



HISTORIC
ENVIRONMENT
SCOTLAND

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ALBA

Property in Care (PIC) ID:	PIC088
Designations:	Scheduled Monument (SM90186)
Taken into State care:	1969 (Guardianship)
Last reviewed:	2021

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

KILPATRICK DUN



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Any enquiries regarding this document should be sent to us at:

Historic Environment Scotland
Longmore House
Salisbury Place
Edinburgh
EH9 1SH

+44 (0) 131 668 8600
www.historicenvironment.scot

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HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

KILPATRICK DUN

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Please note, the research for this document was undertaken during 2020-2021 with limited access to archives and resources, as a result of Covid-19. While every attempt was made for accuracy throughout the statement, errors or omissions may remain. Please direct comments or suggestions to CRTenquiries@hes.scot

I. SUMMARY

1.1 Introduction

Kilpatrick Dun is a circular, stone-walled settlement, most probably of Iron Age date, to which is attached a large enclosure of later date. These features stand within a more extensive area of archaeological remains including several hut-circles, cairns and traces of associated fields, all of which may be of Bronze Age date; they are collectively protected as Scheduled Monument SM90186.¹ It is possible that the dun itself represents a re-modelling of a Bronze Age or Neolithic funerary cairn.

The site is situated one mile south of Blackwaterfoot, on the west side of Arran.

The dun and enclosure were taken into State care under a Guardianship Agreement in 1977, at which date the enclosure was thought to represent an Early Christian monastic enclosure or 'cashel'. This is no longer believed to be the case.

The site is unstaffed and is free to visit year-round. It must be approached on foot; a half-mile walk from the A841 coastal road.²

1.2 Statement of Significance

Kilpatrick Dun is of national importance as a dun; a small stone-walled settlement of mid to late Iron Age date. Duns are widespread in north and west Scotland and in the Western Isles: while usually regarded as fortifications, the demonstration of the social status of their owners was probably an equally important factor in their construction. Duns vary greatly in size and plan. Kilpatrick is an example of a simple dun, towards the smaller end of the spectrum. Its near-circular plan implies that it may originally have been fully roofed, although its internal diameter of over 16

¹ Scheduling details are accessible at:

<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90186>

² As parking space is restricted, visitors are advised to park at the bottom of the road and walk to the site on foot. Further access information is available on the HES website: <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/kilpatrick-dun/getting-here/>

metres would have posed a technical challenge. The dun's thick wall contains at least one 'chamber' within its width. There is no evidence to indicate how high the wall originally stood.

The dun's significance is enhanced by evidence suggesting a complex history, demonstrated by the discovery in the early 20th century of a Bronze Age stone-built burial cist below the dun's floor. This has led to the suggestion that the dun may have been deliberately set into an earlier monument which had retained significance over many centuries.³ The Iron Age practice of siting circular houses, duns and brochs on pre-existing Bronze Age and Neolithic funerary monuments is widely attested in northern Mainland Scotland, Orkney and the Western Isles.⁴ Kilpatrick Dun (and the cairn which it may have superseded) sits near to the centre of a sizeable array of early field boundaries, burial cairns and hut circles, which sample excavation has dated to the Bronze Age.⁵ Most of these remains are scheduled as SM90186,⁶ but only the dun and enclosure are currently in State care.

The closest structural parallels to the Kilpatrick Dun are located in Kintyre (Kildonan Dun) and Bute (Dun Burgidale). By analogy with sites excavated in Argyll and elsewhere, a date in the last century BC or first few centuries AD seems likely. But it may well be that simple duns such as this span a much longer period than is usually ascribed to them; they may arise earlier (as has recently proven to be the case with the better-studied brochs, which are essentially a specialised class of dun⁷) and may also continue in use for longer – some duns appear to have continued in use into the early medieval period.⁸

The dun lies on one side of a larger enclosure, which is clearly later in date. Formerly described as a 'cashel' or early monastic enclosure (with the nearby hut circles interpreted as monastic cells)⁹, this enclosure is now believed to be of much later date, probably no older than the post-medieval period. Traces of rig cultivation can be seen within the enclosure.

As the 1909 excavations were very limited in extent and quality, it is highly likely that more extensive remains survive in situ. The 1978-9 excavations were located outside the boundary of the area in State care, but provide a

³ Barber 1997, 33-34

⁴ For example: **Carn Liath**, Highland (Bronze Age cist below broch outer buildings); The Howe, Orkney (Neolithic chambered tomb below several generations of Iron Age roundhouse and a broch); Pierowall Quarry, Westray, Orkney (Iron Age roundhouse built into/over Neolithic chambered tomb); Clettraval, North Uist, Western Isles (ditto).

⁵ Barber 1997

⁶ Scheduling details are accessible at:
<http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90186>

⁷ Dockrill et al, 2015,199

⁸ Nieke 1990, 132-3

⁹ Balfour 1910 (paper delivered in December 1909)

valuable general context for the earlier settlement and cultivation of the whole area.

Key aspects of the site's significance include the following:

- The evidence it can offer for Mid to Late Iron Age enclosed settlement on a small scale (as compared with the more familiar hillforts of the earlier Iron Age), especially in comparison with larger enclosed settlements (such as **Rispain Camp**¹⁰) or the numerous duns of irregular and larger plan.
- The extent to which it typifies, or is exceptional to, the generality of later prehistoric settlement in upland Scotland, and in particular the relationship between thin-walled house circles, duns and brochs.
- The evidence it may be able to offer towards the detailed construction, layout and internal use of simple, circular, duns – which in nearby Argyll probably represent about half of the total population of such sites.¹¹
- The possibility of surviving, undisturbed deposits capable of providing further information about the site's construction and occupation more generally.
- The evidence that it may have earlier origins as a modified Bronze Age burial mound (noting that a Neolithic chambered cairn has also been suggested as an ancestor, due to the large size of some of the individual stones),¹² which would make it part of the larger Bronze Age landscape of settlement and burial which was explored in the late 1970s.¹³
- The evidence that the enclosure and the area contained within it can offer in relation to agricultural practice over an extended period.
- The site's history of antiquarian and archaeological discovery, interest and investigation, especially the changing theories surrounding the date and function of the enclosure, once (but no

¹⁰ Throughout the text, site names in **bold** are managed by Historic Environment Scotland and are publicly accessible. Access information can be found at: www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/

¹¹ Nieke 1990, 136-7

¹² Barber 1997 33-4

¹³ Barber 1997

longer) believed to be an example of an Early Christian monastic ‘cashel’.¹⁴

- Its conservation, use and presentation as an Ancient Monument since it was taken into State care in 1977.

The above paragraphs outline the significance of Kilpatrick Dun. The following sections offer more detailed descriptions and analysis of the site.

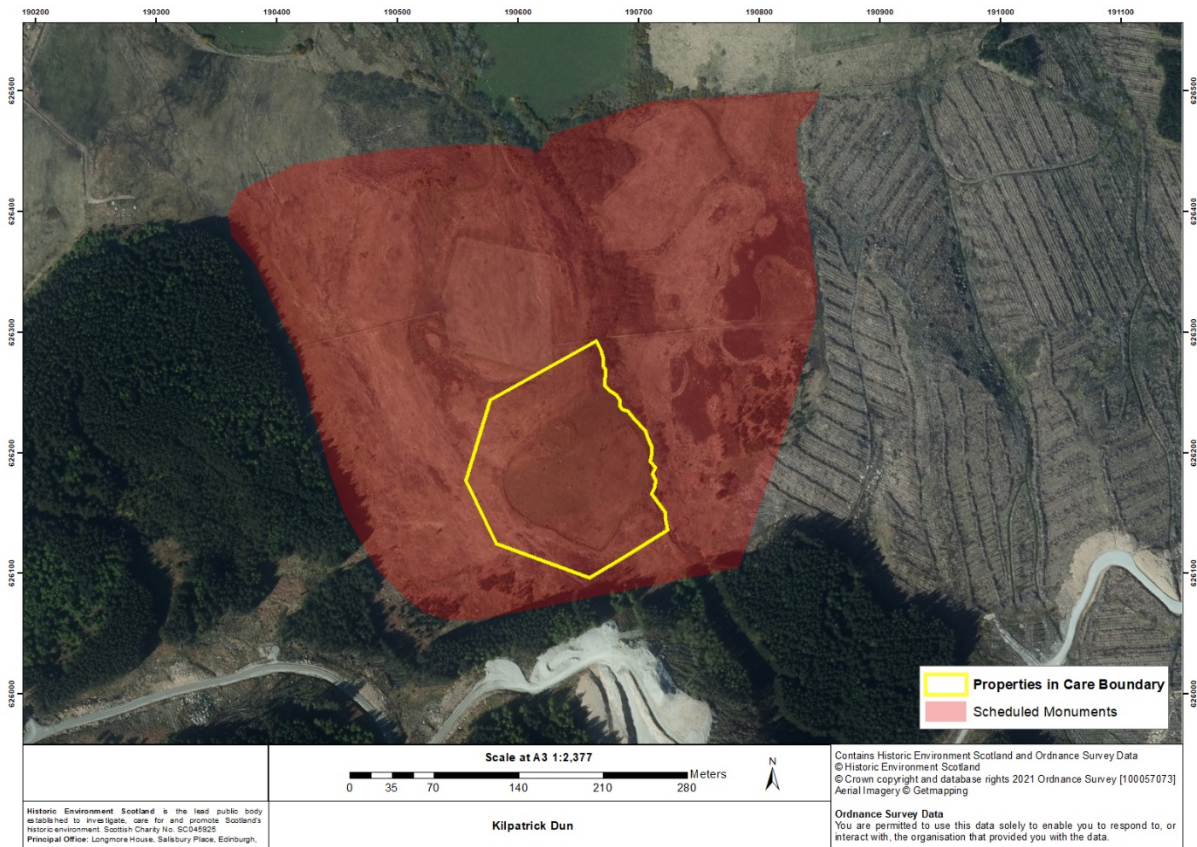


Figure 1: Scheduled area and Property in Care (PIC) boundary of Kilpatrick Dun. For illustrative purposes only.

2. ASSESSMENT OF VALUES

2.1 Background

2.1.1 Context: later prehistoric settlement in Arran and surrounding areas

In terms of its prehistoric archaeology as well as its topography, Arran appears to have rather more in common with Argyll and the western

¹⁴ Balfour 1909 and 1910: 200

Highlands and Islands than it does with lowland Ayrshire to the east, and it is in this context that Kilpatrick Duncan best be understood.¹⁵

The hillforts which characterise the earlier Iron Age of southern Scotland do occur here, but are fewer in number and smaller in scale. Sites such as the nearby Drumadoon on Arran or Dun Skeig and Balloch Hill in Kintyre represent the upper end of the scale in terms of their enclosed areas and relatively simple defensive works. The majority of local earlier Iron Age settlement is probably represented by simple roundhouses, a type which also occurs both earlier and later and is impossible to date without excavation.

By the last centuries BC, this pattern of generally open settlement with a few forts appears to change, with an increase in the number of small, stone-walled, enclosed sites: generally referred to as duns.

The term 'dun' is very much a catch-all category. About half of known duns resemble Kilpatrick in being i) relatively compact (seldom more than 15m in internal diameter, so Kilpatrick is quite a large example amongst these 'small' duns), ii) near-circular on plan and iii) capable of having been fully roofed. The remainder are very varied in plan, often with boundaries following natural features, and are likely to have contained free-standing circular houses within their outer walls. The smaller duns are effectively heavily-built and impressively sized roundhouses, while the larger, irregular duns are in essence miniature hill-forts.¹⁶ The thickest-walled, most circular duns of all, with specialised architectural features which might have allowed them to be built to a considerable height, are called brochs. 'True' brochs, however, appear quite rare in this area, and are more frequent from Mull and Lismore northwards. It should be noted that Gaelic does not make any distinction between brochs and duns – they are all called *dun*, or more correctly *dùn*.

There have been few modern excavations of duns in the area, so precise dates for their construction are lacking. However, two unexcavated sites in Argyll (Dun Skeig¹⁷ and Dun MacSniochan¹⁸) display superficial evidence for duns being built within the defences of long-established and possibly abandoned hillforts, with the duns perhaps marking re-occupation of a significant ancient site by the dun-builders. It may be that (as has been suggested for the lowland example of **Edin's Hall**¹⁹) possession and use of an 'old' hillfort was an indicator of high social standing. Kilpatrick follows this pattern, since the presence of extremely large stone slabs built into its wall suggest that it may have been built by adapting a pre-existing Bronze Age, or even Neolithic, burial cairn. The surrounding area (not in State

¹⁵ The site is technically in the Central Lowlands, as the Highland Boundary Fault, which runs diagonally through Arran, lies a few kilometres to the north.

¹⁶ Harding 1997

¹⁷ RCAHMS 1971, 70-1, No. 165

¹⁸ RCAHMS 1975, 69-70, no. 136

¹⁹ Dunwell 1999

care) also contains several hut-circles, small burial cairns and the remains of an extensive field system, all of Bronze Age date.

Society at the time of the dun's construction seems to have followed a chiefdom model, with power and status more widely distributed than in the earlier Iron Age, when hillforts point at regional hierarchies on a larger geographical scale. Social rank may have come to depend as much on intangible matters (such as descent or special skills) as on conventional wealth (such as holdings of cattle or extent of ploughland). There is evidence from across Scotland and further afield that portable wealth, in the form of jewellery and other fine metalwork, was becoming increasingly important as a means of displaying status. A dun such as Kilpatrick might represent the home of a minor local chief, seeking to demonstrate status both by the construction of a large stone-walled house and, perhaps, also co-opting the site's existing status as a monument to previous generations.

The landscape of Arran, at least along the coast, had long been managed and utilised by human populations, as the many Neolithic and Bronze Age monuments of western Arran testify. The environmental evidence from sites of this period excavated elsewhere points to mixed farming, with cattle prominent, but sheep, goats and pigs also raised. Crops included wheat and barley. Oats seems to have been a new introduction to Britain at about this time. Wild foodstuffs were also important, including venison, birds and fish. Most settlements would have stood at the centre of extensive areas of cleared and cultivated land, with livestock grazing on poorer soils and marshy areas providing hay for overwintering stock.

It is difficult to offer a satisfactory context for the enclosure attached to the outer walls of the dun. It is no longer regarded as an Early Christian monument, with a Medieval or even post-Medieval date now preferred. The enclosed traces of rig cultivation would certainly fit with such a date, but it should not be ruled out that the enclosure itself may represent a later re-working of an earlier set of field boundaries. Only excavation could hope to address this question, and while there have been excavations on apparently similar boundaries nearby, the supposed 'cashel' has not been scientifically examined or dated. What is without doubt is that the Kilpatrick area contains a complex series of archaeological sites spanning more than 3000 years.

2.1.2 Descriptive overview

The dun and enclosure are situated at about 85 metres above sea-level, on low spur near the foot of a north-west facing hillside. The location commands an extensive view: north west over Drumadoon Bay to the hillfort of Drumadoon and beyond towards Kintyre, and north across the low-lying ground around the Black Water towards Machrie Moor and its standing stones. Higher ground blocks the distant view elsewhere. A

sizeable stream, the Allt a'Ghoirtean (the burn of the enclosure) lies just to the east.



Figure 2: Kilpatrick Dun's location commands extensive views. © Crown Copyright HES.

An extensive complex of archaeological remains of probable Bronze Age date lies around the dun and enclosure, both to the north-east and to the south-west. This includes at least six 'hut-circles', two unenclosed platform houses, at least 12 cairns (several of which have been excavated and shown to contain burials) and a number of long stretches of boundary banks of stone and earth, some of which appear to date from the Bronze Age, but others of which may be later.²⁰ However, these features are not currently in State care: only the dun, the enclosure attached to it and their interiors are in care (see Figure 1). The description which follows focusses on these latter features.

The dun sits on a pronounced hillock, which may represent the remains of an earlier structure. It is nearly circular, with an interior space 16 metres in diameter surrounded by a thick wall which varies from 3.7 to 4.3 metres thick and survives to less than a metre high. The wall is faced with boulders inside and out, including some very large slabs on the north-west side of the inner face – one of these is over 3 metres in length. The northern portion of the wall is distinctly wider than the southern portion, and contains what appear to be the remain of cells or galleries within its

²⁰ Barber 1997 for details

thickness. The entrance passage is located on the south-west arc, with large upright stone slabs forming one side.



Figure 3: Large upright stones flank the entrance to the dun. © Crown copyright.

Excavations in 1909 located a stone cist within the interior of the dun, close to the entrance. This contained an undecorated pottery vessel of Bronze Age type, full of partially burned human bones. The cist is no longer visible. But its presence, plus that of several large stone slabs built into the walls of the dun, have led to the suggestion that the dun may have been formed by remodelling a large Bronze Age cairn or possibly even a Neolithic chambered tomb. This suggestion gains support from the excavation, in 1978-9, of a number of smaller, kerbed, cairns lying a short distance to the east. These proved to contain stone-built cists at its centre and produced the remains of several Bronze Age pottery vessels of 'Beaker' and 'Food Vessel' type.²¹

²¹ Barber 1997, 39-47, argues that there were probably several phases in the use of these cairns, all within the earlier Bronze Age. The use of Beakers is normally regarded as lasting from around 2400 to 1800 BC, with Food Vessels appearing

The enclosure formerly described as a ‘cashel’ lies to the south-east of the dun, its wall abutting that of the dun, and running partially over it. The enclosed area is approximately D-shaped, measuring about 135 metres by 125 metres – around 2 hectares in extent. The dun sits on the straight, north-west, side of the ‘D’ (see Figure 4). The enclosure’s boundary is a tumbled wall of earth and stones from 1.5 metres to 2 metres thick and standing no more than 1 metre high at any point. The area within the boundary shows clear traces of parallel ridge / rig cultivation, which appears to be of late Medieval or early post-Medieval date. Neither the boundary bank of the enclosure nor the cultivation within it has been directly dated, so it is entirely possible that the enclosure is older and was refreshed and re-used in more recent times.



Figure 4: Oblique aerial view focussed upon approximately ‘D’-shaped enclosure, with dun (at centre of image) on the straight, north-west side. Rig cultivation is clearly visible on this image as diagonal, parallel lines. © Historic Environment Scotland.

2.1.3 Early antiquarian interest and activity

The site appears to have remained unremarked by antiquarians, and is not mentioned in either the Old or the New Statistical accounts.

rather later but overlapping in use. This is consistent with the evidence from the Kilpatrick excavations.

In 1909, John Alexander Balfour, the author of the first volume of the *Book of Arran*, visited the site together with local friends. He formed the view that it was an Early Christian monastic enclosure of the Irish type known as a cashel. After his departure, his friends dug into the site and found a Bronze Age burial cist, which he was summoned back to excavate. He published his conclusions promptly, advancing the theory that the cashel, as he believed the site to be, might have been dedicated to (if not founded by) St Brendan of Clonfert, and perhaps the primary site associated with the Christianising of Arran. He seems to have developed this explanation because the stretch of water between Arran and Kintyre is named Kilbrannan Sound, which he argued was a specific reference to this supposed religious site.²²

Balfour's identification of the site as a cashel was widely accepted for several decades, appearing on Ordnance Survey maps and in several archaeological accounts. It began to be queried in the early 1970s, when the Kilpatrick area came to be studied more closely.²³

2.1.4 Survey and excavation nearby in the late 1970s

In the early 1970s, extensive areas of southern and western Arran were designated by the Forestry Commission for large-scale tree planting. An opportunity was given to the Department of the Environment (Property Services Agency) – a predecessor of Historic Environment Scotland – to survey these areas for sites of archaeological interest, with a view to salvaging information and perhaps arranging for the most significant sites to be preserved, with the clear understanding that any areas left unplanted should be very limited in extent.²⁴

Edinburgh University students led by Roger Mercer undertook a rapid walkover survey of a number of areas, including Blackwaterfoot/Kilpatrick in 1976.²⁵ The results of this work, accompanied by field visits by the staff of DoE (PSA) and RCAHMS, led to two linked decisions by DoE (PSA). The first was to arrange to take the dun and 'cashel' into State care (which took

²² While agreeing with the Brendan association of Kilbrannan, later commentators have preferred to derive the *kil* element from Gaelic *caolas* a narrow strait rather than *cille* a church. (Barber 1997: 33) This seems open to debate, given the continuing acceptance of a *cille* = church derivation in the name Kilpatrick itself and other locations such as Kildonan in Kintyre.

²³ McLennan 1977: 37; Stevenson 1985: 148 (site number 103); Ritchie 1988: 19 all rejected the idea of the enclosure being a cashel, and describing the dun variously as a dun or as a homestead, suggesting a date in the early centuries AD.

²⁴ Finally, a total area of over 15 hectares, centred on the dun and enclosure and including most of the excavated features, was preserved from ploughing and planting for forestry. This was subsequently scheduled as a protected Ancient Monument (HES scheduling database, consulted December 2020, reference SM 90186).

²⁵ Mercer 1978

place in 1977) and the second was to task their in-house excavation team, the Central Excavation Unit,²⁶ to explore the character and quality of the surviving archaeology. Excavations took place at Kilpatrick in 1978-9, revealing the remains of houses, burials and field systems of Bronze Age and later date. However, investigations were limited to areas still under threat, so lay outside the agreed boundary of the new property in care. It was during this work that Balfour's idea of a monastic 'cashel' was discarded, in favour of a much more recent date and an agricultural function.

While the results of this work undoubtedly provide a hugely valuable context for the dun and enclosure, they can do so only by inference and extrapolation. The exact date of the dun and the enclosure (the former 'cashel') remain untested by modern investigation.

2.1.5 Maintenance and conservation activity

After the site came into State care in 1977, no major work was undertaken beyond the erection of the first of several generations of on-site interpretation panels. It has continued under this low-input management regime, with sheep maintaining a relatively short grass sward with a few small patches of heather.

No significant threats to the integrity of the site are currently identified beyond the slow erosion caused by the hooves of grazing sheep. However, there is always the risk of rabbit or mole activity which could cause damage.

2.2 Evidential values

The evidential value of Kilpatrick Dun and enclosure is high for what the site's physical fabric, location and setting might tell us about settlement during the latter part of the Iron Age and in subsequent centuries. In addition, there is a very strong likelihood that the monument overlies and contains evidence relating to human use of the area since at least the beginning of the Bronze Age (- a time stretching as far back from the date assumed for the dun, as the latter stands back in time from the present day). While current understanding of the dun and enclosure is far from complete, the results of excavations undertaken nearby do suggest that there is high archaeological potential within and beneath the visible remains. Investigation of which would assist in clarifying what is clearly a complex site history.

²⁶ The Central Excavation Unit transferred into the private sector in the 1980s, and now operates as AOC Archaeology.

Although physically much reduced, the dun appears to represent a widespread class of monument in the local area and in western Scotland generally, and one which has been much discussed, but little examined. Its importance is enhanced by the strong likelihood that it was deliberately sited upon an older, probably funerary, monument, which would have implications for how Iron Age society adopted markers of earlier human activity. Therefore, the site has a high representative value: evidence from it could be extrapolated to contribute to a broader picture of social and environmental change over an extended period. Likewise, evidence obtained from other sites of similar character could aid in placing Kilpatrick itself into context.

The 1909 excavations provided conclusive evidence of Bronze Age use of the site of the dun, and this has since been reinforced by the identification and investigation of extensive remains of Bronze Age and later date in the surrounding area. By contrast, there is no Iron Age artefactual material from the site, so its date rests solely upon the plan form of the surviving remains. Likewise, the remains of the enclosure, now believed to be more than 500 years old, have not been dated by any scientific method, although dates have been acquired from apparently similar boundaries nearby.

Significant archaeological evidence is likely to survive across the entire site. It is distinctly possible that the wall of the dun conceals structures and deposits of earlier date, and the date of the enclosure is by no means certain. In short, the monument poses more questions than it offers answers. However, its considerable archaeological potential could only be investigated through processes which would be disruptive of the fabric as it has survived and is displayed:

- The interiors of both the dun and the enclosure, though disturbed, have not been excavated to natural soil level, so are likely to retain deposits and structural evidence, with the potential to provide evidence towards more precise dating of the dun and enclosure. (The area immediately adjacent to the supposed entrance to the dun, and the junctions between the enclosure boundary wall and the wall of the dun, might be of particular potential in this respect.)
- The surviving wall footings may contain evidence for how the dun and enclosure walls were constructed and may also seal evidence for use of the site before the dun was built, especially as regards any earlier structure(s) on site.
- Modern analytical methods may add considerable information regarding land-use and economic activity through a sampling strategy, without requiring major disruption of the upstanding remains.

2.3 Historical values

The primary historical importance of Kilpatrick dun and enclosure lies almost entirely in its potential rather than in proven historical facts.

The site retains potential to contribute to evidence-based narratives describing how society in later Iron Age southern Scotland may have operated, and changed over time. However, the absence of secure dates for this and other sites believed to be of the same general period, currently limits that potential.



Figure 5: The large stone slabs may be part of an earlier cairn; Iron Age 'adaptations' of earlier sites are noted at a number of locations in northern and western Scotland. © Crown copyright.

Perhaps more important, though currently not possible to assess, is the extent to which the site lies over, and was perhaps partly built out of, earlier monuments and archaeological remains, dating at least as far back as the Bronze Age. The extent to which the builders of the dun and the enclosure were aware of such earlier traces of human presence in the landscape, and how far this influenced their decisions as to what, where and how to build, is a question of considerable interest. Similar questions

are raised by other Iron Age ‘adaptations’ of older monuments noted at a number of locations in northern and western Scotland.

There is no evidence for any local tradition of monastic occupation having existed before the speculations of Balfour;²⁷ such traditions being attached instead to the nearby St Patrick’s Chapel. But following Balfour’s publication in the 20th century, the site acquired additional historical significance due to the understanding that it was a ‘cashel’. Many still apply this term to the site today.

2.4 Architectural values

The architectural details of ‘simple’ duns have received much less attention than those of the more elaborate subset of duns which are known as brochs. In particular, there have been insufficient modern excavations to offer convincing evidence for (or against) the assumption that sites such as Kilpatrick represent the remains of stoutly walled, fully roofed, round houses. In this context, the site is likely to contain buried deposits and structures which might offer a contribution to furthering understanding, especially of the dates of such duns relative to their more architecturally sophisticated cousins the brochs.

Excepting the stout, stone-built, outer wall, the basic structure of the dun would probably have been similar to larger Iron Age roundhouses elsewhere, which were built entirely of wood.²⁸ For example, the excavated house at **Rispain Camp** in Wigtownshire is only slightly smaller in diameter. This poses the question of the extent to which ‘simple’ duns such as Kilpatrick were truly defensive, as opposed to representing a local expression in stone of the much wider later Iron Age phenomenon; that of impressive houses built to serve as an expression of rank or social prestige.

There has been extensive discussion of the ‘defence versus prestige’ question, mainly in the context of brochs. The answer probably lies part-way between; duns and brochs were most likely the habitations of significant local personages and built to appear impressive and intimidating, in the hope that their defensive capabilities would not be put to the test. The strong suspicion that the dun at Kilpatrick may be embedded into the remains of an earlier, possibly funerary, monument, might tend to offer support to the prestige side of the argument.

²⁷ Balfour 1909

²⁸ Barrett 1982

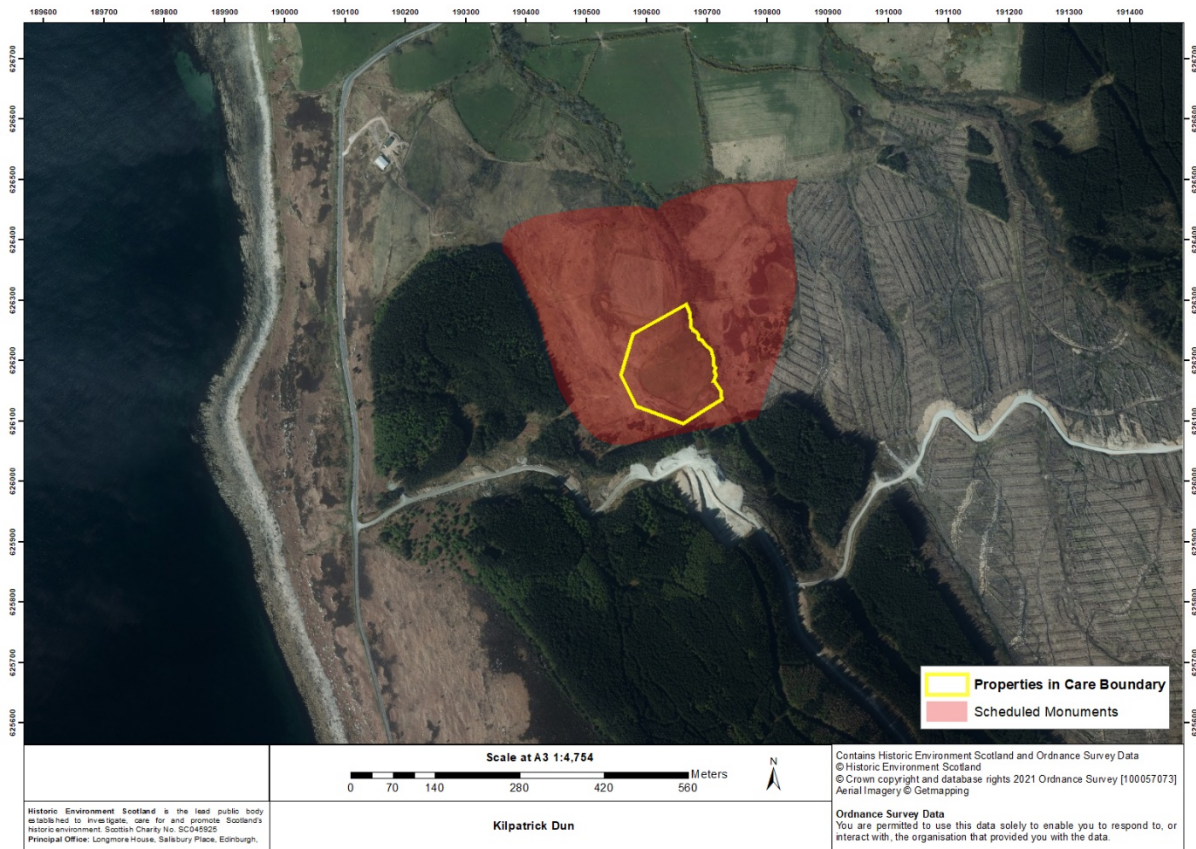


Figure 6: Location of Kilpatrick Dun in relation to partially harvested woodland, and coast.

2.5 Landscape and aesthetic values

Kilpatrick Dun and enclosure form a notably grassy island towards the centre of a broader gap left unplanted in 40-year-old coniferous woodland, which has now begun to be harvested. Areas of scrubby natural woodland lie in the nearby stream valley. To the north, where forestry planting did not take place, the outlook is unobstructed, and on a clear day the site offers spacious views towards Drumadoon, Machrie Moor and the hills of northern Arran. The site is accessible on foot,²⁹ and offers a pleasant and not particularly arduous walk of about 500 metres from the public road. The path is rather rough underfoot.

The site shows to advantage from the air, and oblique aerial views of various dates are held in the National Record of the Historic Environment.³⁰

²⁹ Extremely limited parking is available, but visitors are advised to park at the bottom of the road and walk to site on foot.

³⁰ NRHE is accessible at: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/39637/arran-kilpatrick>

2.6 Natural heritage values

The land immediately around Kilpatrick Dun is not currently (2021) designated for the protection of species or habitats. Both the open area and the surrounding forestry plantations are excluded from the Arran Moors SSSI/SPA.³¹ However the site is of some local importance for the habitat it provides and the walk to and around the site is an important part of the visitor experience with natural heritage making a positive contribution to this.

The bedrock geology of the site belongs to the Kilpatrick Intrusion (South Arran) of Quartz-Feldspar-Porphyry, with superficial deposits of Devensian Till.³²

The in-care area consists of largely unimproved acid grassland/heathland. This means it has not been subject to any significant agricultural improvement which makes it one of the most threatened lowland habitat types in the country. A few species of note have been identified, including bog myrtle (*Myrica gale*), and harebells (*Campanula rotundifolia*). Honeysuckle (*Lonicera periclymenum*) and wood sorrel (*Rumex acetosa*) are ancient woodland indicator species; both of benefit to butterflies. As are other plant species here, such as bramble (*Rubus fruticosus*), cross-leaved heath (*Erica tetralix*), sheep's fescue (*Festuca ovina*) and tormentil (*Potentilla erecta*).³³

Several species of raptor have been observed: buzzard (*Buteo buteo*) occur frequently while short-eared owl (*Asio flammeus*), merlin (*Falco columbarius*), hen harrier (*Circus cyneus*) and Golden eagle (*Aquila chrysaetos*) are seen occasionally, the two last-named usually during the winter months. Smaller birds include many species typical of grass and heather moorland, including meadow pipit (*Anthus pratensis*), stonechat (*Saxicola rubicola*) and skylark (*Alauda arvensis*).

Roe deer (*Capreolus rupicola*) are sometimes seen in the early morning and at dusk, but the only mammal which visitors can rely on seeing is the ubiquitous rabbit (*Oryctolagus cuniculus*).

2.7 Contemporary/use values

There has not been a formal assessment of the value of Kilpatrick Dun to contemporary communities, either of geography or interest. However, the site is used by the local community as a convenient and interesting short,

³¹ Information from NatureScot website, accessed 16 December 2020.

³² British Geological Survey, onshore GeoIndex, accessible at: <https://mapapps2.bgs.ac.uk/geoindex/home.html>

³³ Tevendale, 2018

off-road, walk. It is known of as an element of the area's rich heritage, and most local visitors are aware of the archaeological aspects of the site. It is still referred to more often 'The Cashel' rather than as a dun, even by those who are aware that it is no longer generally regarded as an Early Christian site. However, it does not hold the same degree of prominence in local awareness as many other prehistoric sites on Arran, such as the fort at Drumadoon and the standing stones of Machrie Moor.

It is visited by tourists from further afield who are interested in Arran's heritage. There are no official figures, but visitor numbers are estimated at around 1,200 annually.

Images of the site have been used in archaeological guides and reference works, but it does not usually feature in modern general guidebooks. Even in specialist works, it is usually afforded no more than a brief paragraph: this is partly because of the uncertain nature of the site's history. It was more frequently referenced in older publications, before it was 'demoted' from its 'Cashel' status.

On-site interpretation is provided by a single interpretation board. Visitors must park at the bottom of the farm road (there is a small parking space) and walk approximately a half-mile up to the site. There is no vehicular access up the farm track.³⁴

3. MAJOR GAPS IN UNDERSTANDING

Please note, the research for this document was undertaken during 2020-2021 with limited access to archives and resources, as a result of Covid-19. While every attempt was made for accuracy throughout the statement, errors or omissions may remain. Please direct comments or suggestions to CRTenquiries@hes.scot

Given the lack of certainty about the history of the site, it would not be unreasonable to take the view that *any* new information about it would be of great value. The 1970s excavations nearby have provided a chronological framework for human use of the area, but it is by no means certain how the dun and enclosure fit into this, or how they relate to each other.

Assuming the dun is, as it appears to be, of mid to late Iron Age date, there is a marked lack of comparable excavated sites in the area. This means that local evidence to support an understanding of the place of duns in the Iron Age in Arran and the south-west Highlands is virtually non-existent.

³⁴ The limited parking provision is not currently (2021) signposted; prior to visiting, please check access information at <https://www.historicenvironment.scot/visit-a-place/places/kilpatrick-dun/getting-here/>

Interpretations have instead been extrapolated from other areas and type sites, (including both the brochs and wheelhouses of the north and west, and the hillforts and enclosed settlements of the south-eastern coastal plain and eastern Borders) even though the regional variability of later Iron Age settlement patterns has long been recognised.³⁵ There are a few hillforts, which may be earlier than the duns (though only Balloch Hill in Kintyre³⁶ and Dunagoil on Bute³⁷ have been examined, the latter a century ago), but there have been no recent excavations on Iron Age duns of simple circular plan, similar in plan to Kilpatrick.

However, it is possible to sketch out a short list of unanswered questions about the monument:

- What is the sequence and date of construction and use of the dun and enclosure?
- In particular, does the dun re-use an earlier site?
- What was Kilpatrick Dun's internal layout when completed? Was it a single, roofed dwelling or did it contain a smaller dwelling with open space around it within the outer stone wall?
- What was the nature of human occupation and use of the area outside the dun?
- How does Kilpatrick Dun fit into the local Iron Age settlement pattern? (Tackling this question would potentially require a major programme of regional survey and multiple excavations.)
- What is the date of the enclosure: is it Medieval or later, as has been suggested, or is it earlier in origin but with cultivation continuing into more recent times?
- Finally, in the absence of firm dating evidence, are we absolutely certain that the Early Christian 'cashel' theory can safely be discarded?

Added to the specific questions above, there are major gaps relating to the period to which Kilpatrick Dun belongs. Key research questions relating to the Iron Age as a whole are contained within the ScARF National Framework Iron Age report.³⁸

³⁵ Hingley 1998, 44

³⁶ Peltenburg 1982

³⁷ Harding 2004 for a modern account

³⁸ Accessible at: <https://scarf.scot/national/iron-age-panel-report/>

4. ASSOCIATED PROPERTIES

Associated properties managed by HES

- Torr a'Chaisteal dun (dun, Arran)
- Rispain Camp (defended settlement, Dumfries and Galloway) – a circular house excavated within the enclosure appears to be of similar date to Torr a'Chaisteal(s)
- Dundonald Castle (medieval castle on site of earlier fort, East Ayrshire)
- Dumbarton Castle (medieval castle on site of earlier fort, West Dunbartonshire)
- Dun Struan Beag (broch, Isle of Skye) – present-day appearances give some idea of Kilpatrick Dun when at its full original height
- Other properties on Arran, although of different periods, including Machrie Moor standing stones and Moss Farm Road stone circle, Torrylin chambered tomb and Lochranza Castle

Sites not managed by HES

- The Doon, Drumadoon, Arran (nearby hillfort, possibly earlier Iron Age)
- Kildonan Dun, dun, Kintyre, Argyll (comparable dun to Kilpatrick)
- Dun Burgidale, dun, Bute (comparable dun to Kilpatrick)
- Clettraval, North Uist, Western Isles (Iron Age wheelhouse built within ruined Neolithic chambered cairn)

5. KEYWORDS

Iron Age, Arran, Kilpatrick Dun, dun, defensive, roundhouse, enclosure, cashel, Bronze Age, cist, Medieval, post-medieval, cultivation, burial.

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Note: Footnotes throughout the text offer page numbers where appropriate. If no page number is given, this indicates that reference is being made to the general thrust of the publication cited rather than a specific point of detail.

Further Details:

NGR: NR9063926186

Canmore ID: 39637

Canmore entry: <https://canmore.org.uk/site/39637/arran-kilpatrick>

Scheduled Monument: SM90186, description accessible at <http://portal.historicenvironment.scot/designation/SM90186>

APPENDICES

APPENDIX I: TIMELINE

Neolithic (before 2000 BC)	Possible chambered cairn built on site of later dun [not proven].
Bronze Age (2000-700 BC)	Extensive settlement and cultivation of general area, with construction of roundhouses ('hut circles'), small burial cairns and field walls - more likely date for cairn on site of later dun.
(c. 1500 BC)	Cist burial below cairn of large stones on site of later dun.
Mid to late Iron Age (late BC or early AD)	Possible earlier cairn remodelled to create dun. Field system, established in the Bronze Age, probably continues to be cultivated and modified.
Early Christian period	Proposed date for 'cashel' enclosure attached to dun [no longer accepted].
Medieval / early post-medieval	So-called 'cashel' enclosure constructed of stone and earth, interior cultivated in upcast ridges - it is however possible the enclosure may be earlier than the cultivation, though it does appear to post-date the dun.
Modern 1909	John A. Balfour invited to excavate within the dun, following the discovery of a Bronze Age cist. He publishes his theory that the site represents an Early Christian monastic enclosure, known as a 'cashel'.
Mid-1970s	Afforestation proposals advanced for a large area including most of the archaeological sites.
1976	Pre-forestry survey by Edinburgh University.
1977	Dun and 'cashel' taken into State care under a Guardianship Agreement.

1978-9	Excavation of several nearby sites, including Bronze Age burial cairns, and investigation of the field system, and spaces between upstanding monuments.
Late 1970s	Planting of extensive conifer forest around the wider archaeological area, with a substantial area left unplanted to preserve archaeology.
Early 1980s	First of a succession of interpretation panels erected at the dun, plus guideposts on the approach path.
1994	Area re-scheduled (scheduled area is more extensive than the property in State care - see Figure 1).
Early 2000s	Felling of maturing forestry plantations begins.