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The Archaeology of Finlaggan, Islay

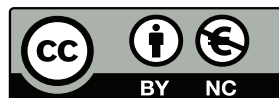
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Chapter 4

INDUSTRY AND LAND USE

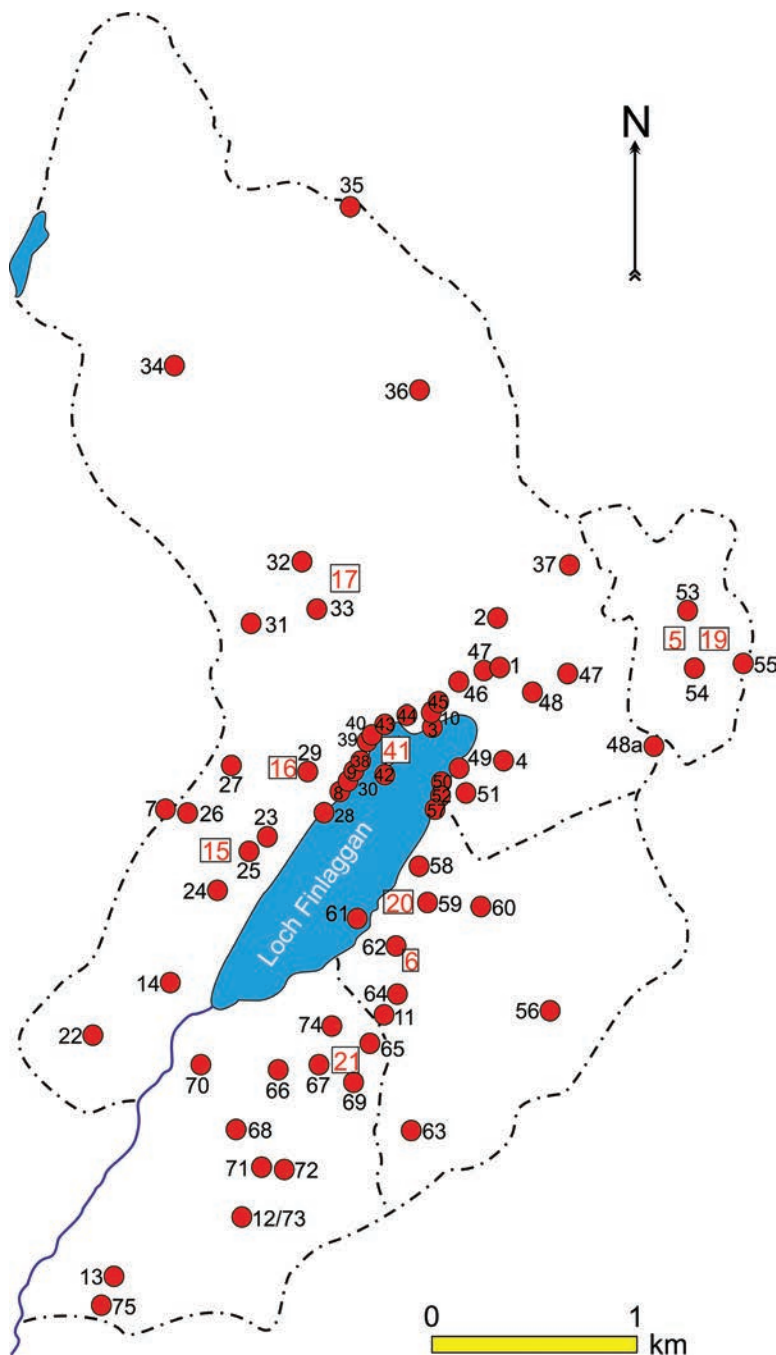


Illustration 4.1

Map showing locations of sites and monuments in the study area

Evidence for human occupation and land use in the area around Loch Finlaggan is relatively good from the medieval period onwards. Prior to that we are dealing with a palimpsest of archaeological shreds, many teased out of our programme of excavations (Illus 4.1).

Roads

Loch Finlaggan is now bypassed by the main road from Bridgend, long the administrative centre of the Islay Estate, to the ferry terminal at Port Askaig on the Sound of Islay. The loch is a back-water not visible from the road, but things were not always thus. The line of the road through Ballygrant and the farm tracks off it are of relatively recent date, clearly cutting across an earlier network of roads. The map of Islay based on the surveys of Stephen McDougall in 1749–51 shows a road from Killarow (Islay House beside Bridgend) to Port Askaig which mostly follows the higher ground to the north and west of the modern road, avoiding the boggy ground down by the River Sorn (Ramsay 1991: 68, illus 8). Its line is now partially represented by a farm road running south-west to north-east between the farm-steadings of Octovullin and Skerrols, and the road from Persabus to Heatherhouse. Between Ballimartin and Persabus much of it can be traced as a track or hollow way going through the ruined settlement at Druim a' Chùirn and up the side of Loch Finlaggan through Sean-ghairt, fording the Finlaggan Burn next to Cnoc Seannda. It can then be traced to the north of the farm road to Finlaggan, heading east through Mulreesh to ford the Allt an Tairbh and continue through the ruined township of Laoigan and up to Persabus.

Another road is shown looping south from this one going from Eorrabus to Persabus via Ballygrant, more or less following the line of the modern road. It may be represented by a hollow way on the higher ground parallel to the present road but to the east of Woodend farm-steading.

A key date in the development of the modern route appears to have been 1753, when the Islay Stent Committee decided that the Killarow–Port Askaig road should go via Ballygrant (Ramsay 1890: 45). The village of Ballygrant is a development of the 19th century but there was a mill from at least 1686, a change house (inn), first recorded in 1741, and lead mining activity from at least the late 17th century (Smith 1895: 515, 557; McKay 1980: 106). All this no doubt helped make this seem a better route than the other via Loch Finlaggan, which only passed through some joint tenancy farms. But we must suppose that the Finlaggan route was at one time the main one since it passed by the historic centre of the Lordship of the Isles.

FINLAGGAN

Another early route traceable as a hollow way runs to the west of the village of Ballygrant through the Ballygrant Plantation to the ruins of the old settlement of Robolls, and then curves around the shoulder of Robolls Hill heading in the direction of Finlaggan. It stops dead where it is cut by a turf dyke at NGR NR 3939 6766, marking the mid-18th-century boundary between Portanellan and Robolls.

Plans of the farm of Mulreesh produced by the surveyor William Gemmill in the 1820s or 1830s (Illus 4.23), along with the 1st edition of the Ordnance Survey map of 1878, show a winding track running from Mulreesh through the old settlement at Cùl a' Bhaile north-westwards in the direction of Cachlaidh Chreagach. Another heads this way from Finlaggan farm-steading and Buaile Mhic Iante. The farm road from Mulreesh to Balulive appears to follow the line of an earlier road. The present road to the Kepollsmore farmhouse runs to the east of an earlier route.



Illustration 4.2

Finlaggan Farm, with ruined steading in the foreground

Improved farms and recent buildings

Finlaggan not only has a steading (no. 1) next to its farmhouse but another complex with house, sheepfold and milking parlour a few metres away at Buaile Mhic Iante (no. 2). Sean-ghairt, Mulreesh and Robolls never developed into single-tenancy improved farms. A substantial two-storey house was erected at Robolls in the mid-19th century and is now the core of the Ballygrant Inn (see also no. 56). There is a derelict 19th-century farm-steading and house at Kepolls (see also no. 75) and a 19th-century farmhouse, farm buildings and sheepfold at Kepollsmore (no. 72). The Kepollsmore farmhouse is apparently a remodelling of one of the houses occupied by one of the joint tenants before the farm became a single tenancy in the early 20th century.

There are few other modern or occupied buildings in the survey area. They include:

- Sean-ghairt, NGR NR 373 665, ruined farm labourer's cottage
- Finlaggan Visitor Centre, NGR NR 391 684, ruined 19th-century cottage restored in the 1980s; see also no. 46
- Robolls, NGR NR 401 673, 20th-century cottage
- Robolls, NGR NR 401 672, 20th-century cottage
- Robolls, Robolls Croft, NGR NR 398 671, a holiday home built in 2003
- Robolls, Kilmeny School (latterly village hall) and teacher's House of the late 19th century, NGR NR 392 661, both now derelict
- Kepolls, NGR NR 373 653, restored 19th-century cottage; see also no 75.

1. FINLAGGAN FARM-STEADING (NGR NR 393 685)

Portanellan was renamed Finlaggan in 1868, five years after it became a single-tenancy farm. A ledger in the Islay Estate papers records the provision of slates, sills, lintels and flags (including

some for stalls) to William Morris (a builder?) at Portanellan in 1863 and 1864 (Mitchell Library: TD 13338/2/6/10, pp 26–27, 189), indicating that the farm-steading dates to this time. The steading, in ruins, is a surprisingly small rectangular structure with walls of locally quarried stone, about 23.5 by 27.5m overall. The entrance in the middle of the south wall is broad enough to admit carts and wagons, and gives on to a small, cobbled courtyard surrounded on all four sides by ranges of buildings. Attached the length of the north exterior wall are the ruins of a 20th-century concrete milking parlour.

After several years of dereliction, the adjacent farmhouse was substantially remodelled in the 1990s as a holiday home. It is a two-storey house which probably also dates to 1863–64 (Illus 4.2).

2. BUAILE MHIC IANTE, FINLAGGAN FARM (NGR NR 393 688) About 250m to the north of the Finlaggan farm-steading are the ruins of Buaile Mhic Iante, including a milking parlour, sheepfold and cottage (Illus 4.3, 4.4). The rubble walls of the milking parlour stand complete. It is a long rectangular structure 28.4 by 6m overall, with a small wing at one end, still containing several rusty and broken milk churns, trapped under a collapsed slate roof. It may also date to 1863–64. The sheepfold, about 20 by 38m, is subdivided into six pens, the largest consisting of about two thirds of the enclosure. Built out from one end of it in concrete are the remains of a sheep-dip. A mass of collapsed and overgrown rubble at the south-west corner may be the remains of a cottage. It and the sheepfold are both represented on the 1878 Ordnance Survey map, but the sheepfold would appear to have been remodelled since then.

Another, badly dilapidated, cottage, still with a roof of local slates and brick chimneys in place, stands to the north-east. It post-dates the 1897 Ordnance Survey map and was probably built in the early 20th century as a replacement for the earlier cottage by the sheepfold. It was known as Lochview Cottage. It has sash windows and 15 amp electrical sockets. Inside the front door is a small lobby

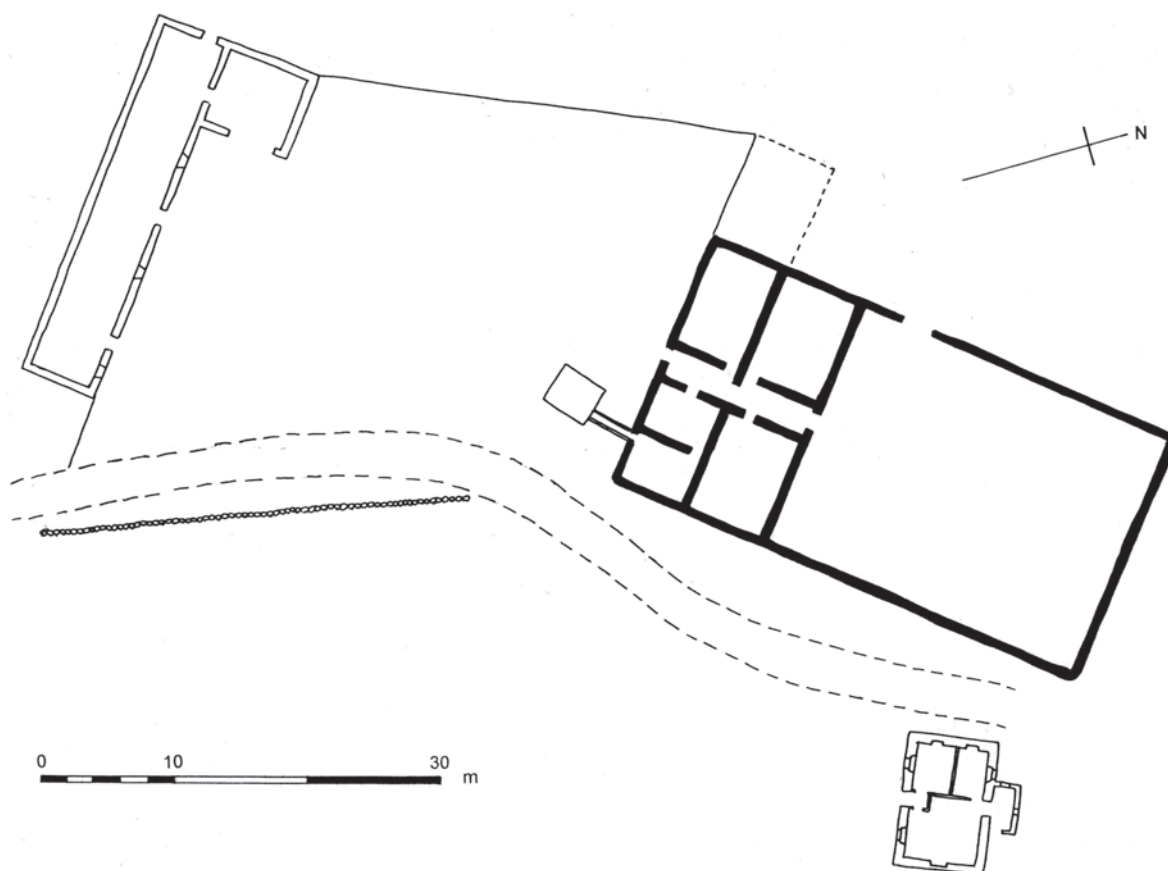


Illustration 4.3
Plan of Buaille Mhic lante



Illustration 4.4
Buaille Mhic lante from south with, left to right, the milking parlour, sheepfold and cottage

giving access to a cement-floored kitchen taking up the east half of the building. It has the remains of an iron range in the fireplace in the gable wall, shelf supports on its north wall, a hook for a lamp and a trapdoor into the roof space in its ceiling. The west half is subdivided into two smaller rooms, both with fireplaces and timber floors. An outshot containing a sink masks the back door.

Behind this cottage is an area of debris, stones and defunct farm equipment overgrown with nettles and gorse. It is possible that this masks the ruins of earlier houses ('Buall-vhic'), recorded as being occupied at the time of the 1861 census.

Lead mining

Michael Cressey

This section concentrates on the results of archaeological field survey of abandoned mine sites in and on the edge of the Finlaggan catchment. In most cases the evidence that survives on the ground is difficult to date, especially since it is clear that we are dealing with multi-period sites. Evidence of early prospecting has been identified, mostly in the region of later activity at four mines identified here as the West Shore, Portanellan, Mulreesh and Robolls Mine. For other early prospecting on the farm of Kepollsmore see no. 66 below.

A fifth mine, represented by a rubbish-filled tunnel or adit, is at NGR NR 371 664. This is presumably the level reported in 1770 to have been started at Sean-ghairt, a mine then proving too difficult to work (Smith 1895: 459; Callender & Macaulay 1984: 31). This level does not drain into Loch Finlaggan, and its entrance is on the farm of Ballimartin, outside our study area.

Mining activity is represented by the following features and structures:

1. Trials, or open-cast works: trenches excavated along surface or shallow veins of ore.
2. Adits, drifts, levels: tunnels driven horizontally. Adits were used to drain off water. Other tunnels were for working ore.
3. Bell-pits, or shafts, sunk vertically. Galleries were dug from the bottom, following the veins of ore. Most shafts have been backfilled and are often recognisable as circular depressions surrounded by heaps of grassed-over waste material.
4. Spoil-heaps of debris, including tailings: crushed rock, the residu left after the ore has been extracted.
5. Industrial buildings and structures.

3. WEST SHORE MINE, PORTANELLAN (NGR NR 390 683)

At the head of Loch Finlaggan on the lands of Portanellan Farm are mine workings, christened 'West Shore' in this report to distinguish them from other workings (Illus 4.5; see no. 44 below for key to the illus). Situated on a geological boundary between phyllite and limestone are two shafts with surrounding spoil up to approximately 1.5m high. The more northerly of the two shafts is on the edge of higher ground forming a level area adjacent to the mound of Cnoc Seannnda. The other shaft is close to the loch and has slightly more elongated sides. A trial has been cut into the side of the shore forming a small basin with quite pronounced internal

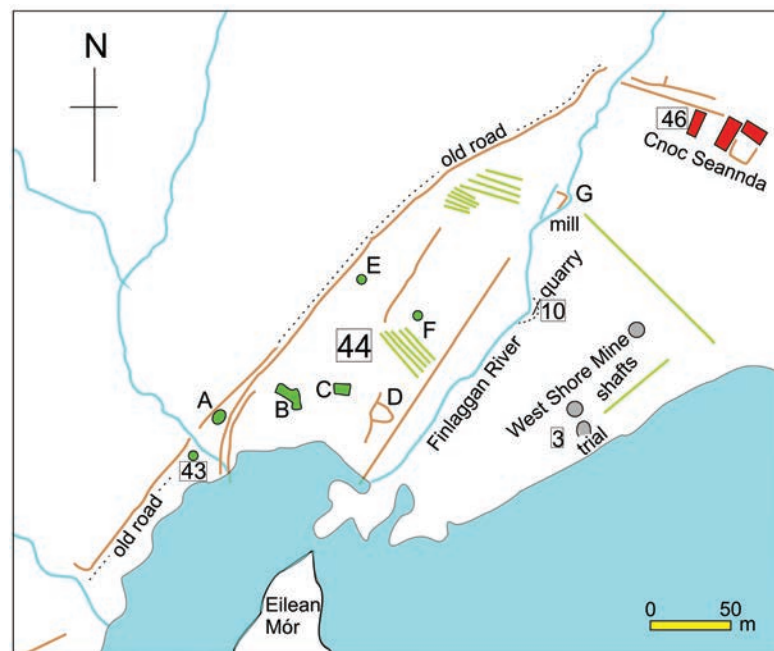


Illustration 4.5

Map of sites and monuments between Eilean Mór and Cnoc Seannnda, based on a survey by the Royal Commission on the Historic Monuments of England on behalf of the Time Team, 1994

slopes. The two shafts were possibly joined by a gallery, allowing the exploitation of a pipe-vein of galena. This mine does not appear to have developed beyond these two shafts and the trial.

An iron hoop (SF 30206), possibly from a kibble (hoisting bucket), was recovered from the loch adjacent to the trial, and the substantial remains of a barrel or kibble (see W34: Illus C6.7 in the Catalogue) was found in 1990 lodged in the sediment in the loch adjacent to the bridge to Eilean Mór. It very probably also came from the West Shore mining activities.

A document of 1770, concerning damage on the farm of Portanellan caused by the mining activities of Charles Freebairn, distinguishes damage in 'the Winterton', that is, in the area of land around the main settlement kept as arable ground. It is possible that these are the workings in question (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/3/4/1, Petition of Comprisement of Damages).

4. PORTANELLAN MINE (NGR NR 391 678)

These mine workings lie on a gentle slope adjacent to the north-east shore of Loch Finlaggan. They are probably the cause of a compensation claim by the tacksman of Portanellan in 1770 for damage within 'the Meadow' (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/3/4/1, Petition of Comprisement of Damages). The vein that was worked here was discovered about 1745 along with another at Ballygrant (Smith 1895: 458). When reporting on the state of the Islay mines in 1770, Mr Alexander Shirriff, considering the possibility of linking the mine with nearby Mulreesh, wrote:

Portnealon vein is discovered at the surface in different places with some ore in it for trying of the vain. A cross cut is driving from Portnealon Loch advanced in open cast 24 fathoms [1 fathom = 6ft, about 1.83m] and close drift 22

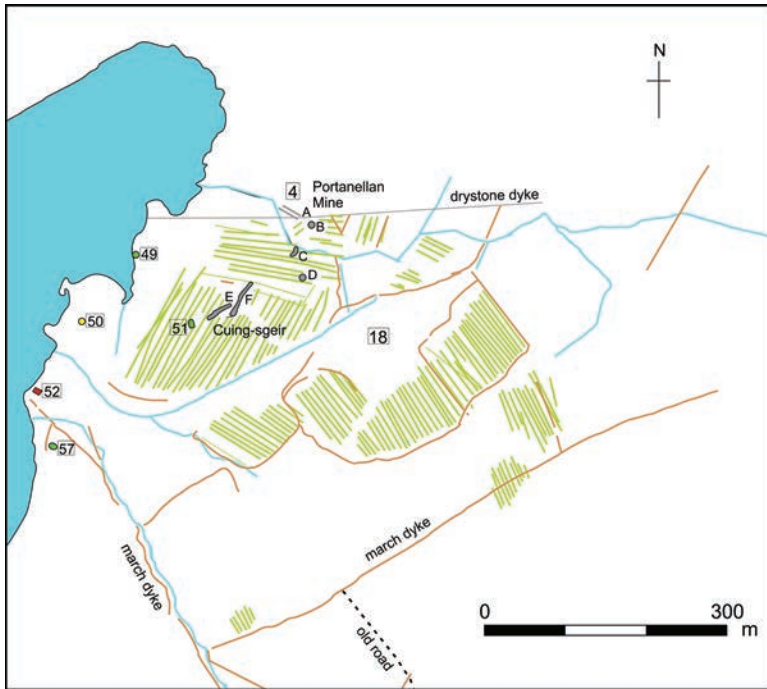


Illustration 4.6

Map of field systems and mine workings at Cuing-sgeir, based on a survey by RCAHMS, 1993

fathoms will cutt the vain in drawing 5 fathoms . . . If on driving north on this vain it be found to carry ore, it will serve as a level to Mulrees works to which it points. The distance may be 400 fathoms and will, when at the Mulrees works, be 12 fathoms under the old soles [old worked-out areas]. (Smith 1895: 459)

The description accords well with the surface evidence obtained from survey of the earthworks. The suggestion that Portanellan might be linked with Mulreesh, given the distance between the mines, appears ambitious, but field survey does hint it was attempted and possibly achieved.

Illus 4.6 shows a water-filled adit (A) with denuded banks up to 1m high, bisected by a drystone wall that forms the boundary between the present-day farms of Finlaggan and Kepollsmore. A shaft (B) with surrounding spoil up to 2.5m is situated 20m to the south-east. A series of trials (C) have a depth of about 1m, and each is surrounded by spoil which is 1 to 2m high in places. To the south of shaft (B), there is a second shaft (D) which has internal banks 2m deep with surrounding spoil to a height of 2m. To the south-west of these workings a natural limestone outcrop is flanked by two deep trials (E-F) that traverse upslope for about 47m. All the features mentioned lie over or cut through the remains of the rig and furrow of the old farm of Quinskirn (no. 18), last listed in a rental of 1722. This land may, of course, have been farmed long after this date as part of the farm of Portanellan.

In the fields to the north-east of these workings, extending for about 400m as far as the Finlaggan Farm road, are patches of mine tailings, and by the side of the road at NGR NR 3955 6844

there is a mine shaft (or quarry?), diameter 11.5m. It might relate to Alexander Shirriff's proposal to connect the Portanellan workings with those at Mulreesh.

5. MULREESH MINE (NGR NR 401 687)

Freebairn was undertaking extensive mining work at Mulreesh by 1770 (Smith 1895: 458–59, 463) and Messrs Hodgson, Smyth and Hawkins were apparently working here in 1786–90 (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/1/6/1). Mulreesh was the centre of operations for the Islay Lead Mining Company from its inception in 1862 until the last year of production in 1896. It was the most mechanised mine, and certainly the last to be worked in the study area (Illus 4.7). The Company had a steam-driven Cornish beam engine shipped to the island in 1873. This was for pumping water

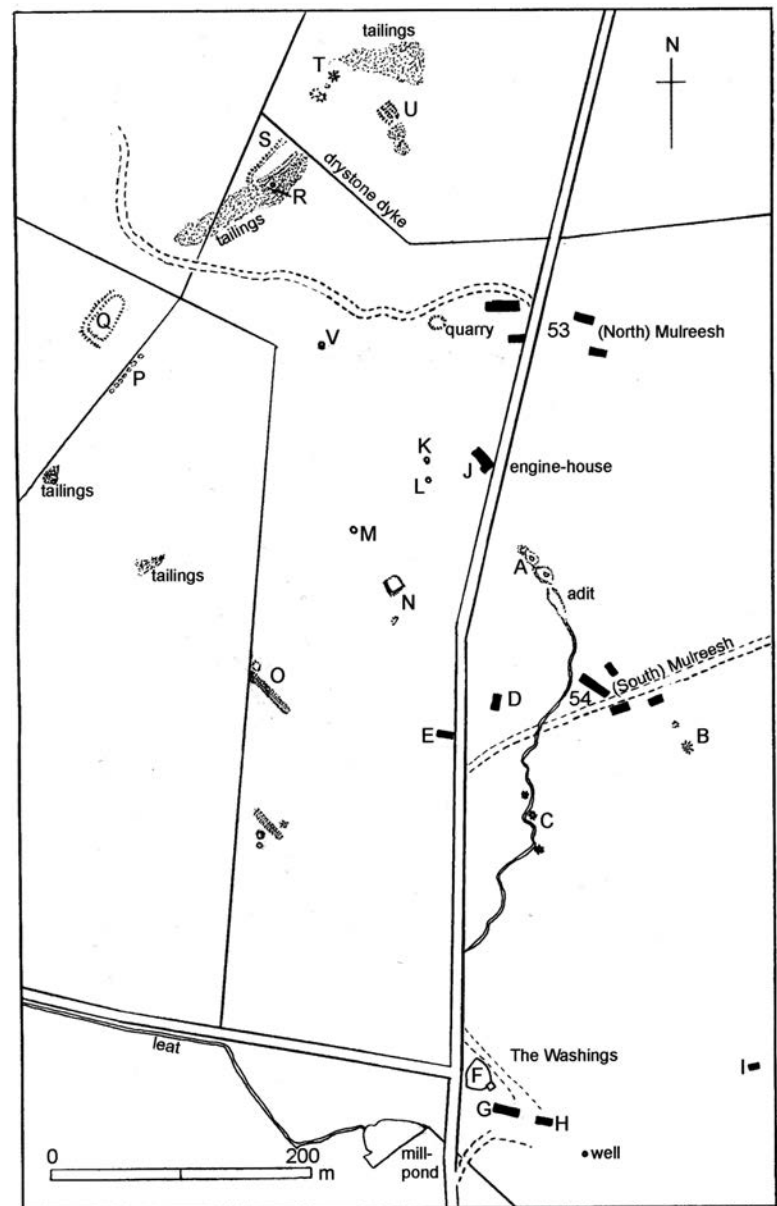


Illustration 4.7

Map of sites and monuments at Mulreesh, based on work by Michael Cressey

from the mine shafts and for raising ore (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/1/6/3, 9, 14).

A north-west-trending vein of calcite and dolomite with galena, sphallerite, pyrite and chalcopryrite was worked in the 18th and 19th centuries. In 1770 a 64ft (24m) long shoot had been worked to a depth of 132ft (50m). It ranged up to 4ft (1.52m) wide and the sole of the level was 10 in to 2ft wide (c 25.5–70cm). The mine was later sunk to a depth of 300ft (114m) and worked by four levels which were 60ft (22.8m) apart (Smith 1895: 458–59).

That the search for lead ore at Mulreesh may be of some antiquity is suggested by some trials or open casts. There are two (O) by the fence that replaced the earlier march dyke with Portanellan at this point. One of them is 40m in length, 1.2m in depth and up to 5m wide, following the edge of a Palaeogene dyke. There is a shaft adjacent to it, backfilled with tailings. The other trial runs parallel to the first but about 100m to the south. It is about 30m in length, 1.7m wide and 1m deep. This trial is represented on an early 19th-century plan of Mulreesh, off a proposed new road near the march with Portanellan. Nearby are two backfilled shafts and a small heap of tailings. Further north, between the 'north shaft' (R) and a drystone boundary wall, there is another large open cast (S). A fourth trial at Sloc an Fhamhair (Gaelic, 'the giant's pit'), NGR NR 4034 6826, is just outside the survey area on the farm of Auchnaclach. Perhaps the name is suggestive of mining activity.

The shafts adjacent to the trials (O) may represent a later phase in the mining operations at Mulreesh. There are several others, including a series situated below the 80m contour in an area to the south of the main 19th-century workings. They are depicted on the early 19th-century plan of Mulreesh. There are three adjoining rubbish-filled shafts (A) on high ground just to the north-west of the settlement of South Mulreesh (see below, no. 54). A water-filled adit drains south, eventually to join a nearby burn. There is another small trial pit and shaft (B) on the same alignment as the others, a few metres to the south-east of the houses of South Mulreesh.

Another series of three shafts (C) are positioned along the edge of an outcrop of limestone to the south of South Mulreesh, at NGR NR 40222 68398, NR 40243 68425 and NR 40260 68486. There is a row of seven pits or shafts (P) aligned south-west/north-east to the south-east of the catch basin (Q). They are all filled to the surface with farm refuse, but their original diameter was established as 3m. More mine tailings can be observed to the south and south-east of these pits.

To the north, beyond a drystone wall, running in a south-west/north-east direction, is an escarpment with five small pits and a backfilled shaft. Another large tailings dump can be seen to the north of the pits. Cut into the escarpment is an adit (U) with a rubbish-filled entrance. Two large banks approximately 1.5m high lead away from the adit to an area of large boulders. The course of this adit was established as north by north-east along gently sloping ground littered with mine spoil.

The most recent, late 19th-century, mining activity at Mulreesh is represented by a series of buildings, open or only partially filled-in shafts, and other features.

Many of the names and identifications of buildings in the following account are derived from Callender & Macaulay (1984: 26–28). They had interviewed Alastair MacEachern, a former resident of Mulreesh, who had 'retained a collection of stories relating

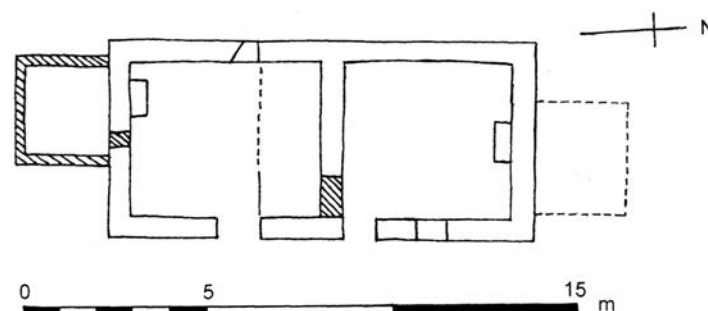


Illustration 4.8
Plan of 'the smiddy', Mulreesh

to mining which had been told to him by a grandmother'. Some information on the shafts is derived from a drawing by H M Vercoe, the mine manager, in 1874, preserved in the Islay Estate Office.

At NGR NR 401 685 stand the ruins of a building marked on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map as a smithy (D). It is assumed to have been directly related to mining activity. Its walls, of lime-mortared quarried stones, are almost complete but roofless, and it is divided into two rooms that originally interconnected (Illus 4.8, 4.9). Both have fireplaces added against the gable walls and the ruins of outshots. In its present form the building appears to be a pair of semi-detached cottages occupied well into the 20th century. A blocked vertical slot in one gable may relate to its previous use as a smiddy. A few metres to the north-east are the circular stone remains of a well.

A few metres to the west of the smiddy, end on to the present-day road to Balulive, are the ruins of a building identified as 'The Miners' Dry' (E), where working clothes and tools were kept (Callender & Macaulay 1984: 27). It is cut into a slope and has two small detached outhouses and a garden enclosed by an earth dyke (Illus 4.10). The house is constructed of quarried stones held in lime mortar. There is limited use of bricks around openings, some at least marked GILCHRIST & GOLDIE / OLD



Illustration 4.9
'The smiddy', Mulreesh, with remains of a well in the foreground

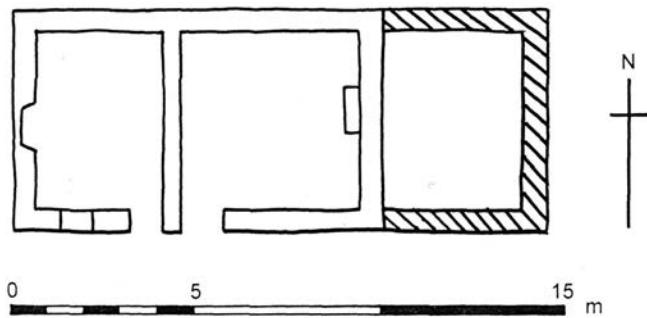


Illustration 4.10
Plan of 'the miners' dry', Mulreesh

LANGSIDE ROAD / 18 GLASGOW 73. The '1873' indicates that they were manufactured in that year. This building, or a predecessor, is, however, represented on the early 19th-century plans of Mulreesh. An aerial photograph of 1947 indicates that some of its roof was still then in place. It has two rooms, both entered separately from adjacent doors in the middle of the south wall. The western room is the smaller of the two, but there is evidence for a window in the south wall and a fireplace in the west gable. There is a low platform against the east gable in the eastern room, presumably for a stove or fire. A substantial extension has been added to the east gable.

On higher ground to the north of the smiddy and miners' dry is a ruined engine-house (J), built of quarried blocks of dolerite, presumably in 1872–73. There are now no traces of the boiler-house and chimney which must have been adjacent to it. It is joined to the gable end of three derelict semi-detached cottages, all shown on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey map, along with a saw pit immediately to the south-west (Illus 4.11, 4.12). Each house has an outshot or substantial porch protecting the door giving access to the main room with a cement floor and a fireplace fitted with a cast-iron cooking range. A smaller bedroom with its own fireplace and sprung-timber floor is separated by a wall of timber boards. One of the cottages was occupied as recently as the



Illustration 4.12
The engine-house and cottages, Mulreesh

early 1970s, and in 2004 there was still much evidence of furniture and fittings, including the ranges, sash windows, wooden shelves, an electricity supply in one, linoleum on a bedroom floor, and the remnants of bedsteads with open-work metal headboards. There is an outhouse against the gable wall of the cottage furthest from the engine-house. The engine-house and attached cottages were demolished in 2021 to make way for a new house.

Beyond the engine-house there is a large tract of land pock-marked with innumerable backfilled mine workings and a few fenced-off shafts, including four (L, K, V and R) identified by Vercoe, the mine manager, in 1874. The 'ladder shaft' (L) close to the engine-house is lined with dressed stone and has a depth of about 40m. The 'engine shaft' (K) and 'drawing shaft' (V) are also fenced off and are too dangerous to investigate. The 'north shaft' (R) is now flooded completely, but the remains of what appears to be winding gear and timbers survive at its head. Around it are large quantities of tailings, only partially grassed over. They mostly consist of an assortment of small, angular, sharply broken rocks. These are fresher looking than those elsewhere at Mulreesh and Portanellan. The largest dump of tailings was adjacent to the engine-house but was removed in the late 20th century for road building.

Situated to the south-west of the north shaft (R) is a large sub-rectangular feature with banks that are in places up to 2m high, containing standing water at its north end (Q). The feature is tentatively identified as a catch basin for holding water and may have been supplied by a series of wooden troughs from the north shaft. The remains of a small wall adjacent to the north shaft may be all that remains of a plinth to support a pump for draining water.

A fenced-off shaft (M) of unknown date lies to the south-west of the open-cast and does not relate to those shown

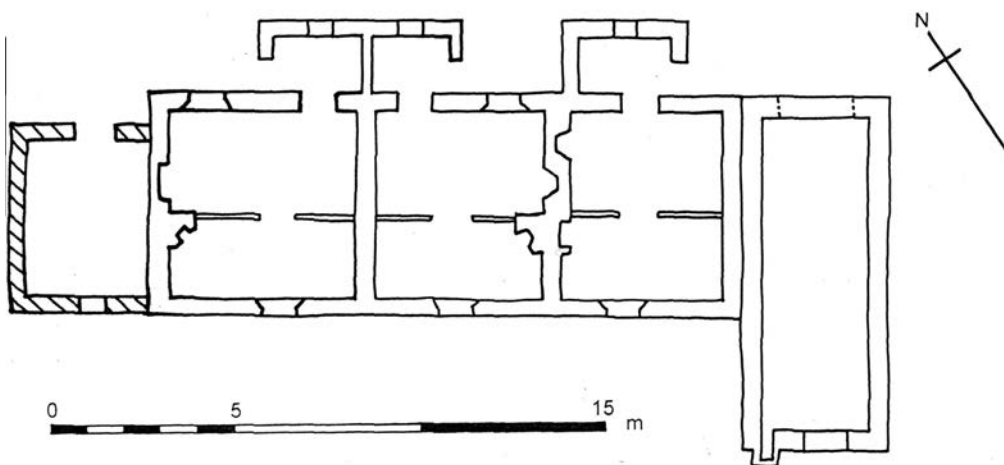


Illustration 4.11
Plan of the engine-house and adjacent houses, Mulreesh

FINLAGGAN

on Vercoe's plan. It may be somewhat earlier than 1874. South-east of this shaft is a rectangular feature comprising a shallow scoop with denuded banks (N). It is possible that this is the blocked entrance to the 'day level' shown on Vercoe's plan. A few metres to the south of it is a pit filled with rubbish associated with the last period of occupation of the cottages adjoining the engine-house.

Approximately 250m to the south of the engine-house are 'the washings' where ore was crushed and washed. Water for these operations was supplied by a leat that traversed the moor for a distance of approximately 3km from Loch Airigh nan Caisteal, artificially dammed to control a regular supply of water. The estimate of its length as 6 miles, given at the 1872 share-holders' meeting, was presumably just an exaggeration (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/1/6/9). It, and the mill it fed, may date to the 1860s. The leat can still be traced running along the south verge of the Finlaggan Farm road, and the 1878 Ordnance Survey map shows it crossing under the road to Mulreesh to power a mill. This leat or water course was the cause of much concern to the farmers of Finlaggan and Balulive in the years from 1871 to 1879. Both claimed compensation for damage caused by water leaking from it (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/1/6/8).

Some of the water from the leat could be diverted into a millpond, now largely drained, in the corner to the south-west of the junction of the Finlaggan and Mulreesh roads. It is likely that water was passed back into this pond for recycling once it had passed over the millwheel. Sometime after 1878 a triangular-shaped reservoir (F), with internal sides about 20m long, was constructed opposite the junction with the Finlaggan road. It is partially terraced into the slope and contained by rubble-built walls some 1.5m thick, coated in the interior with a mortar lining (Illus 4.13, 4.14). The walls have been breached quite recently and substantial amounts of stone have been robbed for track repair. At the east end a substantial stone pier houses an iron pipe (Illus 4.13, C) which may have been for feeding water for operating the mill. On the slope below its mouth are two toppled concrete blocks, each about 1 by 2m.

The 1878 Ordnance Survey map shows a substantial building (G) that may be identified as a watermill. There is little

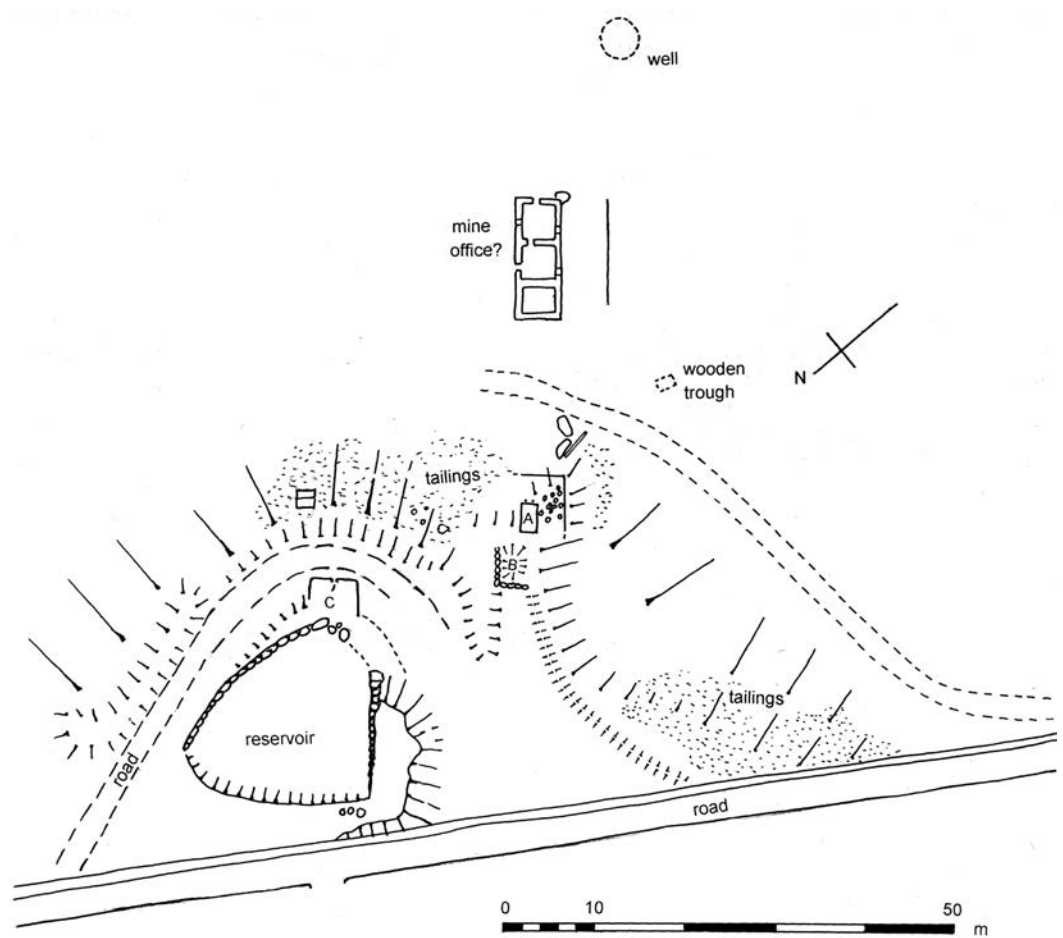


Illustration 4.13
Map of the washings at Mulreesh



Illustration 4.14
The reservoir for storing water, at the washings, Mulreesh

trace of it on the ground today. A wheel-pit (Illus 4.13, B), approximately 2m long and 1m wide, lined with roughly dressed rubble, is situated at the north-west end of a broken and tumbled concrete gangway or bridge (Illus 4.13, A), set with stout metal rods for supporting a water pipe or trough. A wooden beam, some 4.8m long, may have had something to do with the trip hammer or stamp assumed to have been operated by the mill for crushing the ore. The crushed ore would then have been washed to separate the lead from the rock. Nearby are the remains of a wooden trough buried by fine tailings, probably one of the washing troughs. In May 2001 a lump of slag was picked up from the site, evidence that at least some of the lead was smelted here before being shipped off the island.

A ruinous building (H) to the east of the mill is described as the mine office (Callender & Macaulay 1984: 26). It is rectangular, about 14m long by 5m wide, and was subdivided into three rooms. Its walls are of quarried limestone blocks with bricks around the window openings. A large buttress has been applied to its south-east corner to help stabilise it. There is a filled-in well a few metres to the south-east. Building H was occupied as a house into the mid-20th century, being known as Tòn Riabhach (Gaelic, 'brindled bottom').

At NGR NR 4034 68268, well away from the other buildings, is a ruin (I) identified by Callender & Macaulay (1984: 27) as a store for gunpowder. It is rectangular, with a length of 8.42m and a width of 4.04m. It has a rectangular projection at one end, giving it an L-shaped plan. Its walls, mostly of quarried limestone blocks set in lime mortar, stand to a maximum of four courses.

A rock surface on the west side of the road from Ballygrant to Mulreesh, before the turn-off for Finlaggan, should also be noted. It is covered with initials, now mostly much worn, said to be those of the last miners at Mulreesh, and carved by them prior to their departure from the mine. This was pointed out to us by a local, Ara Fletcher, who got the information from his father.

6. ROBOLLS MINE (NGR NR 388 671)

These workings (Illus 4.15) are to the south-east of Loch Finlaggan on sloping ground about 60m from the eastern shoreline in an area covered with the remains of early agricultural activity, identified by us as belonging to the lost farm of Robolls Tannach, of which more below (no. 20). The only documentation for working here appears to be a list of payments, dated 15 May 1878, owed by the Islay Lead Mining Company for damage caused by their activities. It includes an entry for 'surface damage at Robolls to date' (Mitchell Library: TD 1338/1/6/8). It is probable, however, that these workings include some of 18th-century and earlier date, although all mention of them is missing from contemporary records.

The mine workings are all in a strip of land bounded by two parallel turf dykes, about 187m apart, running in a south-easterly direction from the loch shore (Illus 4.24, 4.25). A trial (A in Illus 4.15) trending east-west has within its interior three shafts now full of refuse that masks their true depth. Mine spoil is evident both outside and within these features, and a large spoil tip (B) is situated 5m north of these shafts. Five other open-cast workings (C–G) are in the immediate vicinity. Two (E and F) are dug along the edge of a Palaeogene dyke. A large shaft (H), now backfilled but surrounded by spoil-heaps, has been dug into one of the other trials (D), where it butts on to the Palaeogene dyke.

The ruins of a building (I), on the edge of an escarpment overlooking the loch, are identified on the 1st edition Ordnance Survey

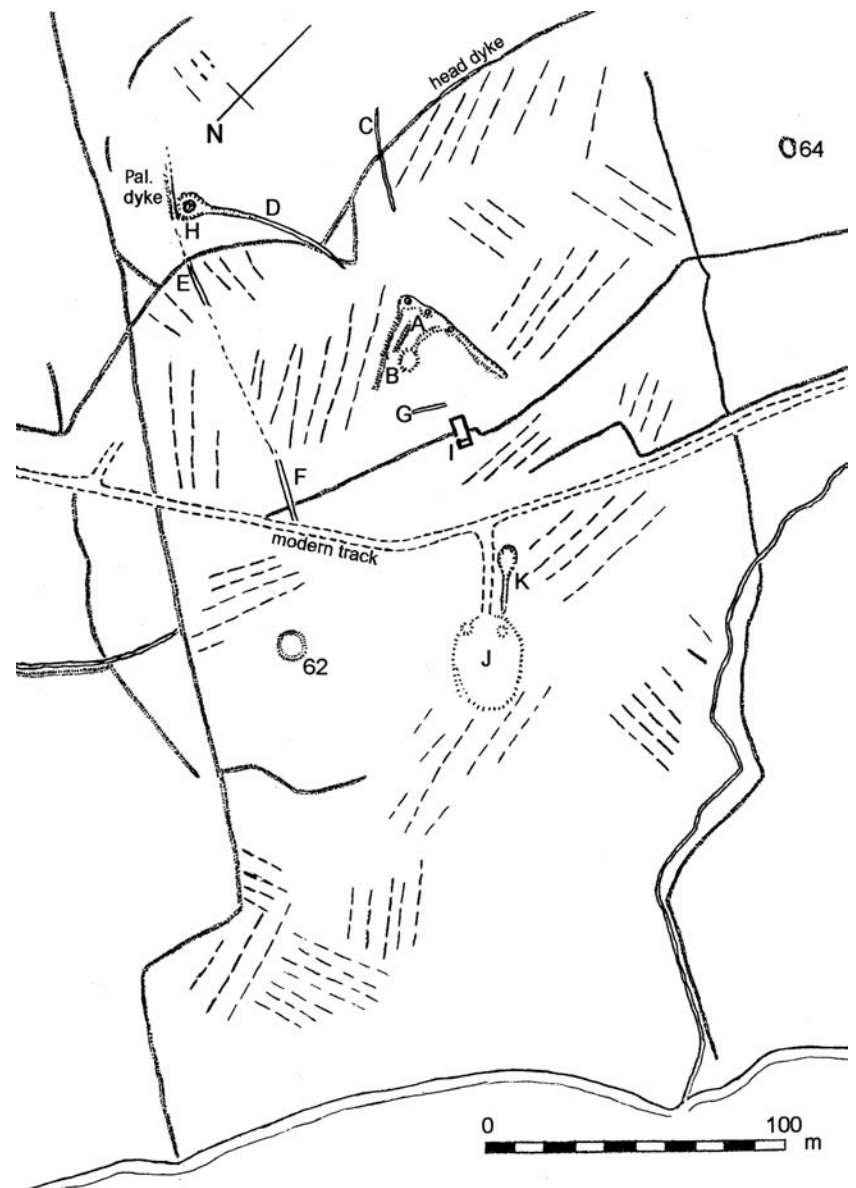


Illustration 4.15
Map of the Robolls mine workings, based on survey by RCAHMS, 1993



Illustration 4.16
Building I (the smithy) at Robolls

FINLAGGAN

map as a smithy (Illus 4.16). The building is rectangular with two rooms, and is built of quarried stone, mostly limestone with some dolerite, still standing one to two courses high, without any traces of mortar. It may have nothing to do with the mining.

Beyond building (I) to the west is a T-junction formed by recent farm tracks, with one running north-west into a flat area (J) that is poor in surface vegetation, with mine spoil covering an area 30m². A denuded spoil tip consisting of small blocks of phyllite suggests deliberate sorting of mine waste and perhaps points to the area's use as a dressing floor. At the junction of the tracks is the entrance to an adit (K). It is now filled with refuse and flooded to a depth of about 2m, and is drained by a substantial ditch leading from it alongside the track to the dressing floor.

Callender & Macaulay (1984: 30) were able to enter this level and described how about 80m in it opens out into a large chamber with a tunnel going off to the right (south). The photograph they publish of this (their pl X) shows rails and other debris.

An early date appears likely for the open-cast features, as they would generally be expected to precede the technically more advanced mining methods represented by the shafts and adit, the latter possibly all dating to the late 19th century, when it is known that the Islay Lead Mining Company was working at Robolls (see above). Two of the open-cast trials (C, D) are crossed by the head dyke partitioning a complex of rigs from rough grazing. Although it is no more possible to date the head dyke closely than the trials, a 17th-century date might appear likely for the former. Three distinct phases of mining may well be separated by periods of agricultural activity. The first phase is represented by the trials (C, D) crossed by the head dyke; the second phase includes at least some of the other trials, now confined to a mining concession partitioned off by dykes; and the third phase consists of the shafts, adit and smithy.

Quarries and peat cuttings

Throughout the study area there are rock exposures which show signs of having been nibbled away for building stone. None of these quarries are of any significant size.

7. QUARRIES, SEAN-GHAIRT (NGR NR 377 678)

A Palaeogene dyke 9m wide running north-west to south-east midway between North and South Sean-ghairt has clearly cut quarried steps and is presumably the main source of dolerite used at Sean-ghairt. Two small quarries, mostly covered with turf, between this dyke and South Sean-ghairt could have been the source for dolomitic sandstone. There is a quarried area above building Q (Illus 5.5) that is less clearly defined than the others and is the likely source for the quartzite used, while dolostone could have been got from the low cliffs on the southern edge of the southern cluster.

8. CLAY PIT, SEAN-GHAIRT (NGR NR 385 6800)

To the north-east of North Sean-ghairt there is an area of boulder clay, extensively pitted for clay extraction. The late farmer Mathew MacMillan thought that at least a little of this may have been done 'recently' for road improvements.

9. CLAY PIT, PORTANELLAN (NGR NR 386 680)

A rectangular cut in the steep bank of the loch, which may be a clay pit rather than a house platform.

10. QUARRY, PORTANELLAN (NGR NR 390 683)

Near the shore of Loch Finlaggan, beside the Finlaggan Burn, is a small limestone quarry that could have been the source of some of the stone used in the medieval buildings on Eilean Mór.

11. PEAT CUTTINGS, ROBOLLS (NGR NR 388 667)

These are in a small valley extending north-eastwards from Dùn Cheapasaidh Mór.

12. QUARRY, KEPOLLSMORE (NGR NR 382 659)

A dyke has also been quarried next to the old road to Kepollsmore at the alleged site of a burial ground (no. 73).

13. QUARRY, KEPOLLS (NGR NR 375 655)

A disused quarry is marked on Ordnance Survey maps to the west of the Kepolls farm-steading. There is evidence here for the quarrying of phyllite and a dyke.

Field systems and fences

The area of the old farms in the study area is listed in Scots acres in a 'View of Contents of the Baroney and Estate of Islay' (Ramsay

Farms	Land Use	Scots acres	Roods	Poles	Acres	Hectares
Sean-ghairt	Arable	122				
	Green pasture	54				
	Heathy pasture	107				
	Total:	283			359.41	145.51
Portanellan	Arable	200	1	12		
	Green pasture	59				
	Heathy pasture	680	2	12		
	Total:	939	3	24	1193.55	483.22
Mulreesh	Arable	65	2	16		
	Green pasture	61	1			
	Heathy pasture	0				
	Total:	126	3	16	161.04	65.2
Robolls	Arable	172	2	16		
	Green pasture	121				
	Heathy pasture	100				
	Total:	393	2	16	499.87	202.38
Kepollsmore	Arable	240	2			
	Green pasture	38				
	Heathy pasture	62				
	Total:	340	2		432.44	175.08

Table 4.1

Areas of the farms in the study area, after Stephen MacDougall, mid-18th century

INDUSTRY AND LAND USE

1991: 63–67), thought to have been drawn up by Stephen MacDougall in the mid-18th century. They are given here in Table 4.1 with approximate equivalents in acres (imperial) and hectares (metric) computed by the writer.

The total area for the whole estate (almost all of Islay) is given as 110,787 Scots acres, and the 171 farms vary in size from 4,695 to 40 Scots acres. The 1741 rental (Ramsay 1991: 37–44) gives the extent (valuation) and rent of two of the farms in our survey area:

- Portanellan: 5 lewres (£2 1s 8d); rent £25 10s 1d
- Kepollsmore: 1 quarter and 1 eighth (£2 10s); rent £19 2s.

The ratio of rent to extent of these two farms seems to compare favourably with others listed in the 1741 rental, suggesting that they were good properties. Sean-ghairt and Robolls were quarter lands, that is, each with an extent of £1 13s 4d. The former was held by a tacksman with two other farms, the overall rental suggesting that it did not provide much of a return. Robolls was wadset to Ronald Campbell of Ballachlaven and it is impossible to gauge its worth.

The threefold division of land into arable, green pasture and heathy pasture in the 18th-century ‘Contents of Islay’ is axiomatic of the system of runrig farming practised in Scotland at the time. The arable consisted of the rigs in regular cultivation. It was still the practice on Islay in the 1830s that the rigs of the different tenants on a farm were intermixed, and reallocated every three years (Teignmouth 1836: 2.308). These rigs, either individually or in groups, were often unenclosed.

Rigs are long, thin, raised beds, separated by furrows. They are normally oriented so that water can drain off down the furrows. It is not clear from fieldwork alone to what extent any rigs in the survey area were created and maintained by ploughing. Many, often called lazy beds, were made by turning over the turf with spades, and mounding it up. Lazy beds were still being dug like this on a small scale on Islay in the first half of the 20th century for growing potatoes.

The heathy pasture was the rough grazing or moorland where the animals were taken in the summer, well away from the growing crops. It was separated from the latter by a ‘head dyke’. Shielings (huts) for the women and children tending the animals are often located just beyond the head dykes. The green pasture was the better-quality pasture within the head dyke, sometimes manured and cropped.

Most of the study area has not been ploughed or cultivated in recent memory, with the notable exception of a large swathe of land to the north-west of Loch Finlaggan which was planted in the 1980s with conifers. Much of the rest of the land that was formally used for agricultural purposes is now merely used for pasture or the occasional crop of silage. The present field system consists of large rectangular areas enclosed by straight stretches of wire fences or drystone walls. Past ploughing has obliterated traces of rigs, and drainage is provided by sub-surface drains and open ditches at field boundaries. Fields like this are concentrated at the north end of Loch Finlaggan and also to the south-west of the loch at Druim a’ Chùirn. Some of the names of fields on Finlaggan Farm have been handed down by the daughter of one of the tenants who lived there in the first half of the 20th century (Illus 4.17).

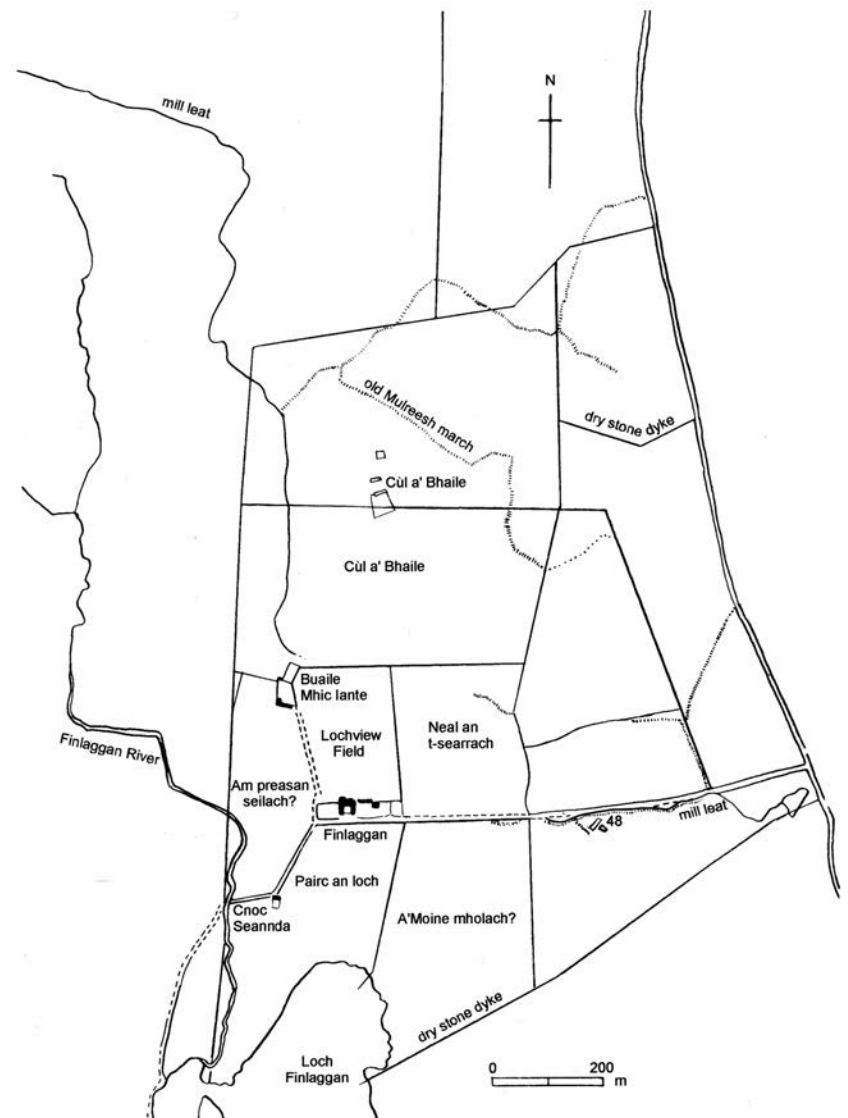


Illustration 4.17

Map of Finlaggan Farm with named fields, based on 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping

Three earlier systems for arable cultivation can be recognised:

1. Small, irregular fields of rigs enclosed by turf dykes, for instance at Sean-ghairt (no. 16). At least some of these may be of considerable antiquity. The need for dykes implies they were created prior to the construction of head dykes.
2. Unenclosed groups of rigs within a head dyke, for example Sean-ghairt (no. 15).
3. Small, quadrilateral fields containing rigs, for instance at Goirtean Chailean (no. 17). Fields like this imply that the tenants had moved away from a system of intermixed rigs reallocated at regular intervals to a permanent division and consolidation of the arable. They represent a relatively recent development, perhaps only of the late 18th or early 19th century.

Four main types of dykes and fences can be distinguished in the study area:

1. Turf dykes, with or without a significant stone content, sometimes in the form of boulders or large stones placed at regular intervals when the dyke was being set out. Sometimes it is only these ('dog teeth') which remain. Illus 4.18 shows the section of a turf dyke on the old farm of Robolls at NGR NR 3900 6768, near the side of the loch. It has been cut by a small burn and the trampling of cattle. It appears to have been heaped straight on top of the grass. Thin horizons of small pebbles, representing the underside of turfs, suggest at least two heightenings of the original bank.
2. Drystone dykes. There is a considerable variety of these in Islay, but in the study area they are of quarried stone with stone or turf coping. These dykes were professionally built and date to the 19th century, when, it is said, drystone dykers were brought in from Durham, Northumberland and Galloway (Ramsay 1991: 105). The Islay rental of 1833–34 records that the farmer of Ballimartin and half of Sean-ghairt was paying interest on a loan for stone dykes, perhaps including those at the south-west of Loch Finlaggan. Although many drystone dykes are still kept in repair, none have been constructed in the study area in recent times.
3. Wire fences with metal stobs. The stobs are set in concrete and there are often drainage ditches on either side of the fence. None are now in a state of repair. According to a local farmer, they date to the mid- or late 19th century.
4. Wire fences with wooden stobs. These are typically the fences still in use or being erected today.

Although the names of the farms that surround Loch Finlaggan are obviously of considerable antiquity, this does not mean that it should be assumed that the marches between them are equally ancient. Indeed, it can be argued that the exact opposite is true, that the presumption should be that march dykes are relatively recent.

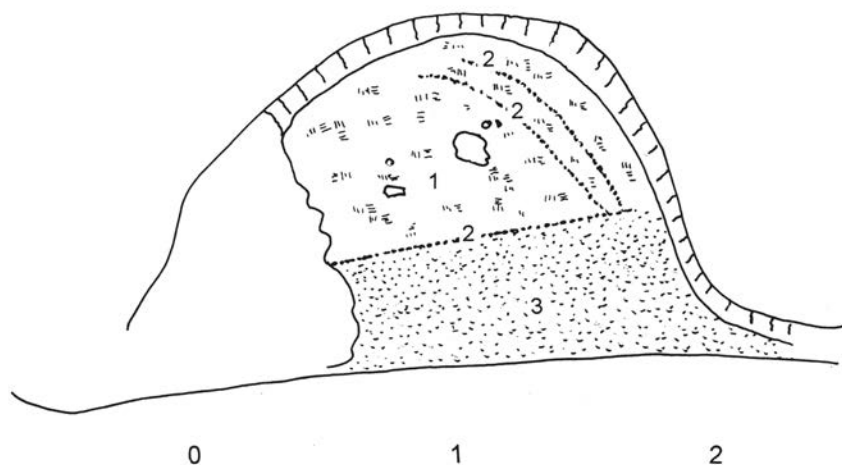


Illustration 4.18

Section of a turf dyke on the old farm of Robolls: (1) yellow/green clayey silt; (2) horizons of small pebbles; (3) brown silty sand full of sharp flakes of limestone

Stephen MacDougall's surveys of Islay dating to 1749–51 did not just lead to an overall map of Islay. They were primarily about establishing the acreage of each farm. Until his work the only way the extent of each farm was measured was by its rent in money and in kind. No doubt the tenants of each farm were well aware of the boundaries of their land, but what must have been of more importance to them were the divisions between their fields or rigs of arable and securing their crops from depredations by cattle. For many Islay farms the shielings were fairly close to the arable land, and the beasts must have been herded to prevent them from straying on to the crops or neighbouring farms where there were no dykes or fences to hold them in. Late 18th-century writers including Pennant (1774: 261) and Walker (1812: 1.103) commented on the lack of dykes.

The standard leases for Islay farms issued by the laird from the 1770s required the tenants to build proper march dykes. They not only had to straighten the marches in the process but also exchange pieces of ground with neighbouring farms, all for the improvement and good order of the country (Ramsay 1991: 97). Since the dykes that the tenants then had the resources to build themselves were traditional style ones of turf and stone, we might expect that many such march dykes, particularly relatively straight and distinct ones, like those separating Portanellan from Sean-ghairt and Robolls, were first laid out in the late 18th century.

The rationalisation of marches required by the laird can be appreciated by comparing the boundaries of farms elsewhere in Islay as depicted on MacDougall's map with those on plans of the 1820s and 1830s attributed to William Gemmill. In many cases the boundaries have not only been straightened out, but large tracts of land have changed hands (Storrie 1997: 122–31). It is also clear that, by the early 19th century, while the traditional farm units still had some meaning, their marches were not yet completely marked out with dykes. The early 19th-century farm plans distinguish between marches defined by 'fences' and those which were merely 'calculated'. All of this should make us wary of expecting any march dykes to be of great age.

The mid-18th-century loch-side boundaries of Sean-ghairt, Portanellan, Robolls and Kepollsmore all appear to have coincided with burns, as also much of the march between Portanellan and Balulive, and the march between Robolls and Kepollsmore, on the one hand, and Ballygrant, Kilmeny, Tiervaagain and Esknish, on the other. Turf dykes were erected along one of the banks of at least some of these burns.

Boundaries of a different sort are represented by those between Sean-ghairt and Ballachlaven, and Ballachlaven and Portanellan. The former, defined by a turf dyke, runs along the summit of Cnoc an Tighe, enclosing a very small area of rough pasture in Sean-ghairt relative to the extent of its arable. It appears likely that Ballachlaven and Portanellan had by the mid-18th century expanded at the expense of Sean-ghairt. MacDougall's map of Islay and his survey of Ballachlaven show the march between Portanellan and Ballachlaven following a watershed via a small loch, Loch Carn nan Gall, to the summit of Càrn a' Choinnleir (Gaelic, 'cairn of the candlestick'), at over 260m above sea level. Looking at Islay as a whole, watersheds more often represent divisions between farms than streams, and lochs are often on the boundary of two or more farms.

The march between Mulreesh and Laoigan to the east is formed by the Allt an Tairbh. Mulreesh's boundary with

Portanellan, however, seems less determined by obvious physical features, perhaps because it was detached from Portanellan or another farm in the distant past.

Long straight lines of fence stretching across the moors indicate that Finlaggan/Portanellan was at one time much larger than indicated by the mid-18th-century survey. They show that Finlaggan had expanded northwards to Loch a' Churragan, taking in land formerly in Ballachlaven, and north-east to include much of the rough pasture of Balulive. It is likely that these fences date to the time that Finlaggan was given over to sheep, during the tenancy of the brothers Alexander and James Greenlees who farmed Finlaggan from 1871 to 1885.

The straight drystone wall that runs from near the top end of Loch Finlaggan eastwards dates rather earlier (Illus 4.6). Rentals from 1815 record that a part of Portanellan had been detached to augment the farm of Robolls, and this dyke may date to that time. It cuts through the Portanellan mine workings and is a rationalisation of an earlier Portanellan–Robolls boundary, represented by a turf dyke further south. It joins up with an unnamed burn flowing into the loch.

Several pre-modern field systems survive in the survey area. It is reasonable to assume that other extensive systems have been destroyed by late 19th- and 20th-century farming practices at Druim a' Chùirn at the south-west end of the loch, around the head of the loch and extending over to the Mulreesh road, at Robolls (around the Ballygrant Inn), and around the present farm-steadings of Kepolls and Kepollsmore.

14. COPPICE, SEAN-GHAIRT (NGR NR 378 670)

A wood of mixed oak and hazel, about 200 sq m in extent, just to the south-west of Loch Finlaggan (Illus 3.4). It has been managed in the past to produce thin wands for wattles, roofing, etc. There are still many small patches of coppice in Islay, the residue of 'the spots of Coppice from 5 to 30 Acres, and in one place . . . above 100 Acres' observed in the late 18th century by the Rev Dr John Walker (McKay 1980: 102).

15. FIELD SYSTEM AND HEAD DYKE, SEAN-GHAIRT (NGR NR 381 676)

Around the two clusters of ruined houses (nos 23 and 24) forming the 19th-century township of Sean-ghairt are the extensive traces of a system of unenclosed rigs, partially removed by 20th-century ploughing between the two settlements in the area adjacent to the loch (Illus 4.19, 4.20, 4.21). There are also some straight dykes, probably forming a series of quadrilateral fields of more recent date than the unenclosed rigs. These rigs can be identified as the Sean-ghairt infield. There are other more sporadic groups of rigs further out from the settlements, representing the outfield. The rigs are all about 2m wide and aligned with the slope down to the loch.

A sinuous turf and stone dyke, still over a metre high for much of its length, encloses these rigs as well as field system no. 16 (see below). It runs approximately south-west/north-east and its course beyond field system no. 16 is now lost through the creation of the conifer forest in the late 20th century. It apparently progressed eastwards to near the edge of Loch Finlaggan, possibly joining up with other dykes to form part of a continuous system all the way to the coast of the Sound of Islay at Bunnahabhain,

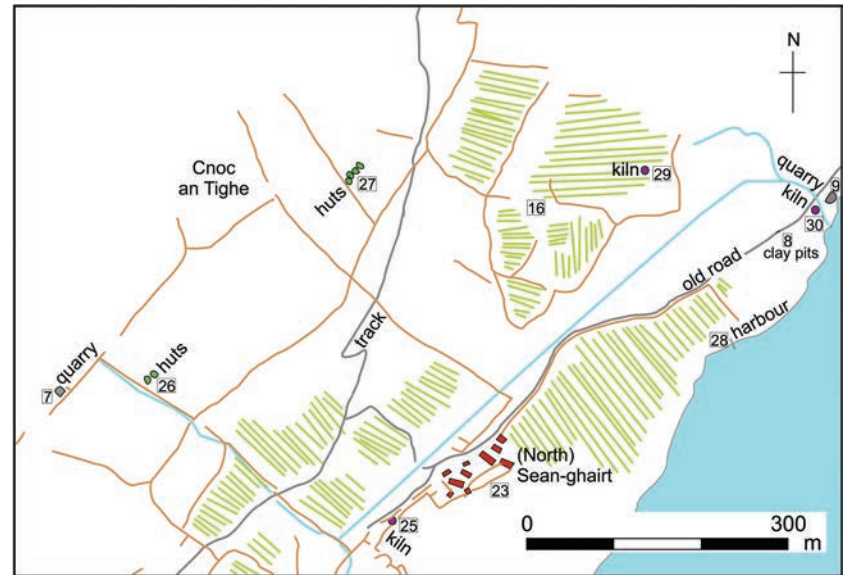


Illustration 4.19

Map of field systems (nos 15 and 16) and head dyke of (North) Sean-ghairt, based on a survey by RCAHMS, 1993

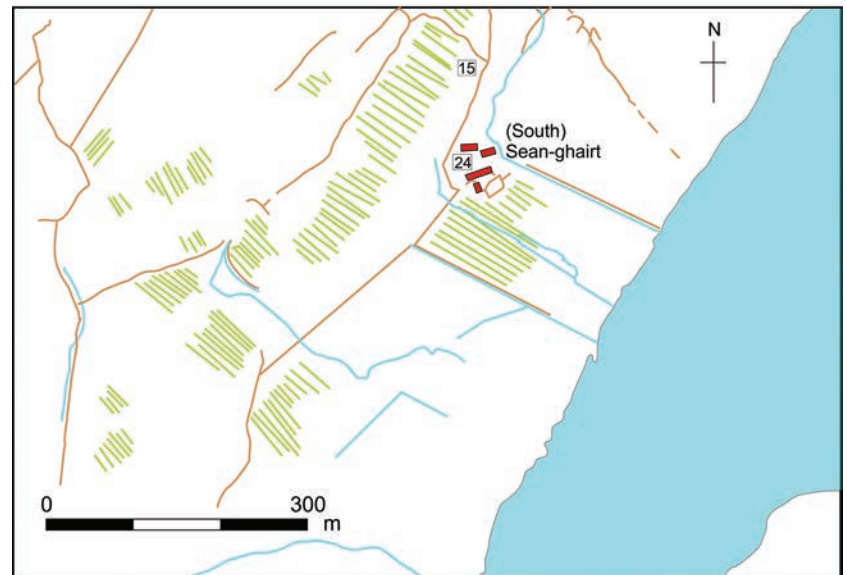


Illustration 4.20

Map of field system (no. 15) of (South) Sean-ghairt, based on a survey by RCAHMS, 1993

protecting the arable land of Balulive, Staoisha, Staoisha Eararach and Ardnahoe.

Heading south-westwards, the Sean-ghairt head dyke bifurcates. One prong separating the supposed infield from the outfield may represent an earlier line. The other further upslope forms the march with Ballachlaven before joining up with the head dyke for Ballachlaven, from whence a continuous head dyke extended through the farms of Baile Tharbhach, Duisker and Balole. It appears that Ballachlaven has cut Sean-ghairt off from access to the moor, with only a relatively small area of rough pasture remaining within the Sean-ghairt march dyke. The march

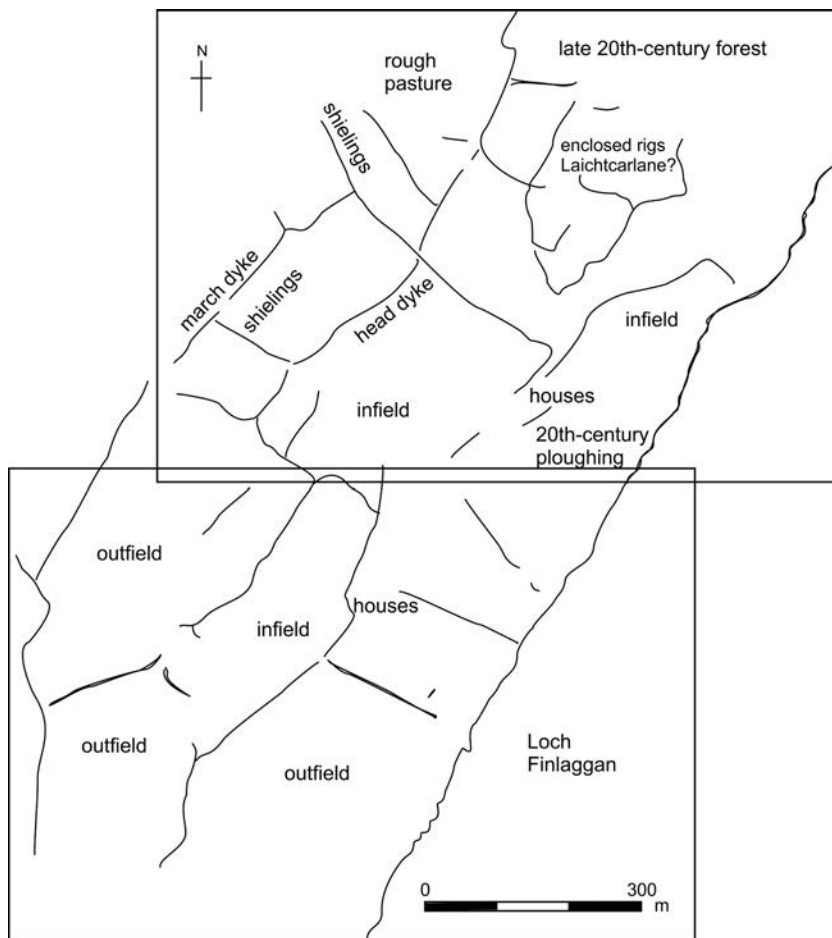


Illustration 4.21
Interpretation of field systems at Sean-ghairt

between the two farms, and the new line for the Sean-ghairt head dyke, may have been created sometime after the Sean-ghairt farmers became sub-tenants of the Campbells of Ballachlaven in the 17th century.

16. FIELD SYSTEM, SEAN-GHAIRT (NGR NR 383 681)

Within the Sean-ghairt head dyke and stretching to the march with Portanellan there is a group of five small irregular fields containing rigs (Illus 4.19, 4.21). They vary in size from about 50 by 66m to 120 by 180m and are separate from the field system (no. 15) just described. They are probably of earlier date. They may tentatively be identified as the arable of the lost farm of Laichtcarlane.

17. FIELD SYSTEM, GOIRTEAN CHAILEAN, PORTANELLAN (NGR NR 386 690)

This field system is associated with a small ruined settlement (no. 33) and probably also the house, no. 32. The fields are now lost in a recent conifer plantation but were small and quadrilateral, probably dating to the 18th or early 19th century (Illus 4.22). Houses and fields are enclosed to the south-west by a substantial turf dyke, which, with a tributary of the Finlaggan River to the north-west and north-east, possibly defines the extent of this holding. Leacann is Gaelic for 'hillside', especially one where the

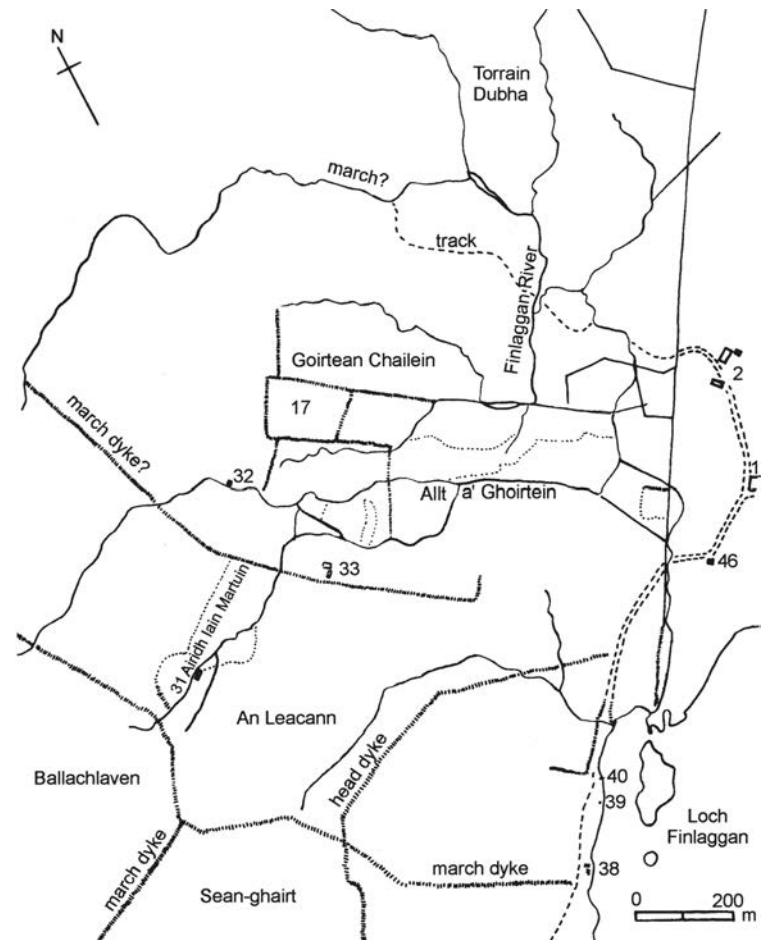


Illustration 4.22
Map of field system at An Leacann, Goirtean Chailean, based on 1st edition Ordnance Survey mapping

topsoil has been washed away to expose a smooth rock surface (Cameron Gillies 1906: 16).

18. FIELD SYSTEMS, CUING-SGEIR, PORTANELLAN (NGR NR392 680)

Cuing-sgeir is the modernised spelling for the old farm of Quinskirn, lying within the mid-18th-century boundary of Portanellan. The lost farm of Kylladow may also be located here and be represented by some of the rigs and fields in this group (Illus 4.6).

There are two unnamed burns flowing into Loch Finlaggan about 300m apart, with rigs and dykes between them and to the north and south of them. The ones to the north are partially truncated by the drystone dyke that now forms the boundary with Kepollsmore. They possibly extended north-eastwards to the unnamed settlements on the Finlaggan Farm road (no. 48) and beside the Mulreesh road (no. 48a). Those between the southern of the two burns and the Robolls march dyke form a tight complex of small fields enclosed by dykes and may be of earlier date than those between the two burns which are unenclosed. The latter are cut by open-cast mine workings which may relate to activity from about 1745 onwards. A claim made in 1770 for compensation for mining damage suggests that the land here was at that time meadow, no longer arable land (see no. 4 above). For huts and houses associated with these field systems, see nos 49–52.

INDUSTRY AND LAND USE

19. FIELD SYSTEM, MULREESH (NGR NR 402 685)

Not much of the pre-improvement field system at Mulreesh can be traced on the ground, and it has been disfigured by lead mining activity. Two plans of the property, apparently produced by the surveyor William Gemmill in the 1820s or 1830s, do, however, provide a considerable amount of detail. They are practically identical, except that one includes some of the mine workings, and compare well with early Ordnance Survey maps in terms of accuracy (Illus 4.23).

The east side of the farm, marching with Ballighillan and Scanistle (Laoigan and Auchnaclach), is defined by the Allt an Tairbh and one of its tributaries. The rest was bounded by turf dykes, some of which can still be traced. The land was traversed east-west by the old road from Loch Finlaggan to Port Askaig, with another road branching off north to Balulive, and there were two clusters of houses (see below: nos 53 and 54). The fields are irregular in shape and size, numbered from 1 to 10 (but including

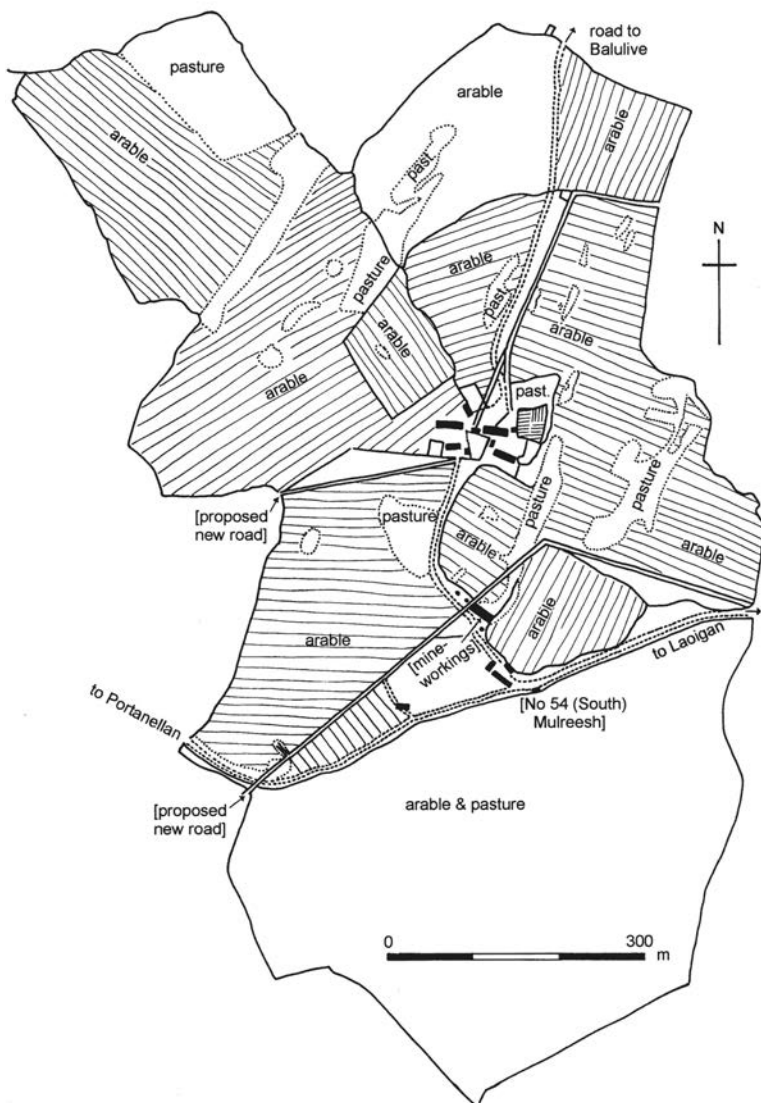


Illustration 4.23

Map of Mulreesh, redrawn from surveys by William Gemmill in the 1820s or 1830s

the houses and yards as one). Two thirds of the land are marked as arable, the rest as pasture. Some of the pasture merely consists of irregular patches in arable fields, evidently rocky outcrops and steep slopes too difficult to cultivate.

20. FIELD SYSTEM, AN TÀMHANACHD, ROBOLLS (NGR NR 388 675)

The name An Tàmhanachd reflects that of an earlier farm known as Robolls Tannach, probably the original Robolls, centred on Eilean Mhuireill (no. 61). We have already noted (see no. 6, Illus 4.15) the Robolls mine workings within this field system spreading along the shore of Loch Finlaggan. Mining activity, particularly the second phase with the smithy, adit and shafts, is confined within a strip of land defined by two parallel turf dykes, about 187m apart, running in a south-easterly direction from the loch shore (Illus 4.24, 4.25). Both may have been constructed to define this particular mining concession.

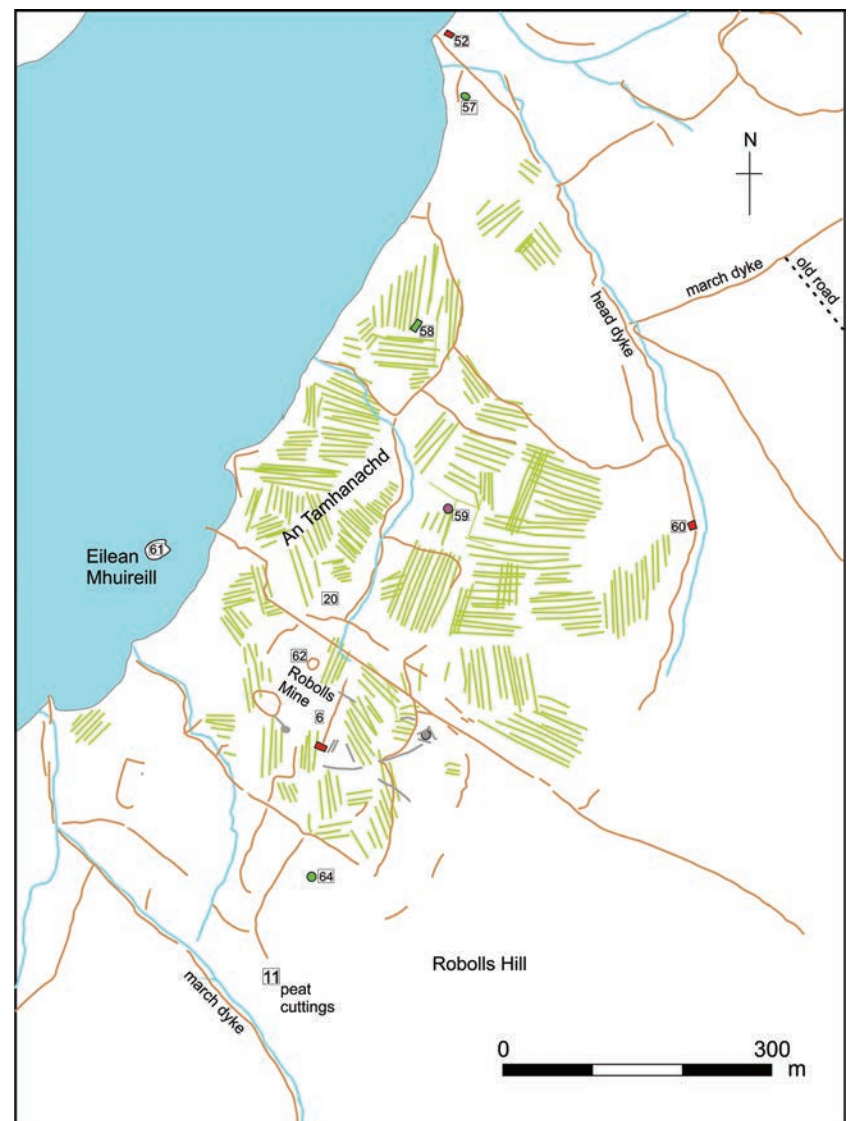


Illustration 4.24

Map of field systems, dykes and mining activity at Robolls Tannach, based on a survey by RCAHMS, 1993

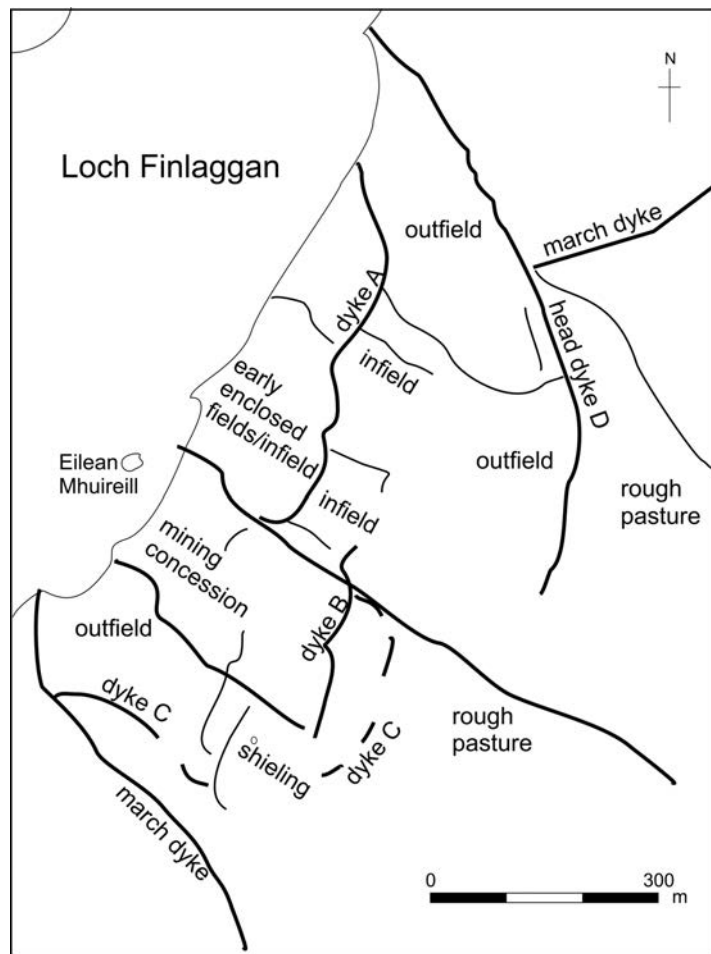


Illustration 4.25
Interpretation of field systems and dykes at Robolls Tannach

Within the mining concession are several groups of unenclosed rigs and stretches of turf dykes, some of which may be associated with the mining activity. One dyke (B), tracing a double-bow and erected across two earlier open-cast mine workings, effectively marks the divide between green and rough pasture. It can also be traced extending into the field systems immediately to the north. There are traces of another dyke (C) about 55m further out, with a small group of rigs between it and dyke B. It probably returned westwards to the south of the mining strip to terminate on the march with the neighbouring farm of Kepollsmore. There is a shieling hut (no. 64) to the south of the mining concession within the line of dykes B and C.

In the larger zone of old arable to the north of the mining concession another sinuous dyke (A) takes off from the loch edge, curves round southwards and is cut by the dyke forming the north edge of the mining concession. There are traces within it and between it and dyke B of other dykes forming enclosed fields, and a considerable density of rigs, some cutting across earlier ones. Another dyke (D), still defining the division between green and rough pasture, forms a quadrant of a circle with ends on the loch-side and the mining concession dyke. For most of its length it follows the bank of an unnamed burn round to where it

enters the loch. Between it and dyke B are several groups of unenclosed rigs. The foundations of a small house (no. 60) on the inner edge of dyke D are clearly of late 18th- or 19th-century date, but a house-site (no. 58) may represent the remains of a long house of earlier date.

All of this suggests a possible chronological sequence for the agricultural and mining remains at Robolls Tannach as follows:

1. Field system on the lower slopes adjacent to Eilean Mhuireill with rigs in small enclosed fields, the outer limits of agriculture defined at first by dyke A, possibly with dyke C serving as a head dyke marking the division of green from rough pasture.
2. Mining activity characterised by open-cast workings. Some, at least, of these workings could be earlier than the system of enclosed fields.
3. System of enclosed fields expanded uphill to the line of dyke B.
4. Creation of mining concession in south zone of cultivated area.
5. Arable area to north of mining concession greatly enlarged by bringing more land upslope into cultivation in unenclosed rigs bounded by dyke D. The shieling hut no. 64 may date to this phase.
6. Mining activity by the Islay Lead Mining Company in the late 19th century, with shafts being sunk in earlier workings.

These remains suggest an infield-outfield system superseding an earlier system with enclosed fields grouped on the lower slopes by the loch-side. In the new scheme the enclosed fields would have become the infield, and the outfield the area between dykes B and D. Dyke D would have been the head dyke for this phase. The possibility remains that there was an even earlier phase of infield-outfield farming with the infield contained by dyke A, and the outfield by dyke C.

21. FIELD SYSTEMS, KEPOLLSMORE (NGR NR 386 666)

The remains of a system of small irregularly shaped fields, with turf dykes enclosing rigs, can be traced around Dùn Cheapsaidh Mór (no. 69). Otherwise there are groups of rigs, including those on the low rise called Torr a' Ghoirtein (Gaelic, 'hill of the small garden') and others beside the loch shore (Illus 4.26). These are not on good soil and may represent relatively recent – 18th- or 19th-century? – efforts to bring more land into cultivation with the application of lime. There are three kilns within this area (nos 65, 67, 68), at least two of which may have been for burning lime. This land would otherwise have been the 'heathy pasture' of Kepollsmore. It appears to have been subdivided into larger enclosures, probably to demarcate the holdings of individual tenants.

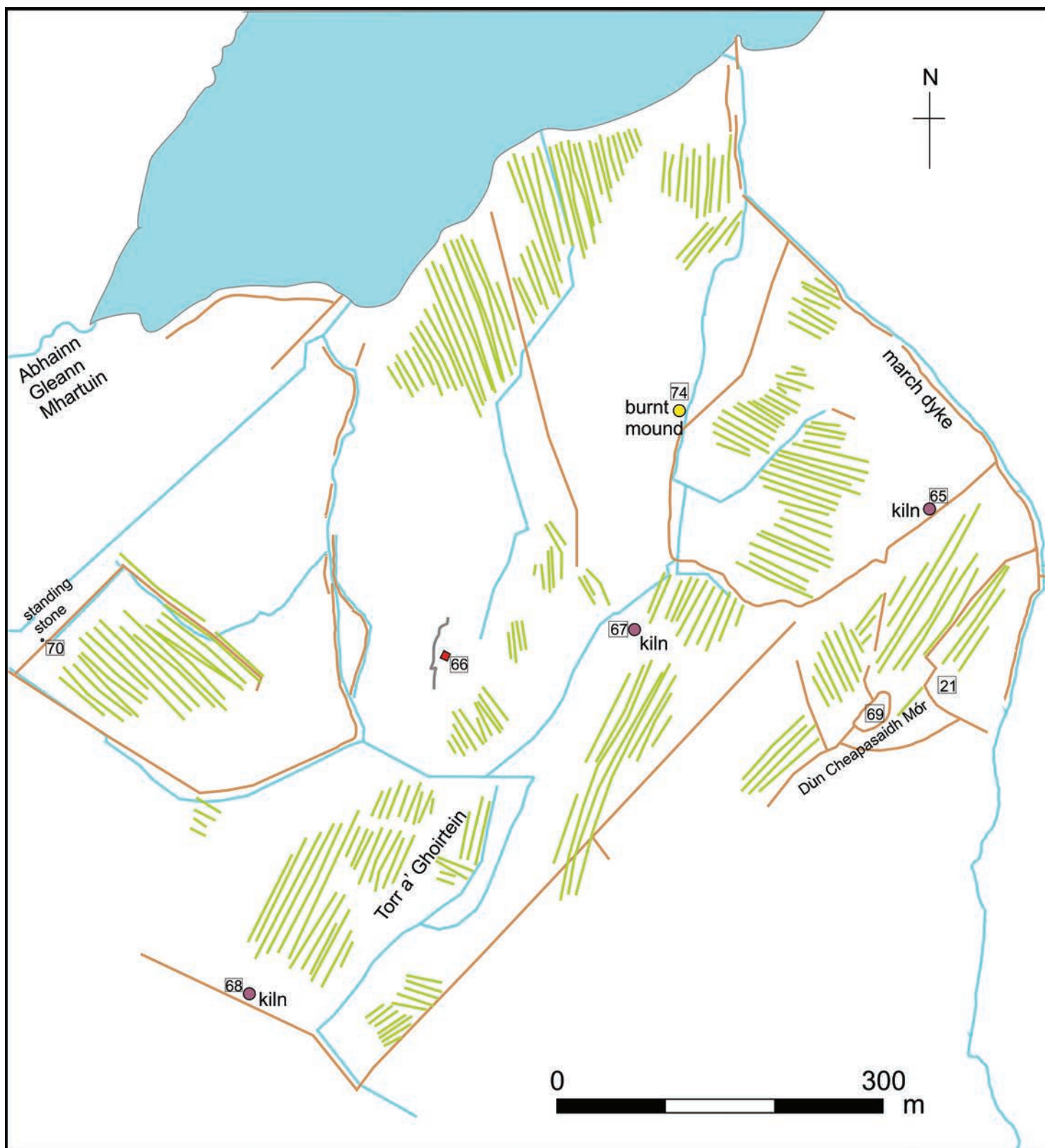


Illustration 4.26
Map of field systems at Kepollsmore, based on a survey by RCAHMS, 1993

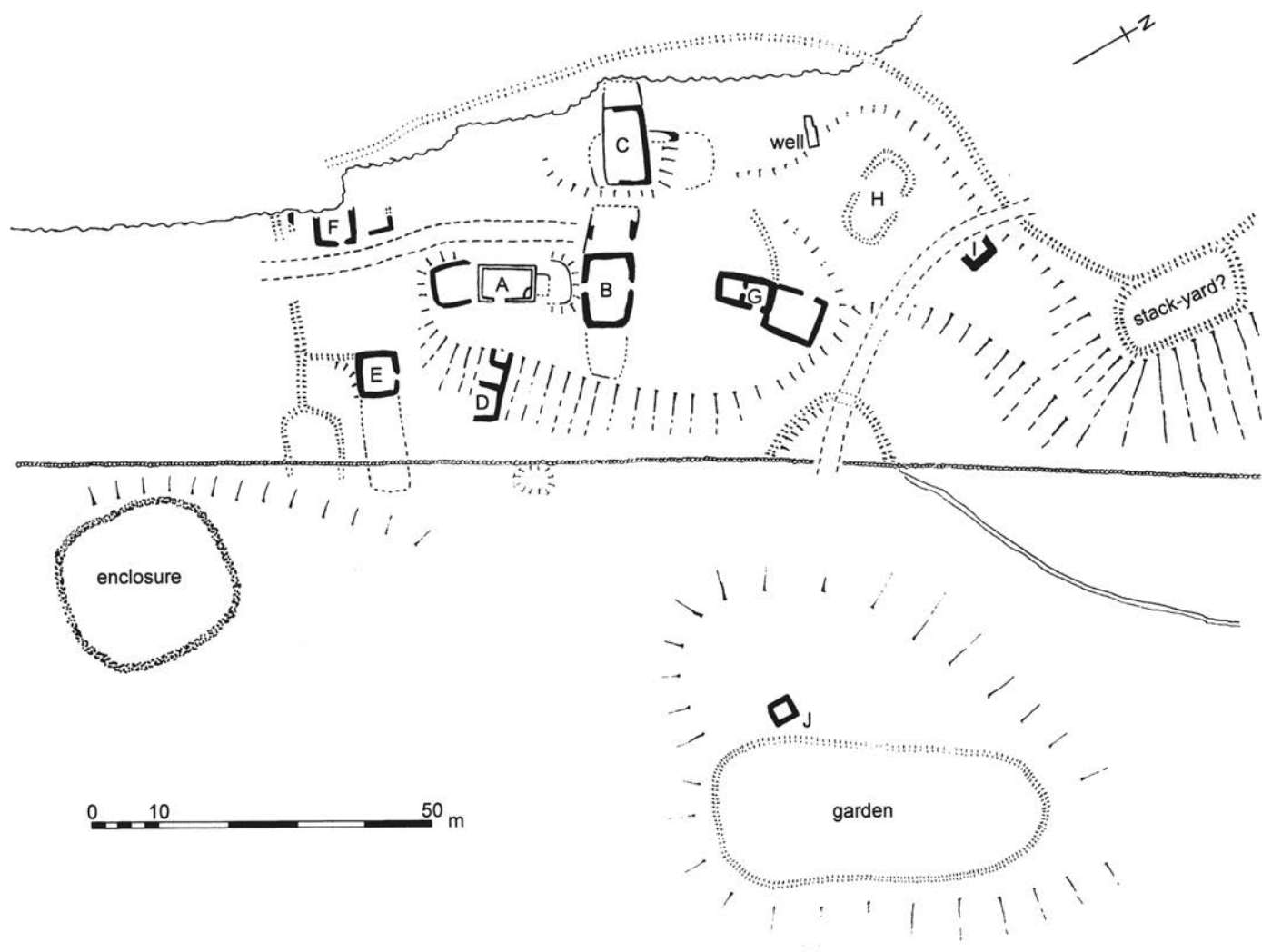


Illustration 5.1
Map of settlement remains at Druim a' Chùirn, Sean-ghairt (no. 22)