ISSN e2056-7421
DOI: 10.9750/issn.2056-741.2017.73
http://repository.nms.ac.uk/2003
Deposited on: 15 February 2018
Achanduin Castle, Lismore, Argyll: an account of the excavations by Dennis Turner, 1970–5

How to cite:

Visit http://archaeologydataservice.ac.uk/archives/view/sair to see the journal homepage

Please note:
This document is the publisher’s PDF of an article published in the Scottish Archaeological Internet Reports journal. This version has been peer-reviewed and contains all final editorial corrections and journal pagination.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

List of illustrations ........................................... v
List of tables .................................................. vi

1. **Abstract** .................................................. 1

2. **Introduction** ............................................. 1

3. **Physical context** .......................................... 5
   3.1 Geology .................................................. 5
   3.2 Local topography ...................................... 6
   3.3 Castle location ........................................ 6

4. **Historical background** .................................... 6

5. **Excavation aims and methods** ........................... 8
   5.1 An overview of the excavated areas ................. 11

6. **Descriptive analysis of structures and excavated areas (DJT)** ....................................... 22
   6.1 Exterior ................................................. 22
   6.2 Entrances, stairs and wall-heads .................. 25
   6.3 Interior .................................................. 26

7. **Artefacts** .................................................. 29
   7.1 The ceramics, *by Derek Hall and George Haggarty* ........................................ 29
   7.2 Coins and jettons, *by Nicholas Holmes* ........ 34
   7.3 The metalwork ......................................... 36
   7.4 Bone objects .......................................... 44
   7.5 Wooden object ......................................... 45
   7.6 Stone objects ......................................... 45
   7.7 Architectural fragments ............................... 46

8. **Environmental remains** .................................. 46
   8.1 The mammal bones, *by the late Barbara A Noddle* ............................................ 46
   8.2 Small mammal bones, *by the late Donald Bramwell* ......................................... 52
   8.3 Bird bones, *by the late Donald Bramwell* ......................................................... 52
   8.4 Fish bones, *by A K G Jones* ........................................ 52

9. **General discussion and some conclusions (DJT)** .................................................. 55
   9.1 Castle occupation and dating .......................... 55
   9.2 Structural evidence .................................... 56
   9.3 Architectural ancestry and regional context ......... 57

10. **Observations on the excavations, by David H Caldwell and Geoffrey P Stell** ................ 58
    10.1 Structural evidence ................................... 58
    10.2 Phases of occupation (Table 1) .................... 61

11. **Acknowledgements** ........................................ 64
**LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS**

1. Dennis John Turner, 1932-2013  
2. The western seaboard showing the location of Achanduin Castle, Lismore  
4. Distant view from north-east, c 1970  
5. Ground plan as surveyed in 1971 and published in 1975 in RCAHMS, *Inventory of Argyll*, 2, Fig. 159  
6. Aerial view from west, 1977  
7. Cliffs on the north-western flank of the site, c 1970  
8. Ground plan showing layout of excavated areas  
9. Ground plan showing location of sections illustrated in DJT’s report  
10. Plan of excavated Areas I–III and VI  
11. View of collapsed masonry in excavated Area I from south, August 1970  
12. Section through hall doorway in excavated Area II  
13. Elevation of external (north-west) face of south-east (hall) range in excavated Area II  
14. View from west of exposed external face of south-east (hall) range in excavated Area II, September 1970  
15. Plan of excavated Areas III and VI  
16. High-level view from east of excavated Area III, September 1971  
17. Sections in excavated Areas III and VI through secondary building and earlier deposits  
18. Plan of excavated Areas IV, V and VIII in south-east (hall) range  
19. View from within south-east range through doorway, showing drain in Area II  
20. Section through south-east (hall) range in excavated Area IV  
21. Excavated Area VI from south-west, August 1974  
22. Excavated Area VII from south-east, August 1972, showing castle entrance with drain to left and ‘cobble’ surface exposed  
23. Plan of excavated Area IX-a-c-d  
24. Plan of excavation in forebuilding  
25. Section through the deposits in the excavated forebuilding  
26. Interior of courtyard from south-west, 1972 and published in 1975 in RCAHMS, *Inventory of Argyll*, 2, Plate 38A  
27. Masons’ marks as published at 1:5 scale in 1975 in RCAHMS, *Inventory of Argyll*, 2, Fig. 161; A and B, south-east hall range; C, detached fragment  
28. Cathedral of St Moluag and Parish Church, Lismore: masons’ marks as published in 1975 in RCAHMS, *Inventory of Argyll*, 2, Fig. 151  
30. First-floor plan as surveyed in 1971 and published in 1975 in RCAHMS, *Inventory of Argyll*, 2, Fig. 160  
31. Pottery. Hand-made vessel no. 1/xl; wheel-made jug no. 29/xxxvi  
32. Brooch no. 1/lxxiii, front (top) and back (bottom)  
33. Brooch no. 2/lvii  
34. Brooch no. 3/lvi  
35. Brooch no. 4/lxxiii  
36. Brooch no. 5/lxi  
37. Brooch no. 6/lx, front (top) and back (bottom)
38. Copper alloy artefacts. Buckle no. 7/lxxvii; belt loop no. 10/75
39. Toilet set no. 12/lxxi
40. Iron artefacts
41. Iron artefacts
42. Jew's harp
43. Iron artefacts
44. Padlock slide key
45. Iron artefacts
46. Nails
47. Two bone tuning pegs and a whetstone
48. Plan showing traces of medieval structures in the north corner of the courtyard and along the north-west curtain wall
49. Evidence of a north-west range in Area I
50. Evidence of pre-castle occupation in Area I

LIST OF TABLES

1. Excavated deposits: an overview of the location of layers and features
2. Proportion of species (large mammals) by fragments
3. Minimum numbers of individuals (MNI) and proportions (large mammals)
4. Age range of individuals: major domestic species only
5. Anatomical analysis of cattle and sheep bone from group S.3 (from A.III) expressed as %
6. Measurements of cattle bone (in mm): complete bones
7. Measurements of cattle bone (in mm): incomplete bones
8. Dimensions of pig bones (in mm)
9. Small mammal bones
10. Bird bones
11. Dimensions of bird bones (in mm)
7.2 Coins and jettons

Nicholas Holmes

This assemblage of 17 coins and one jetton is consistent with activity on the site from the early to the late 14th century. There are no coins earlier than the single cross type of Edward I, first minted in 1279, and only two pre-date 1305. All the English pennies, as well as the halfpenny of John Balliol, are of types which would have circulated all over Scotland until well into the second half of the 14th century. The coins of David II and Robert II date from the period 1358–90, a period during which the evidence of hoards suggests that English Edwardian pennies gradually fell out of circulation, to be replaced by pennies and larger
denominations issued by Scottish kings. Hoards concluding with coins of David II normally also contain substantial numbers of Edwardian pennies, whereas those concluding with issues of Robert II rarely contain coins earlier than David II. Since this assemblage includes no examples of the relatively common early groats of Robert III, it is reasonable to suggest that coin use on the site came to an end not long after 1390. The French jetton is of a type which fits happily into a late 14th-century context, although it could also have been struck a little later.

7.2.1 Catalogue

7.2.1.1 England

9 (clxxxvii) Coin Ag
Edward I–II penny, 10cf2a, London; 0.90g
1971

10 (clxxxvi) Coin Ag
Edward I–II penny, 10cf3a1, London; 1.32g
1971

11 (cdix) Coin Ag
Edward II penny, 11a2, London; slightly chipped; 0.68g
Forebuilding (1972): ‘occupation soil dumped in bridge pit’

12 (cdvii) Coin Ag
Edward II penny, 11b2, Canterbury; 1.03g
1972

7.2.1.2 Scotland

13 (cdvi) Coin Ag
John Balliol halfpenny, 2nd (‘smooth’) coinage, Berwick; 0.52g
Area III: ‘below rubble filling crevice of bedrock and forming pavement of courtyard’

14 (clxxviii) Coin Ag
David II groat, 2nd coinage A, Edinburgh; 4.02g
Area II (1970–3): ‘door fill’

15 (clxxix) Coin Ag
Robert II groat, Perth; 3.59g
Area I (1970–3): ‘below tumble’; found pressed together with coin no. 16

16 (clxxx) Coin Ag
Robert II groat, Perth; 3.32g
Area I (1970–3): ‘below tumble’; found pressed together with coin no. 15

17 (cdvi) Coin Ag
Robert II half-groat, Edinburgh; 1.32g

7.2.1.3 French jetton: latten

18 Jetton Cu alloy
Crown type with annulets as decoration (14th to early 15th century); cf Mitchiner 1988: 477a
Note: DJT drew attention in his notes to a report that ‘About 80 years ago’ [c 1860?] numerous coins were found in an ‘underground passage’ at Achantraur
Castle (Carmichael 1948: 123). The ‘passage’ was filled in on the insistence of the proprietor and the coins cannot be traced or identified.