hope that the high standard set for KIST will be maintained.

A.O.M.C.

route from Kilbride Chapel skirted the hill of Barr-an-Longairt, passed beside Strathlachlan Church and thence over the hill past the Garbhalt lochan and down into Glen-daruel, passing on the way yet another wayside Chapel dedicated to St. Bride (near modern Kilbridemore farm). From this point travellers could continue to the head of the Holy Loch via Loch Striven and Glen Lean.

In 1770 the Brainport Ferry was under the control of the Commissioners of Supply for Argyll. It is of interest that in their Proceedings of 10th May in that year they set a revised scale of charges for the Ferry as follows:

- 1). Six pence for a single Man.
- 2). Parties of 2 or more - 3 pence each.
- 3). Man and Horse - 9 pence.

(All charges to be paid in Sterling and NOT in Scots money).

4). Charges for black cattle to remain as previously charged.

By the year 1790 the Ferry was under the control of the Argyll Road Trustees. On 30th April in that year the Trustees met to consider a Petition from the land-owners on both sides of the Loch. (These were Maclachlan of Maclachlan and Campbell of Eredine). This stated that "for some time past the Ferry had been nearly deserted owing to the new road being carried forward on both sides of Loch Fyne". After some discussion the Trustees decided to grant the Petition and to close down the Ferry "as it was now un-necessary for the public" with effect from the following Whit Sunday. This duly took place, and the Ferry was never re-opened.

It seems likely, however, that the Ferry-man's house continued to be occupied for some years after the closure of the Ferry; but it was almost certainly abandoned before the cholera epidemic of 1832, since, had it been occupied at that time, it would probably have been burned like all the other houses then in Brainport.

STRUCTURES ON THE SITE. (See Fig. 1).

An examination of the whole area disclosed the remains of five separate structures grouped close to the Ferry slip-way and probably at one time or another associated with it.

1. A 'long-house' which is known to have been the home of the last Ferry-man, and which is the main subject of this

report.

2. A small rectangular structure built against the side of a very large boulder E of (1), the inner wall revetted with small stones, the outer wall collapsed. Perhaps a store, but conceivably a smoke-house.

3. A larger rectangular structure on a lower level. Walls collapsed. Purpose unknown.

4. In the wood 10 m. behind (1), foundations of a square stone structure with a broad entrance at its SE corner. Purpose unknown.

5. Immediately SW of (1), remains of a large rectangular structure set on an EW axis. Foundations of massive walls, and debris. Purpose unknown.

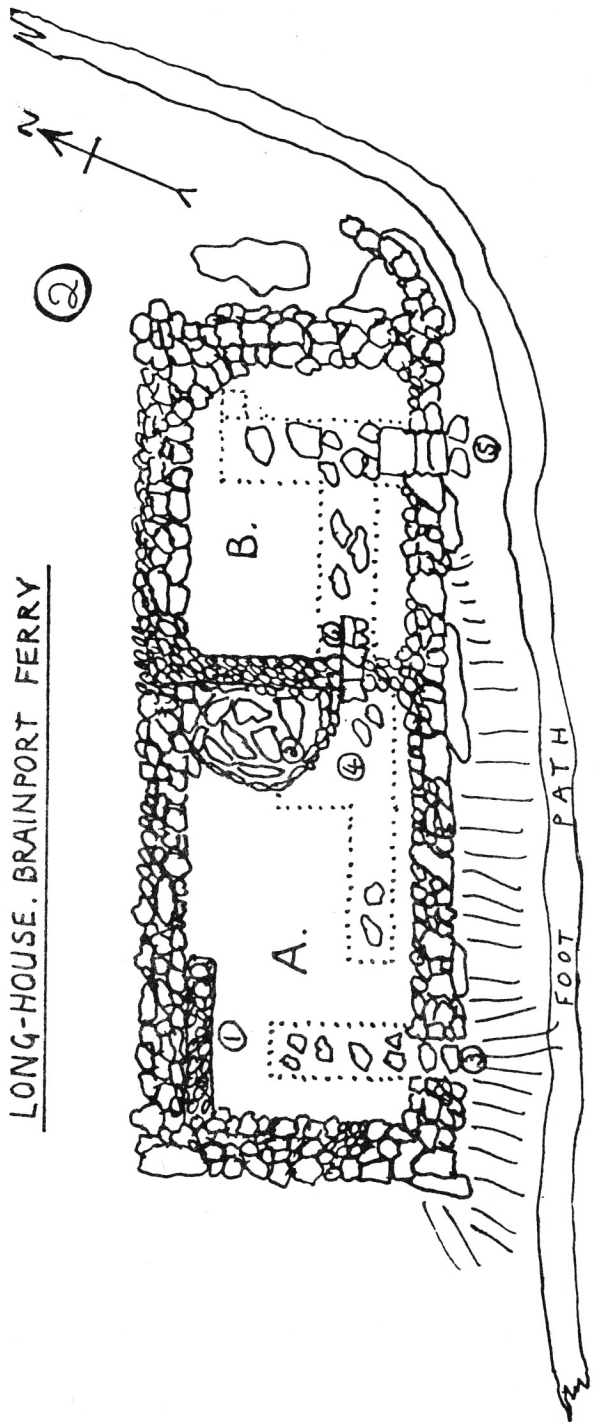
6. The "Milkmaid's house". Not connected with the Ferry.

THE FERRY HOUSE.

(See Fig. 2).

The building may be described as a fairly usual type of early 'long-house' of two-room plan, having a thatched roof and probably somewhat rounded gables at either end. It is slightly narrower at the NE end, the E room being on average 3.8 m. in width, and the W room 4.1 m. This irregularity in building may have been due to a slight constriction of the site at its E end between the foot-path and the rising ground behind the house. The construction is of dry stone throughout, and no traces of mortar can be found. The external walls are based on a foundation of extremely large boulders, many being more than 1.5 m. in length. The outer walls appear to have been built to a fairly uniform thickness of 80 cm., although there are two slight variations in the front wall. At the W end the gable is standing to a height of 2 m., which is the highest portion of the structure. On this wall the beginning of upper curvature can be seen, indicating the type of gable mentioned above. The walls are of 'single' construction throughout. The excavated areas of the interior indicated that the floors were of trodden clay on which a number of flag-stones had been placed, in particular in the areas close to the entrances. The clay used is the local grey variety found in the vicinity of Brainport. It is, of course, entirely possible that the whole interior was paved with stone and that when the house was vacated the paving stones were removed for use elsewhere, as they would have been too valuable to be abandoned.

LONG-HOUSE. BRAINPORT FERRY



LEGEND

- A - WEST ROOM
- B - EAST ROOM
- ① STONE SHELF
- ② RAISED HEARTH
- ③ W. ENTRANCE
- ④ POSS. FORMER HEARTH
- ⑤ E. (MAIN) ENTRANCE
- ⑥ PARTITION PASSAGE
- EXCAVATED AREAS

P.F.G. 1/88.

ROOM "A" (SW END).

This is the larger of the two rooms, being 6.5 m. in length and on average 4.1 m. in width. It appears to have been the living room. The W entrance, which is poorly constructed, opens into it, and may have been a later modification. It is positioned 1 m. from the gable end wall, and is 70 cm. in width. There is no indication of there having been any window in the room. The hearth area was found to have occupied the N corner of the room. It consists of a raised platform of rough stone, on average 25 cm. above the general floor level, and is approximately 1.9 m. across at its widest point. No trace was found of any form of hood or chimney, and it is not clear how the smoke was disposed of. Presumably some form of vent was contrived in the thatch above the fire to allow the smoke out. The passage-way through the partition wall into Room "B" is situated 1 m. from the S wall, and is 53 cm. in width. Just to the W side of the partition step traces of burning and ash were found at floor level, which must indicate that the hearth had at one time been at the S side of the room on the existing floor. An interesting feature of Room "A" is the ruined remains of what seems to have been a built-in stone shelf against the NW wall. (See plan). This was approximately 4 m. in length and 60 cm. in width. It has largely collapsed, and its former purpose is unknown.

ROOM "B" (NE END).

This room is 5.5 m. in length and on average 3.8 m. in width. On the S side there is a well-constructed paved entrance 83 cm. wide and 80 cm. from the end wall. It incorporates a shallow step-up from the outside and a large square flag-stone set in the entrance; it was clearly the principal doorway to the house. The floor in this room was found to be on average 30 cm. lower than that of Room "A", and this necessitated the insertion of an extra step-up to the partition-wall opening. This was well-constructed of three small slabs, all of which are in situ. There was no indication that this room had been used as a byre, and in view of the number of finds of a domestic nature made in the excavated area it seems unlikely. A number of flag-stones, mostly broken or of irregular shape, were found in the excavated areas of the floor, and this seems

to indicate that the better flags had in fact been removed for use in another dwelling. At the SE corner there is a curious prolongation of the S wall, which follows the curve of the foot-path, and it seems possible that this may have formed part of an outside structure attached to the gable end.

THE PARTITION WALL.

Its base is almost intact to a fairly uniform height of 98 cm. from the floor of Room "B" and was probably completed in some light construction above this level.

DISCUSSION.

This investigation of the Brainport Ferry has, above all else, high-lighted the hardships endured by 18th century travellers, and the toughness and skill of the operators in former times. The distance to be covered on each crossing was $2\frac{1}{4}$ miles ($4\frac{1}{2}$ miles for each round trip) in a heavily-built wooden boat between 20 and 25 feet in length. It was probably propelled by a single large sail when the wind was convenient, and at other times by a pair of heavy 10 foot oars known as "Sweeps". The Ferry appears to have operated throughout the year in most weathers, although the state of the strong tidal currents through the Minard Narrows must always have been taken into consideration. The Ferry-man would probably have had one regular assistant but in times of stress passengers would have been invited to help. This was certainly the case at Otter Ferry.

As regards the house, it may be said that it was a typical 'long-house' dwelling of the early 18th century in which the somewhat primitive appearance and squalid interior were off-set by the surprisingly high quality of the table-ware and cooking vessels, as noted by Johnson and Boswell on their tour of the Hebrides in 1773, when they stayed in similar dwellings.

LIST OF FINDS FROM THE INTERIOR OF THE LONG-HOUSE.

(a).Iron.

1). Rectangular slab 3 cm. thick, 15 cm. x 18 cm., found in Room "A" near the hearth area. Perhaps used for baking.

2). Base portion of a cooking pot of the tripod variety, 18 cm. x 13 cm. Portion includes one of the three short legs.

3). Probable base portion of another cooking pot, possibly legless variety, 10 cm. x 11 cm.

4). Iron hinge, or possibly pintle, in centre of Room "B". This could have been a primitive hinge for the main entrance door, but might have been used as a pintle to support the rudder of a boat.

5). Four unrecognisable small pieces amongst burned material from the hearth.

(b).Coarse Pottery.

1). Eight fragments of shallow bowls. Brown internal glaze only. Bold white slip internal decoration.

2). Two fragments of bowls with cream internal glaze on a red fabric.

3). One piece with very dark brown internal glaze on a lighter brown fabric.

4). One piece of a redder bowl, black internal glaze up to the rim on outside and part-glazed on inside.

5). Three pieces from the necks of glazed stone-ware bottles of differing sizes and shades. One side-piece with handle, almost cream in colour. One piece impressed E.L.T. within a circle, so far unidentified.

(c).Household 'China'. (Glazed Pottery).

1). Fragments of at least five different "blue and white" plates, under-glaze decoration in very pale blue (non-cobalt). One has a scalloped edge and a spectacular border pattern of interwoven thistles. One bears the mark "NAPIER IMPERIAL STONE" and the initials J.R. (I have not yet been able to trace this firm).

2). Fragments of two plates and one thicker piece (probably from an ashet) with under-glaze decoration in dark cobalt blue. One is undoubtedly Willow pattern (introduced in Staffordshire in early 18th century).

3). Three plate fragments and one portion of a bowl-rim with under-glaze pale mauve or light brown border designs on a cream ground.

4). Nine fragments of painted glazed cream-ware vessels patterned with broad stripes, zigzags and spots, in red green and blue.

(d). Glass.

1). Fragments of at least three thick "blown" glass

bottles in varying shades of dark olive green containing many small bubbles.

2). Base of a blue-glass medicine bottle. Several bubbles.

3). Three fragments of flat clear glass with a yellowish tinge. They show a thickened edge with slightly turned-up rim. Purpose unknown.

4). Half the rim of a round vessel 10 cm. in diameter. Clear with greenish tint. Small bubbles.

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...oooOooo...

One of the Three Curses of Gaeldom.

The following conversation was overheard one summer evening not long ago. A visitor returning from a walk which had been prematurely cut short by hordes of the local midges enquired of the owner of the bed and breakfast establishment where he was staying,

"What do you call midges in Gaelic?"

"Meanbh chuileagan" said she.

"That's exactly what they are!" said the aggrieved visitor, furiously mopping his face and neck. "Mini-hooligans!"

[The pronunciation to an unattuned ear, especially one impeded by being scrubbed with a handkerchief soaked in insect repellent, is somewhat similar. Ed.]

...oooOooo...

THE DUN ALASDAIR RHODODENDRON GARDEN.

F.S.Mackenna.

In the spring of 1957 a move from Worcestershire to Tarbert came into effect, with all the problems which accompany fitting a quart into a pint, so far as accommodation was concerned, but Garden-wise there were fewer urgent decisions. Never at any time an enthusiastic gardener, content with an admittedly large suburban version kept in a state of perpetual tidiness by persons employed for that purpose, there had been no practical interest. So a few easily portable items were uprooted and brought north, but even these, having been selected on a casual basis, proved to be unsuited for such a change of soil conditions and within a very short time had demonstrated their dis-satisfaction either by dying off or just not re-appearing the next year. Experientia docet indeed.

Soon however the gardening horizon lightened considerably when it was realised that an acid soil was able to support hitherto unfamiliar types of vegetation, such as the Genus Rhododendron. In self-justification it must be conceded that this variety of garden plant was not even then quite unfamiliar, for during many painting holidays in the West Highlands over the preceding twenty years one had paid visits to such famous gardens as Larach mòr near Arisaig and Inverewe, but always as a painter not a horticulturist. But it was a different matter when one came to reside in an area where the genus flourishes to perfection and in a matter of a few months contacts had been made which soon changed indifference into enthusiasm - to such an extent that we have been known to announce that "If it's not a rhododendron it's a weed". This remarkable change-over was effected when it was my good fortune to meet Sir George Campbell of Crarae, Sir James Horlick of Gigha and Archie Kenneth of Stronachullin. To these most valued friends and benefactors is due credit for starting me off on this new trail. But they were very quickly followed by other most generous 'enthusiasts' as my needs became known; the Wright brothers at Arduaine must rank high on the list, and other valued sources of specimens include the Royal Botanic Garden in Edinburgh, Brodick Castle and Benmore. Many other most important specimens have come from members of visiting Rhododendron Societies,

some of them names of international impact as collectors in the wild. Amongst the latter it is always heartening to be told - "So you have my - - ! I'm so glad. It was only found once in the wild!" In my full catalogue the name Stonefield occurs. These are plants which, in my initial ignorance and avidity I secured from that source, only gradually realising that this material was in the highest degree limited, for no new plantings had occurred for very many years, the extensive groves being confined almost entirely to a few species given to the owners by the collector Joseph Hooker in 1849-50. The hotel polices now swarm with enormous specimens of Arboreum Hodgsonii, Barbatum, Campanulatum and the like, of interest only for their dimensions and for their origin. So it fell out that I still have a number of these individuals despite drastic removals. But what remain are in many cases good examples of their kind and still retain some degree of interest to visitors when told "That is from the original Hooker plant at Stonefield".

Reverting to the early and massive contributions from Crarae and Gigha the latter more than any other deserves remark. Time and again the Islay boat would come in to the West Loch pier with its deck almost covered by masses of enormous rhododendrons, all needing the services of a crane to unload them on to a lorry to bring them up to Dun Alasdair. In this way I had a flying start instead of having to wait years for smaller plants to grow and develop. Perhaps not all readers will know that 'if a rhododendron can be moved it may be' - in other words the possibility of moving dictates the matter. Hence the great value to me of receiving such mature plants - off to a flying start indeed!

Continuing the theme of acquisition it has to be stated that relatively few were bought commercially. This was not due to any manifestation of national 'canniness' but simply the outcome of experience. In the first few years a number were ordered from the catalogues of well-known firms, but it was soon apparent that very often reliance on identity could not be maintained, and 'wrong' plants would arrive; a reverse which would be aggravated by the assurance that "we are sure you will like it". Only once did this failure turn out advantageously, when one was later seen in flower by several of the highest auth-

orities in the land and declared without question to be the excessively, almost unknown pink form of Sino-grande.

After all these remarks about the origin of the collection, and before going on to mention a few of the rarities now to be found here, it is time to give a description of the physical aspect of the garden. In 1957 when I arrived I found the ground immediately adjacent to the house laid out in lawn for about half the area, the rest a mixture of conifer, ponticum rhododendrons and other shrubs, the whole making a complete screen from the road below. At once steps were taken to acquire a considerable area behind and to the north of the house, known as 'The Jungle' and 'The Park', being mainly an impenetrable mass of ponticums, rowans, willows, sycamore and conifer, interspersed with rocky outcrops, all sloping steeply and traversed by two small burns. Over the years a gradual expansion of clearance has taken place, with resultant formation of areas of various size each surrounded by a high wall of ponticums to afford necessary shelter.

All these changes involved one in a lot of work, not only in felling and clearing but also in draining, for there are many minor springs. Most fortunately in due course the adjoining property was acquired by my very great friend Gordon Bignall who has taken a major part in all changes and improvements, so that it is now in effect and also actual fact 'our' garden. Without his help and advice the whole thing would have come to an end, for on my own such activities are no longer agreeable or even possible, so it is a great relief that continuity is assured.

For many years the garden has been recognised as containing plants worth coming to see, and many learned societies both British and American have made visits and re-visits. Such contacts with some of the world's greatest authorities are of immense interest and value, and many happy and lasting friendships have been made.

It is an odd circumstance that our location seems to be favoured beyond that of some other semi-local places. For example I was once given a plant of a superlative Crassum with enormous corollae up to 5 inches long by Sir George Campbell, who had himself received it from some now-forgotten source and who declared that it was hopeless for him to try to grow it at Crarae. With me it flour-

ishes and has produced quite a number of layers both natural and contrived. It is in fact one of the main show pieces of the garden.

It must not be thought from all the foregoing that it is at all a large collection. At present the catalogue numbers stand at 730. Hybrids are not in evidence, most of what there are came as gifts from generous but misguided friends.

It may be kind to issue a warning! On no account let Lamium galeobdolon be admitted. I accepted it in ignorance and within a couple of years it had practically taken over the whole garden. Every node produces roots and eradication is impossible. Things are quite different with another invasive plant, Lathraea clandestina which is a much-liked and well-behaved parasite on birch roots and humus. Every spring the light purple hooded blooms appear above ground, delight the eye for a few weeks and then it goes underground until the following year. It spreads by projecting its seeds for as much as ten feet in all directions, but it is never in any way a nuisance.

Finally it may be of interest to other rhododendron growers to have the reaction of some of the visiting experts regarding various specimens. There are one or two of my plants which were of such recent discovery at the time of their arrival here that they had not been named. This will have to wait, probably, until they reach flowering age somewhere.

AGANNIPHUM, rare and very desirable; ANHWEIENSE, uncommon; ANNAE, uncommon in cultivation; ARBOREUM ALB, from the original Hooker tree; AURITUM, very rare; BEANIANUM, rare even in the wild, an exceptionally good form; BRACHYSIPHON, the true form, most are not; BUREAVII, outstandingly good form; CALOSTROTUM, rare deep purple form; CAMPBELLII, from Hooker's original tree; CILIICALYX, true form, rare in cultivation; CITRINIFLORUM HORAEUM, considered elusive; CORIACEUM, remarkably good form, one of best in country; CRASSUM, deep rose pink; COUNTESS OF SEFTON, hybrid with strongly geranium-scented flowers and leaves; DIAPREPES, uncommon; EDGEWORTHII, notably outstanding in every way; HYPOGLAUCUM, exceptionally well regarded; KENDRICKII, uncommon in cultivation; LANIGERUM, red-flowered form; LAUDANDUM, rare and little known; LEPIDOTUM v. ELEAGNOIDES, excessively rare; LEPIDOTUM SMYTH 46, not in Edinburgh;

LEPTOTHRIUM, rare; MACULIFERUM, not often seen; MADDENII, pink; MALLOTUM, superlative form; ORBICULARE, extremely good form, leaves 5¼ x 4 ins; PHAEDROPUM, rare in cultivation; PHOENICODUM, rare in cultivation; PLANETUM, uncommon; RUDE, uncommon; SHWELIENSE, reputedly very rare; SINO-GRANDE, the beautiful almost legendary pink form; TSARIENSE, new form, far superior to those already known; VESICULIFERUM, rarely seen in cultivation; VELLEREUM, rare; ZALEUCUM, a form with 7-8 corollae in each truss, double the normal.

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FOOTNOTE TO 'INISHAIL' (Kist 41 p.18)

Lady McGrigor has sent this additional note;-

In 1769-71 Jais MacInturnour was keeper of the Duke's rabbit warren at Inishail at a fee of £2 per year. He descended from an ancient race of hereditary ferrymen to the Campbells of Inverawe.

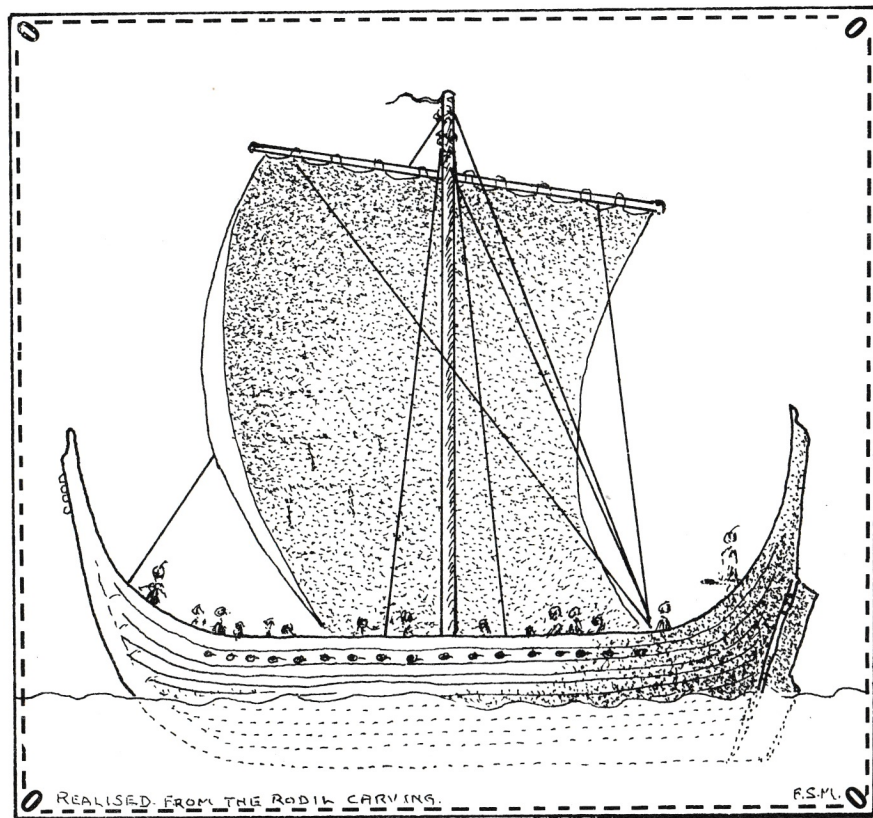
EDITORIAL NOTES TO 'A 17TH CENTURY MILL' (Kist 41 p.19)

Lady McGrigor's mention of the enactment against the use of querns in an attempt at securing a monopoly for the mills is supported by a passage in Miss Donaldson's Further Wanderings. "Alexander III enacted in 1284 that 'na man sall presume to grind Quheit, Maislach or Rye with a Hand Mylne, except he be compellit be storm, or be in lack of mylnes quilk suld grind the samen'. As a penalty for the use of the quern the culprit was to forfeit the thirteenth part of the corn ground The law subsequently empowered the laird to permit the miller to search out and break all querns".

F.S.M.

Such regulations regarding the milling of corn and the prohibitions on the use of querns were evidently difficult to enforce. For the next 500 years they were frequently repeated by various authorities, and constant disputes rumbled on in the courts. (See Alexander Fenton Scottish Country Life p.107 ff.)

A.O.M.C.



MEDIAEVAL GALLEYS.

Denis Rixson.

"The oars rose and fell in unison. The sea, glass-calm and kind, swelled gently. The bow knifed through the water, surging ahead with each thrust of the oars. From every throat rang the chorus of the "iorram", the rhythmic rowing song that overcame the heat and the pain. Sweat poured down arms and legs and brows, unhardened palms were a mass of blisters. The helmsman brought her round the point, the word was given, the oars were lifted and the galley glided swiftly into the bay. There, riding on the water, burnished in the sun, lay more than twenty others.

News had travelled fast. The battle fleet was being assembled...." So might an account run.

Imagine such a scene 400 years ago in the West Highlands. Word has gone round that Donald Dubh has escaped and is attempting to regain the lost Lordship of the Isles. Money is coming from the English, vengeance will be wreaked, much booty will be taken. The bonds, the impositions, the presumptions of the Lowland Scottish kings will all be shaken off. The Islands will regain their independence under their rightful leader. All the chiefs will be there: Clanranald, Glengarry, Maclean, Macleod. More are coming, all are bringing men and ships. Here the Clanranald boats are assembled, at Eigg or Canna, a brief rendezvous before their journey south to Carrickfergus, Ireland, to build a fleet of more than 150 warships. And then....

It all fell through, of course. The rest is history - but what a sight it must have been. The great fleets of the Western seaboard assembled for the last time in the summer of 1545: brown wood, white and speckled sails, banners flying, weapons sharpened, rigging checked. Two centuries later it had all gone. The Highlanders, crushed under the weight of their own poverty, could not even afford proper fishing boats. Today the clues to this lost world lie weathering in the scattered churchyards of the West Coast.

Information about life in the Highlands in mediaeval times is very scarce. Few material remains survive. Documentary records are written primarily from a Lowland-Scottish viewpoint and are often extremely antipathetic to the Highlands. Few Gaelic documents have come down to us to redress the balance. When looking at Highland history therefore we often find our perspective distorted. However we do have one unprejudiced type of evidence and that is the series of grave-slabs carved between about 1350 and 1550 and found in the old burial grounds of the West. Worn and eroded as these are it is amazing what information they can give us.

There are more than 600 grave-slabs and crosses in this series, and about 10% bear a carving of the standard West Highland warship - the galley. This was most likely a symbolic and heraldic gesture derived from still earlier wax seals of which we also have evidence. It could well have indicated that the person whom the stone commemorated had the right to or resources for a galley of his own. However

even this modest suggestion introduces problems, because one galley has been found in conjunction with an anvil, another with a pair of shears, trade emblems we associate with craftsmen rather than chiefs. Perhaps we should conclude that its original significance was not always strictly maintained.

There were also different schools of carving whose workshops favoured slightly different designs. Galleys produced by the Kintyre school, for instance, tend to have their sails furled, whereas Oronsay sculptors preferred the sail set and billowing. Of course many galleys are fairly conventional and because of this and their weathered nature betray little detail. In a few one feels that the artist is making a faithful representation of a boat he knows. At their most realistic, as at Rodel in Harris, it is amazing what detail emerges. We can tell the number of oar-ports, the device on the banner, what the crew are doing, how the rudder is attached etc.

Galleys were direct descendants of the Viking longships. The Vikings of course had settled extensively on the Western seaboard, and their boat-building traditions had been continued. Galleys were wooden, clinker-built, with a high stem and stern, and a single mast set centrally. Propulsion was either by sail or by oars and occasionally by both. They were quick and ideally suited to the frequently changing weather conditions of the western seas. The main difference between them and their Viking predecessors was at the stern. Viking longships had a steering-board or large oar set at the rear of the right-hand (hence "star-board") side of the boat. Some time after about 1200 this was generally abandoned in favour of a rudder set centrally at the stern. In the Isle of Man there is a stone cross-slab dating from the 12th century which carries a carving of a Viking boat. But for the steering-board it looks strikingly similar to the West Highland grave-slab galleys of three and four centuries later.

Galleys, like longships, seem to have carried elaborately decorated stem and stern posts. These may have been detachable to prevent unnecessary damage. Since they occasionally face in the same direction it has also been argued that they could have served as wind-vanes. However on one slab these posts end in what appear to be prongs, and this has led to the suggestion that they functioned as a

support for the mast when lowered. On the Rodel boat it is even possible to make out the horizontal slits beside the oar-ports which enabled the blade of the oar to be shipped.

From grave-slabs, crosses and seals we can tell what these boats looked like. We can then fill out our knowledge with the titbits of written information that have come down to us. Some of these are found in official documents which are naturally concerned with galleys as an element in the power politics of the day, an element the Scottish government was keen to regulate. Other references are found in feudal charters and refer to the building of galleys as a right or duty. We learn, for instance, that there was a difference in size between a galley and a birlinn, the birlinn carrying fewer oars. The Rodel boat would have ranked as a big galley since it carried 34 oars and was about 24 metres long. Sails were made of strong woollen plaiding, white, speckled or coloured. Future research could be directed to culling the literary sources for all the various snippets of information that will increase our knowledge about galleys.

Perhaps one of the richest sources of information about how it felt to travel in such a boat is Alasdair Macdonald's great poem The Birlinn of Clanranald. This 18th century classic describes a stormy passage for Clanranald's birlinn in epic terms. It also reveals much interesting information about the boat;

"Then we struck the thin sails
of spotted canvas
and laid the mast, fine and smooth-red
on the decking.
We put out oars, slim and sweet-tuned
smooth and tinted
of the pine Macvarish cut
in Islandfinnan."

This brief quotation, from a translation by Derick Thomson, suggests the mast was laid flat on the deck; but of course this was around 1750. The pine oars came from St. Finnan's Isle at the foot of Loch Shiel in Moidart, a spot Macdonald knew intimately.

Communication in the mediaeval West Highlands was overwhelmingly by sea. Despite their function as warships, galleys must also have served as general-purpose vessels,

ferrying men, animals and freight about the islands. They were used for quick hit-and-run raids, and of course they were status symbols. They were highly visible signs of the wealth and power of their owners. What happened to them? We know they existed, we know a little about them. Their disappearance from the scene remains one of the problems of Highland history. The Scottish kings would not lament their departure, and certainly these same kings mounted occasional naval expeditions to the Hebrides to bring them to heel. However, we may doubt that these were responsible, any more than the later edicts against Highlanders bearing arms were successful. We know of naval battles between Highland chiefs, but no one crisis seems to have been responsible for the decline of the galley. It was probably a gradual process associated with the political and economic decline of the Lordship. We have sculptural and documentary evidence for such boats in the 16th and 17th centuries, but there is also evidence of Lowland boats being used in the Highlands. To what extent this was a new development is hard to tell. In 1648 Donald Macdonald, son of Clanranald, took 300 soldiers to Carrickfergus in a galley and a "rigged low-country frigate" that he had. In 1685 in the massive Highland "creach" or raid on Kintyre the single most important item stolen was a two-masted boat and all its gear from Campbeltown. By the 18th century Highland naval power was a thing of the past.

Why? It is unlikely to have been a shortage of timber. Whilst trees are scarce on some of the islands the plentiful supply of timber on the mainland was one of the attractions for English iron-smelting companies that set up in the Highlands in the 18th century. It may well be that the fundamental reason was economic - the slow insidious decay of Highland power and prosperity compared to Lowland. The wealth necessary to build and maintain warships in the age of gunpowder simply could not keep pace with the new and vastly more expensive naval technology.

As yet galleys have been little researched. They still raise more questions than answers. How were they built? How did they navigate? How did they engage? Did they attempt to ram each other, or board and fight it out hand-to-hand? (Armed warriors are shown on several grave-slab galleys). How did their design change over the years? There are few concrete answers, but I shall try to indicate

some lines of research that may prove fruitful. The carved crosses and grave-slabs need more study before they deteriorate further. The literary sources are as yet barely touched on. What can we learn about boat-building in the Highlands in later times? The Highlands were so backward for so long that we may yet elicit information about the materials used and the processes involved. Finally, what about the language? The Gaelic heritage is profoundly maritime; what of the sea-songs and prayers, what of the etymology of words to do with seafaring, which are Gaelic, which Norse, which English? Put together all this information will help us to trace Gaeldom's maritime roots and understand its Golden Age.

It is impossible, when looking at a galley in silent stone, not to feel sad at the wastage of such a tradition. However the search for more knowledge always contains something of the mystery of a treasure-hunt. Perhaps one day someone will come across the wreck of a Highland galley on the floor of one of our numerous sea-lochs and so reveal for us more of their life and death.

...oooOooo...

NOTE on the COVER.

The humped shape of Dunadd rises calmly above grazing land and marsh, catching the attention as one passes on the Oban road, its grassy summit offering a viewpoint from which all the country round can be surveyed, a quiet place to visit. It was not always so; for 300 years at least Dunadd was the central stronghold of a large area, and may have been the 'capital' of Dalriada. The Annals of Ulster record a siege in 683 and a capture by the Picts in 736; doubtless there were other violent episodes unrecorded; but Dunadd also enjoyed an everyday existence. We may imagine approaching it on a calm frosty autumn evening some 1100 or 1200 years ago, seeing the massive encircling wall and huge gate, the small fortress on the height, the lower slopes packed with houses and workshops and noise, smoke from cooking fires rising into the still air, the glow from many small forges; travellers hurrying on the causeway, a ship at the quay and one or two others nosing up the marshy river from the sea. It was like that once.

J.D.Robertson.

Plankton of the sea and our sea-lochs consists of small cells and animal organisms which are drifted about by currents and tides. Microscopic coloured flagellates and diatoms, the phytoplankton, are at the base of the food cycle in the sea, synthesizing organic compounds from water, dissolved carbon dioxide and nutrients from land drainage, energy being supplied by sunlight through chlorophyll. The phytoplankton is eaten by herbivorous zooplankton, which in turn are eaten by carnivorous zooplankton. These again are the food of larger invertebrates such as squid, and of most pelagic fishes, the latter being eaten by sea birds, whales, seals and man.

Towards the end of the 1939-1945 War, experiments were initiated in a sea-loch in Argyll to see whether the addition of nutrients at one end of this food cycle could increase the growth of small flounders near the other end of the cycle. Later the suitability of some sea-lochs for culturing oysters and mussels was investigated.

The nutrient salts introduced in Loch Craigin, a small arm of Loch Sween, for the fish experiment were superphosphate of lime (a mixture of calcium phosphate and calcium sulphate) and sodium nitrate. It was already known that the outburst of phytoplankton in spring and again in autumn was limited by the amount of phosphate and nitrate in the water. Increased growth was found in the relatively few flounders captured of the 23,000 introduced. Most of the nutrient salts were taken up by the fringe of seaweeds. Today, young salmon are confined in cages in our sea-lochs and fed on commercial food pellets. The original experiments were carried out by Drs. Gross and Raymont of Edinburgh University, and Dr. Sheina Marshall and Dr. Orr of the Marine Station, Millport.

Oyster investigations were initiated by the Scottish Marine Biological Association in 1943, and involved three members of its Millport staff, Drs. Orr, Marshall and Pike. In 1947 Dr. R.H.Millar took over and spent much of his time for the next twenty-five years in field and laboratory studies of oysters.

The native oyster Ostrea edulis, a European species,

is found in shallow, sheltered coastal waters, and has been fished for food since prehistoric times. Commercial fisheries, large in the Firth of Forth and Loch Ryan, and smaller in other areas, had all declined. The general aim of the oyster work was to see whether oyster fisheries could be re-established. This involved layings of young oysters in suitable hard ground, or keeping them in suspended culture where the ground was too soft, and measuring their survival, growth and fattening over a period of 3-5 years. A second part of the investigation was to follow any breeding of the oysters by examining the plankton for oyster larvae, and for the minute food organisms on which the larvae feed - flagellates of up to 1/10,000 of a millimetre; finally, whether there was a 'spatfall', the settlement of the mature larvae on stones and shells, to be transformed into young, shelled oysters.

In the 1950's and early 1960's West Loch Tarbert and Loch Sween were two of the many sea-lochs of the West of Scotland and its larger islands where two-year-old oysters from Brittany were laid to assess their growth and fattening, and possible breeding for recruitment of stock. Oysters laid on the coastal shelf at Rhu and Torinturk between two and three miles from the head of West Loch Tarbert grew and fattened satisfactorily. The chief predator on the beds was the starfish Asterias rubens which could be removed by baited traps or collected by divers. Although production of larvae was also satisfactory, spatfall was poor over the three years of the investigation, due apparently to poor growth and survival of the larvae; this was possibly caused by the relatively low numbers of the small flagellates on which they feed. Although the tidal range is only 2-4 feet, the ebb-tide could carry larvae long distances from their origin; in one case stained larvae were recovered $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles 'downstream' after 18 hours.

Linne Mhuirich, a branch of Loch Sween, is sheltered with a relatively high salinity, and is fairly shallow, leading to reasonably high temperatures of 15-20 C in the summer (1946-48), and consequently was thought to be satisfactory for growth and breeding of oysters. Its limitation is the relatively narrow zone below low-tide mark of ground suitable for the laying of oysters. Although laid oysters were shown to grow well, and their size ten

years later (1957) indicated that some spatfalls had taken place in the intervening years, examination of the settlement of larvae showed severe competition from a sea-squirt, Ascidella. The larvae of this ascidian settled from the plankton at the same time as oyster larvae and covered suspended plates on which it had been hoped that the oyster larvae would settle. The sea-squirts did not settle as much on the bottom stones, and it seemed that increasing the surface area on the substratum by layers of empty mussel and oyster shells ('culch') would assist larval spatfall.

Hatcheries to obtain oyster spat would ensure supplies of young oysters for relaying, and much work was done at Millport and laboratories in England on the biology of larval culture. These young oysters would replace those from Brittany formerly used for the laying experiments, as it is difficult to obtain parasite-free stocks. Even English beds have important pests which are absent from Scottish waters. Nowadays commercial oyster fisheries in this country use the Pacific, or Japanese oyster (Crassostrea gigas), a hardier and more rapidly growing species than our native oyster (Ostrea edulis).

Mussel (Mytilus) culture was attempted at Loch Sween in 1970-71 by suspending ropes from rafts. Sisal ropes rotted after 18 months, but polypropylene ropes were more durable. Mussels attaching to the ropes took over two years to reach marketable size. Barnacles and tube-worms which settled on the mussels did them no harm, and the starfish also on the ropes were too small in their first year to be a pest.

Recent plans by the Nature Conservancy Council to designate Loch Sween as its first Marine Nature Reserve in Scotland have not met with general approval from the local community, particularly those concerned with fishing, and it is presently obvious that it will be some time before these differences can be resolved.

I am indebted to Dr. R.H. Millar for certain published references concerning the oyster programme.

...oooOooo...

The extreme degree of lawlessness in the remote Highlands in long past times is well brought out in the contents of Charter Chests, with their remaining deeds and letters, and two examples serve well to show how things stood in the 1500's and 1600's.

In 1527 it was reported that 'letters of apprising' against MacLeod of Dunvegan could not be delivered without assistance of the King's Lieges "because ye said Alexander duellis in ye Hieland where nane of ye officeris of ye law dar pass for fear of yair lyves".

In 1674 proceedings were taken to obtain payment from M'Neil of Barra of some money due from him to a merchant in Glasgow for "certaine merchand wear" bought by him, and an unfortunate messenger named Munro was sent to serve legal letters on M'Neil. The results were disastrous, for "Rorie M'Neil in hie and proud contempt of His Majesties authoritie did deface molest trouble and persew the said messenger and notar, and did most cruellie and inhumanlie discharge foure scoir shott of hagbutts muskets gunns and pistols at them, and threw great stones frome the house whereby they were in hazard of being brained and so durst not for thair lyvis approach nearer to have left copies at the principall door thereof, as use is, so they left them on the ground, on being informed of which Rorie M'Neil and others to the number of twentie all armed with hagbutts guns pistols and other invasive and forbidden weapons, being thieves robbers sorners and broken men did persew and follow after the said messenger and notar to the yle of Funday and there did take and apprehend ther persons, and did detaine them captives and prisoners ther the space of two dayes, still threatening and menacing them and did most proudlie and insolentlie robb the wreits they had then in their compayne from them and in high contempt of his Majesties authorite did rend and ryve the samen."

Rorie M'Neil did not get off scaithless. He was tried at Edinburgh in 1679 and fined £1000 and to be imprisoned till the fine was paid, and one of his dependants, Donald Gair had "his haill moveable guidis and gear escheat" and was imprisoned.

[The editor is indebted to Dr. Mackenna for this disillusioning account].

THE HOUSE THAT BAXTER BUILT.

Marion Campbell.

The Estate Rentals of Archibald Campbell of Knockbuy (1693-1790) run from 1728. As well as Minard, he farmed parts of Kilberry and in 1757 moved a tenant's brother, Duncan Baxter, to spread his Improving ideas. Duncan's family originated at Kilmory Knap (they are a MacMillan sept) so were not too alien to Knapdale. But first he needed a house:-

An Accompt of the Days the Tenants of Cuilghaltroe were Leading Stones and Timber for Duncan Baxter's Deweling House and Barn &c.:-

Impss (imprimis, firstly) Duncan Mcphoil wrought Seven Days with two Horses in Leading Stone and timber

I^m (item) Duncan McCavish wrought as above

I^m John Moloy wrought Seven Days at Leading Timber & Stones for Said house

Neil McCavish the widows Son wrought the Same Number of Days

Donald Turner wrought Six Days with two (horses) att Leading the Stone and Timber but was Not in the woods one off the days

Duncan Leach & Neil Ditto wrought four Days with two horses

Itm Neil Leach in the Acre were four Days working with two horses

Ane Accompt of the Days that Duncan Baxter and Archibald his son and Archibald McKichan wrought att Leading off Stones and tymber for Dunc Baxters house -

Impss Archibald McKychand and Al(asdair) his (brother) wrought ('x days quarrying') stones and three Days with Horses and ?... .. Cutting Timber out off the woods.

Itm the Said Duncan Baxter and Archibald his Son were Ten Days leading the Stones and two Days with four Horses and Hew and D... for Said Houses and his Sons with him and three Days in the woods with a Bou and ?... two of which Three Days he had eight horses (and boys off the farm - crossed out)

And two Days with two Horses leading Rush and Hedder and Diffet and his Sons with him for the Barn -

In all thirty one days.

The paper (the latter part in Duncan's writing) was pinned into the ledger, to be (in Knockbuy's spelling) 'allowed yow' in payment of future rents. Some lost words are easily restored; other entries identify McKichan's brother. 'Hew and D...' may mean 'hewing and delving', preparing the site; the Concise Scots Dictionary gives 'hew = to dig out bushes, esp. whins'. 'A Bou and ...' should mean something like Saw and Axe', but I cannot find 'Bou' in Scots or Gaelic. 'Rush, Hedder and Diffet' are rushes, heather and divot (turf, in long strips as underlay for thatch).

Three years later Duncan built another house for the laird, this one valued by independent arbiters:-

Cuilgaltro Aprile 25th 1760

Donald McIllmaluag And Angus McIntagert, Sworn Burlawmen and Compraisers who Sighted and Comprised the workmanship of a New House Build by Dun: baxter in Cuilgaltro to Knockbuy and that is to Say for Quarring the Stons and building five Cupples also the ston was Leaded to him, & all other furniture to the Ground wher the houss was build and when all was Considered we Amount the workmanship to three pounds ten Shill Ster Mony

This we Did according to our best Skill and Judgment (signed) Donald McIllmaluag Angus Mc^{his} Intagert^{mark} and the Compraisers wages

This also needs a word or two. Both men were Knockbuy's tenants at Lergnahension, Donald being Knockbuy's miller - Donald the Miller (his son John had already changed his surname to Milloy). The wood for this and the other house probably came from oakwoods near the Mill, where suitably curved cruckbeams might be found; Kilberry itself was almost treeless apart from the shelter belt around the castle. Five pairs of crucks denote a long house, like those at Auchindrain; they were normally set about nine feet apart along the side walls. It took time to choose such timbers; often a curved limb was split lengthways to give a perfect pair. 'Furniture' does not denote tables and chairs but small fittings such as a hearthstone, doorstep, or wattles for a door and hanging chimney, as well as clay to pack the unmortared walls and cover the cobbled floor (which might be finished by shutting sheep into the house overnight, so that their sharp hooves and oily fleeces and droppings could settle and seal the floor ready for a top-coat of fine sand).

In the year that House D at Auchindrain is at last restored, at a cost of around £46,000, it is appropriate to remember the initial value of such a structure.

(The Kilberry Papers, including the Rent Books, are lodged with the District Archivist at Lochgilphead, and are available for further research).

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From the ex-President.

By the kindness of the Editor I have an opportunity to send a message to the many Members who contributed so generously to the Society's gifts to me in October 1990. It distresses me that I have never yet written to thank you personally, but I do want to express my delighted gratitude for the most handsome and most useful desk and (for the first time in my life) a truly comfortable typing-chair. They fit neatly into the Study in my new home, and are in daily use. I now have every incentive to embark on several books at once - but I have relapsed into idle comfort instead. I still have a few remaining good intentions, and may yet carry some of them through to completion!

Thank you all most warmly.

Marion Campbell.

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NOTICE from the PUBLICATIONS SECRETARY.

The first 21 issues of Kist and number 28 are now out of print. Back numbers 22 - 27 inclusive and 29 onwards are available, all at 60p per copy (post and packing extra).

Requests are frequently received for issues that are out of print. If any members have copies of out-of-print issues which they do not wish to retain, the Publications Secretary would be glad to receive these or to arrange to have them collected.

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NOTICE from the EDITOR.

Readers will have noticed a change in format. Kist is smaller and the margins are narrower, although the type-size remains the same. This is due to the installation of new machinery at the Dolphin Press, just before Kist was sent for printing. It will be possible

- a) to reduce the size of type and have wider margins, or
- b) to keep the size of type and reduce the amount of material per page, or
- c) to present it as in this issue.

The Editor will welcome members' views on this.

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