Property in Care (PIC) ID: PIC088
Designations: Scheduled Monument (SM90186)
Taken into State care: 1969 (Guardianship)
Last reviewed: 2004

HISTORIC ENVIRONMENT SCOTLAND
STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

KILPATRICK DUN

We continually revise our Statements of Significance, so they may vary in length, format and level of detail. While every effort is made to keep them up to date, they should not be considered a definitive or final assessment of our properties.
KILPATRICK DUN

BRIEF DESCRIPTION

Until the 1970s, Kilpatrick Dun was interpreted as the remains of a cashel wall, an Irish form of Early Christian monastery, dedicated to St Brandon with outlying monastic cells. However, following survey and excavation in the 1970s, Kilpatrick is now generally accepted as comprising several phases of mainly prehistoric occupation, including an Iron Age dun situated within a later boundary or cashel, several hut-circles and an associated a field system of Bronze Age date. Although there are several elements to this site, only the dun and the cashel are presently held in Guardianship.

The dun is 16.8m in diameter and is enclosed by a wall up to 4.6m thick with at least one chamber and an entrance on the south. Despite excavations directed by J A Balfour in 1909, the dun is still poorly understood as no internal features were recorded. However, Balfour's excavation revealed a Bronze Age short-cist beneath the dun's floor level, leading to a suggestion this was the site of a burial cairn or that the cairn was later rebuilt as a dun in the Iron Age.

A later turf bank (the cashel wall), believed to be post-medieval in date, is joined to the dun and encloses an area of rig and furrow measuring about 120m from east to west by 130m (approximately 2.1 hectares), suggesting the site was re-used at a later date. The enclosure also incorporates a series of small rectangular structures on its south-east side which the bank appears to respect.

Outwith the Guardianship area, two hut circles connected by a linear bank lie to the west of the enclosure, and at least three further hut circles are situated on the east bank of the Allt a' Ghlinne burn. One of these has a forechamber, a feature of several hut circles on Arran.

Further to the east, situated on a slight rise, are the excavated remains of a multi-phase Bronze Age kerb cairn. Excavation found three cists, with a Food Vessel recovered from the central burial. Traces of field systems of both Bronze Age and later date are found throughout the scheduled area, taking the form of rig and furrow and low banks and cairns.

CHARACTER OF THE MONUMENT

Historical Overview
1909: site of dun excavated by J A Balfour, who concludes the site represents an early Christian monastery.
1976: area surveyed by Edinburgh University
1977: monument taken into Guardianship
1992: excavation of burial cairns by AOC archaeology Ltd

Archaeological Overview
The dun at Kilpatrick is unlike any other on Arran, but similar examples lie at Kildonan and Dunburgidale across the Kilbrannan Sound. As Balfour's 1909 excavation of the dun recorded no internal features, the site is still poorly understood.
understood and further excavation may be required to improve our knowledge of this monument. Similarly, no firm date has been ascertained for the cashel.

**Artistic/Architectural Overview**
The dun is of drystone construction, possessing galleried chambers within its walls. It has been suggested that it may have been built on the site of a burial cairn because of the cist found in 1909. The structure also incorporates long slabs often found in chambered cairns, and the long passage into the dun is reminiscent of their architecture.

The cashel is enclosed by a turf bank, damaged in places due to the action of cattle walking through it. Stock are no longer kept on the site.

**Social Overview**
Not known.

**Spiritual Overview**
No known current spiritual significance. The discovery of the short cist within the dun and the nearby Bronze Age round cairn attest to the beliefs and associated rituals of the prehistoric community in the area.

**Aesthetic Overview**
Kilpatrick occupies a conspicuous position, with fine views of the surrounding landscape. The site lies within an archaeologically rich landscape. Reaching the site requires some effort however, and the visitor must negotiate a rough track following the Allt a’ Ghlinne.

**What are the major gaps in understanding of the property?**

The dun was excavated without the benefit of modern scientific techniques, and our understanding of this structure is limited. There is also speculation that the dun may occupy the site of an earlier cairn, or may be a burial monument adapted in the Iron Age.

**ASSESSMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

**Key points**

Kilpatrick lies within the archaeologically rich and spectacular landscape of the Machrie Bay area, and this site offers the visitor an insight into prehistoric farming practices and underlines the long history of occupation and agriculture in the area.

Architecturally, the ‘dun’ is without comparison on Arran, and is similar to site on the other side of Kilbrannan Sound.

**Associated Properties**

**Torr a’Chaisteal, Arran; Machrie Moor (field system and hut-circles); Ugadale Point; Kiloran Bay (duns of similar type to Kilpatrick)**
Keywords  short cist; food vessel; Bronze Age; kerbed cairn; hut-circle; field system; rig and furrow; dun; cashel; galleried chamber; Early Christian; St Brandon/Brendan; J A Balfour