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2 Historical Background

THE LATE IRON AGE AND EARLY HISTORIC PERIOD

by Stephen Driscoll and Katherine Forsyth

Dundonald occupies a low-lying but prominent craggy hill, 4km inland from Troon with its natural harbour and a further 7km from the mouth of the River Irvine. In its physical characteristics and historical associations, Dundonald corresponds to major royal sites in northern Britain such as Dumbarton Rock, Edinburgh and Dunadd. On topographical grounds and archaeological evidence, Dundonald appears to be a regional power centre of the Early Historic period, but as the excavations show the site was occupied from the Bronze Age (Fig 3).

According to the 2nd-century Ptolemy of Alexandria the native Celtic peoples who occupied west central Scotland were called the *Damnonii* (Barrow 1989, Rivet and Smith 1979, Watson 1926, 15, 26). The early importance of the Dundonald area is reflected in Ptolemy's naming of *Vindogara Sinus*, 'Vindogara Bay' (Breeze 2002). The precise location of *Vindogara*, and whether it was a Roman or native site, cannot be established from classical sources. However, if Andrew Breeze (2002) is correct to interpret the name as meaning 'white shank/headland/ridge', then the sandy headland of Troon (from British, cf. Welsh *Trwyn* 'the nose, headland', Watson 1926, 191) is a likely site. Ptolemy, who is thought to have been drawing upon Roman military maps of the late 1st century AD, provides some insight into the Iron Age political geography of the region. *Vindogara* is one of six *poleis* ('cities') of the *Damnonii*; this large number of named centres (although mostly unidentified) implies a reasonable degree of social organisation. However, unlike their neighbours – to the east, the *Uotadini* (>Gododdin), and to the south, the *Novantae* (>Nouant) – the name of the *Damnonii* does not appear to have survived into the Early Historic period, at least not referring to a political unit. It may however be preserved in the placenames Cardowan, Wishaw, Lanarkshire (<British *caer* 'fort') and Dowanhill, Milngavie, Dunbartonshire (Wilkinson 2002, 143), which give important clues as to the extent of Damnonian territory, described by Barrow as 'the easily traversed territory from Kyle to the Lennox taking in Ayr, Irvine, Glasgow and Dumbarton' (1989, 162).

In the Early Historic period the area is referred to as *Aeron*. This river name, which survives today as Ayr, derives from Celtic *Agrona* 'goddess of slaughter' (Watson 1926, 342). *Aeron* is mentioned in several different contexts in Early British poetry: five times in the *Gododdin* corpus and in three early poems in the *Book of Taliesin* (VII.12, VIII.22, XI.21–2). There are of course substantial problems with heroic poetry for historical purposes, not least in explaining how poetry purporting to have been composed in the North during the 6th and 7th centuries came to be preserved in medieval Welsh manuscripts. These complex



Fig 3 Aerial photograph of the site from the east prior to recent conservation work (AP 1984: Neg. no. A65297: title NS 33 SE 2 – NS36363451, © Crown copyright, reproduced courtesy of RCAHMS).

questions of historical and linguistic context are fully discussed in John Koch's critical edition of the *Gododdin* (1997), while the early British poetry itself is readily accessible in translation through *The Triumph Tree* anthology (Clancy 1998). The *Gododdin* collection is widely perceived of as having an eastern focus, since it celebrates the heroes gathered by the lord of Din Eidyn (Edinburgh) to do battle at Catraeth (Yorkshire). Given that the geographical theatre of action is east of the Pennines, the prominence of Aeron seems decidedly out of place. Koch (1997, lxxx–lxxxiii) and most other modern scholars believe that this is because the cycle of poems that was transmitted to Wales came via Strathclyde where emphasis was given to figures with local resonance.

Aeron is mentioned in three of the late 6th-century poems found in the *Book of Taliesin* (Williams 1968), twice in connection with Urien of Rheged, who is described as the 'defender of Aeron' (VIII.22), presumably as its overlord. The

third reference comes in a list of battles fought all over the ‘old North’ by one Gwallawg (XI.21).

... A battle near Bre Tryn, much heated,
His fury a might fire;
A battle before splendid ramparts,
A hundred warbands trembled in Aeron ...
(Clancy 1998, 91)

In the context of the other sites mentioned in the poem, it is reasonable to identify the battle site of Bre Trwyn, ‘the brae/upland of Troon’ with the Dundonald Hills (Watson 1926, 342; Williams 1968, 123–4; Clancy 1998, 349) and perhaps Dundonald itself with the ‘splendid ramparts’.

Aeron was the home of Cynon, whom John Koch has described as ‘the single most important hero’ in the *Gododdin* (1997, xli). The *Gododdin* focuses on battle deeds and the heroic qualities of the fallen warriors, most especially the bonds of loyalty, which were cemented through the celebrations in the mead hall. The great hall, of course, was the very place where these poems were subsequently performed, reinforcing the social values of loyalty and heroism. The celebration of Cynon’s bloody deeds typifies the entire *Gododdin* corpus.

A most fitting song for Cynon of the rightful privileges:
He was slain; and before the defensive barrier of Aeron was laid waste,
He reckoned [the deeds of] his gauntlet, measuring in grey eagles;
[for] in urgency, he made food for scavengers.
For the sake of the subject mounted warriors from the mountain country,
He put his side in front of the spears(s) of enemies.
Before Catraeth there were swift gold-torqued men;
They slew; they cut down those would stand.
The whelps of violence were [far] away from their [home] regions.
A great rarity in battle on the side
Of the Gododdin Britons was any [?]cavalryman superior to Cynon.
(Koch 1997, 23)

Elsewhere in the *Gododdin*, Cynon’s praise is issued by his enemies, the Deirans of Northumbria, who were expanding into Ayrshire during the 7th and 8th centuries. ‘Heathen tribes of Deiran brigands used to ask whether there came from the Britons a man better than Kynon’ (Koch 1997, xxxix). By the mid 8th century, the Britons appear to have lost the struggle for Aeron, because the conquest of ‘the plain of Kyle, with other districts by the Northumbrian king Eadberht is recorded in AD 750 in the Continuation of Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (Anderson 1908, 56).

The modern district names of Kyle, Cunningham and Carrick (Fig 1), seem to have taken shape in the Early Historic period. Carrick’s etymology is straightforward and less revealing; it derives from *carreg*, ‘rock’ (Watson 1926, 186), perhaps a reference to Ailsa Craig. According to W. J. Watson (1926, 186) the name Kyle commemorates the quasi-mythical 5th-century king *Coel Hen*, the apical figure of several northern (*Coeling*) dynasties, including that of Urien of Rheged. Cunningham is first mentioned in Bede’s *Ecclesiastical History* (V.12)

'Incuneningam'. The *-ingham* ending indicates an Anglo-Saxon coining, but *Cunen* appears to be a British personal name and it is tempting to link him with Cynon of Aeron who appears so prominently in the *Gododdin* poems. It should be noted that Bede describes Cunningham as being *in provincia Nordanhynbrorum* and *in regione Nordanhynbrorum*. While this could be a reference to the situation at the time of writing (730s) it should be noted that the protagonist of the story, which takes place in the 690s, has an Anglo-Saxon name, Drythelm. Either way Bede's story indicates Anglo-Saxon settlement in Ayrshire.

The earliest attestation of the name Dundonald, 'fort of Donald', is found in the 12th-century *Life of St Modwenna*, an English saint whose life had been conflated with that of the Irish St Damerca (d. AD 517) (Bartlett 2002, xiv). The place mentioned, *Dundeuenel*, has been widely accepted as Dundonald, although Barrow for unstated reasons prefers a lost site in Galloway (2004, 5). In one episode 'Modwenna' crosses the Irish Sea and visits a number of places in central Scotland where she finds a chapel or more substantial church (Bartlett 2002, xvi, 122–3). The list includes Dumbarton, Stirling, Edinburgh and Traprain Law all regional power centers of the northern Britons. That Dundonald (*Dundeuenel*) is listed alongside these implies the author of the *Life* considered it as being of similar importance. Bartlett argues that this strand of the *Life* was probably in existence by the 11th century, as it is based on an Irish *Life* by Conchubranus but recognises that it may draw upon an earlier *Life* composed in the 7th century (Bartlett 2002, xiv–xv). Again Barrow is less inclined to recognise these early strata and prefers to see the *Life* as a solely 12th-century composition. The excavated evidence at Dundonald spans the 7th to 12th centuries and indicates that it was probably sufficiently prominent throughout this time range to allow it to have been included in a list of politically significant regional centres, whether it was composed in the 7th or 12th century. The name itself, however, may hold a clue to the local significance of the site.

The form of the name Dundonald found in the *Life of St Modwenna*, 'Dundeuenel', is consistent with it having been formed from British Dyfnwal (*Din Dyfnwal), a name which is cognate with Gaelic Dòmhnall, anglicised as Donald (T. O. Clancy, pers. comm.). This points to an association with the Kynwydyon dynasty of Strathclyde who claimed descent from Dyfnwal Hen, great-grandfather of Ryderch Hen (*flourit* AD 570–80). The name Dyfnwal was popular with this dynasty – one is attested in the 8th century and three between the late 9th to late 10th centuries (cf. Broun 2004, 135) – although no link can be made with a particular Dyfnwal it is tempting to see it as associated with one or other member of this royal dynasty.

Tellingly, the region around Dundonald is deserving of a mention in a range of sources over a long timespan, which suggests its regional importance is rooted in the late Roman and Early Historic period. A great stability is indicated by the name Kyle, which is one of the earliest British territorial units and the only one (apart from Lothian) whose name is still in use in modern Scotland. The early British poetry, such as the *Gododdin* elegies, captures something of the social world of the warrior aristocracy at the heart of Early Historic political life. It is entirely appropriate to the society celebrated in the *Gododdin* with the court at Dumbarton, because of the indications that the collection was preserved for a time

in Strathclyde. Moreover it seems not unreasonable to speculate that some of the *Gododdin* poems were heard within the hall of Dundonald.

Political Context

When it comes to reconstructing the real political world inhabited by the occupants of Dundonald we are on shakier ground, because the prosaic legacy of the Britons is more meagre than the poetry. There are few contemporary British sources and most of what is known about political developments must be extracted from English and Gaelic materials (Anderson 1908; 1922; Kirby 1962). The uncertainties and gaps in the contemporary record impose severe limitations on the historian and militate against the construction of a coherent narrative. Nevertheless, since the Middle Ages, historians have sought to account for the decline and eventual disappearance of the northern British kingdoms and when the evidence has grown scarce, have fallen back on traditions first articulated by John of Fordun in the 14th century (Broun 2004, 130–35). The narrative tradition instigated by Fordun links the sack of Dumbarton by the Dublin Vikings in AD 870 with the final collapse of British political sovereignty. The political vacuum was then filled by the Gaelic kingdom of Alba, which came to dominate the kingdom of Strathclyde by the 10th century. By this time Strathclyde was a dependent sub-kingdom ruled by the designated heir of the king of Scots, in a manner suspiciously similar to the relationship between the king of England and the prince of Wales.

While there is every reason to accept that AD 870 indeed marks a major historical watershed, there can be less certainty that the Gaelic kingdom of Alba dominated the Clyde valley during the Viking Age. However, recent scholarship has refined our understanding of the extent of the pre-Viking kingdom of Dumbarton and of the nature of the Viking Age kingdom of Strathclyde. The arguments for a revision have been drawn together by Dauvit Broun (2004), who provides a historical analysis based upon penetrating source criticism. The arguments, while too involved to consider here, challenge the view of a rapid, terminal decline for the Britons and suggest that a British kingdom lasted in Strathclyde until late in the 12th century. As part of this revision Broun also seeks to separate the replacement of British speech by Gaelic from the development of the kingdom of Alba, in favour of linking the spread of Gaelic in Strathclyde to the influence of the *Gall Gaillib*.

A key point to emerge from this recent scholarly work is that the kingdom of Strathclyde, properly speaking, is a product of the post 870 political landscape (Clancy forthcoming). Prior to this date the kingdom was identified by both Britons and Gaels as ‘Clyde Rock’: Welsh *Al Clud* and Gaelic *Ail Cluaithe*, referring to what is now Dumbarton, ‘fort of the Britons’. This distinction between the kingdom of Dumbarton and that of Strathclyde is not simply a terminological nicety, but probably reflects a major political disruption, which was accompanied by a physical shift in the centre of power and a reconfiguration of the ruling elite. The best candidate for the new royal centre on the Clyde is found upstream from Dumbarton at Partick, which was on the opposite bank from the ancient church of Govan, probably the royal burial place (Driscoll 2003, 2004).

Over the years uncritical usage of the term Strathclyde and casual cartography have suggested that a single kingdom dominated all of west central Scotland, embracing modern Dunbartonshire, Lanarkshire, Renfrewshire and Ayrshire. That this vast area was a single polity now seems implausible. The contemporary references suggest, rather, that the pre-Viking kingdom of Clyde Rock encompassed an area embracing the Clyde similar to the later counties of Dunbartonshire and Renfrewshire (Clancy forthcoming). Apart from the three Ayrshire districts mentioned above (Kyle, Cunningham and Carrick), there is little indication of the political arrangements south of the Clyde, but the use of these names might suggest smaller-scale polities.

While the kingdom of Dumbarton survived until the 9th century, it may be that south of the Clyde the expanding Northumbrian kingdom had a corrosive effect on the local British polities. Aeron may have ceased to exist in the wake of Eadberht's conquest of Kyle in AD 752: But whether or not the British kingdoms survived, there was certainly a significant English settlement as indicated by the Anglo-Saxon place-names and ecclesiastical dedications found across the south-west. By the 8th century English was being spoken practically within earshot of the Clyde, to judge from the place-name Eaglesham. English ambition extended across the Clyde further as can be seen from the Pyrrhic victory at Dumbarton by combined Northumbrian and Pictish armies in AD 756 (Forsyth 2000). The long-term consequences of the Northumbrian presence for the Ayr region are difficult to assess, but the first mention of Dundonald in the company of Edinburgh, Stirling and so on, suggests that it was a regional power centre and as such would have been on the front line in the struggles first with the Northumbrians and later with the Vikings and the *Gall Gaillib*. On the face of it Dundonald appears to have been more successful in resisting the Viking onslaught of the 9th century than Dumbarton. But the collapse of the fort at *Al Clut* was not the end of the British kingdom on the Clyde. The British kingdom of Strathclyde which emerges after 870 may have even expanded, if its influence can be measured by the 10th- and 11th-century sculpture spread up and down the Clyde (Macquarrie 1990; Craig 1994; Driscoll *et al* in press). If the sculpture reflects political hegemony, then Dundonald appears to fall within its sphere of influence, given the presence of high-quality sculpture of this period at nearby Kilwinning (Craig 1994, 77–9)

A key point to emerge from Broun's analysis is that Strathclyde, despite the clear Viking influence in the earlier elements of the sculpture, continued to be ruled by Britons (Broun 2004, 125–30). Indeed there is no compelling case for regarding Strathclyde as a dependency or puppet of the Gaelic kingdom of Alba at this time. Instead of thinking of the main Gaelic influence coming from the east under the domination of Alba, Broun looks westward to the busy Irish Sea of the Viking Age. In his view the *Gall Gaellib* were more active on the Clyde coast than is generally appreciated, which is a relevant point given the proximity of Hunterston, findspot of the remarkable brooch with a Gaelic name scratched in runes on the back (Alcock 2003, 312–2). Although it is not possible to discern their political influence in detail the *Gall Gaellib* did leave their mark in the stratum of Gaelic place-names in Ayrshire and Renfrewshire.

By the 12th century the extent of Strathclyde was approaching the large area normally represented on maps produced by modern scholars (e.g. Hall and

Haywood 2001, 69). This great expansion, although widely recognised, is hard to reconcile with a British kingdom beset by Gaels on the east and west. One possibility is that Northumbria enjoyed another period of expansion north and west from the Borders during the 11th century and was somehow allied with Strathclyde (Broun 2004, 136–40). The brutal suppression of Northumbrians in 1070 by William I ended their northern aspirations and these extensive lands fell into the lap of the kings of Strathclyde, so that the last British kings enjoyed dominion over vast territories extending to the Solway and the Tweed.

Archaeological Neighbours

In many respects Dumbarton offers the closest archaeological parallel for Dundonald. Although Dumbarton has a richer documentary history, as befits a great regional centre, much more is known about the archaeology of Dundonald, because the Alcocks' excavations at Dumbarton were on a smaller scale (Alcock and Alcock 1990). Even so Dumbarton has produced an extremely informative assemblage of finds which points to its role as the major centre for long-distance trade in the region starting with 5th-century Mediterranean routes (exemplified by B-ware) and shifting in the 6th and 7th centuries to the Continent (E-ware). Trade within the Irish Sea of the Viking Age was presumably brisk before Dumbarton was destroyed in AD 870. After that the focal point for the Clyde seems to have shifted upstream to Partick-Govan, which at this time appears to have consisted of a group of inter-related sites straddling the river including the ancient church and an assembly place (Doomster Hill) at Govan on the south bank and a royal manor at Partick on the north (Driscoll 2003, 2004).

Closer to Dundonald, in Ayrshire there are three sites which have produced artefacts from the Early Historic period: the crannogs at Buiston and Lochlee (Munro 1882), and Castle Hill, Dalry (Alcock 2003, 325, 448). Buiston is certainly the most valuable of these for comparison, because of the wealth of artefacts discovered by Munro and because of the re-excavation of the site by Ann Crone (2000). The range of artefacts including Continental and Anglo-Saxon imports, evidence for metalworking and organic materials, provides some indication of the materials that have not survived at Dundonald, while the timber-work reveals the architectural possibilities of the buildings otherwise known only from postholes.

With respect to the development sequence at Dundonald, perhaps the closest comparison is provided by Auldhill, Portencross. Here David Caldwell and his team excavated a hill which was fortified in prehistoric times and refurbished repeatedly using earth-and-timber works until these were replaced by the great masonry castle (Caldwell *et al.* 1998). Although Portencross is not on a comparable scale to Dundonald, conceptually and in practice the redevelopment sequence shows strong parallels with it.

Ecclesiastical Setting

There are suggestions of political coherence in the evidence for ecclesiastic organisation in this region. There seems little doubt that Christianity was taking

root here by the 5th century as it was elsewhere in Britain (Clancy 2001, 10–11; see Taylor 1998 for a review the critical place-name evidence). The historical and linguistic evidence is reinforced by the recent discoveries of early Christian cemeteries on the Clyde at Govan (Driscoll 2004, 8) and Ardrossan (DES 2003, 96–7). Of particular relevance to understanding the organisation of the church in Strathclyde are the church dedications to the British St Uinniau (Finnian) who was active in the mid 6th century and was popular in the south-west: he is commemorated at Kilwinning, Beith, Dalry, Lochwinnoch and Inchinnan (Clancy 2001, 18). Collectively this group of dedications suggests a political dimension that may represent the cult of a saint favoured by a particularly successful dynasty. The parish church in Dundonald is dedicated to St Ninian, who was enjoying a period of popularity in the 12th-century, when the village is likely to have been established. However, as Clancy has revealed, a great deal of confusion has arisen over the centuries between Uinniau/Finnian and Ninian (Clancy 2001), so it is possible that an earlier church was dedicated to Uinniau.

There is a large volume of sculpture dating to the 9th and 10th century in northern Britain, with celebrated collections in Govan and Whithorn. While it is agreed that the corpus reflects the cultural mix of the Viking Age, just how this should be read is a matter of debate. It is interesting to note that three of the sites associated with Uinniau/Finnian – Kilwinning, Lochwinnoch and Inchinnan – have sculpture from this period (Craig 1994, 77–8, 81, 89–90). If nothing else this sculpture suggests that the church managed to ride the political storms of the Viking Age. Indeed the relative absence of an interest in the lands in Ayrshire by the Bishop of Glasgow suggests that the influence of the ancient churches of Paisley and Kilwinning survived into the 12th century.

An Early Historic Royal Centre?

On a wide range of criteria, Dundonald meets our expectations of what an Early Historic royal site would be like (see Alcock 2003, 179–200). The form of the fortifications are readily paralleled elsewhere in Scotland. The presence of imported pottery and dye-stuffs, evidence for fine metal working and weapons are also to be expected on a royal site at this time (Campbell 1996). The scant historical record makes it impossible to comment on the sorts of events taking place there, but its history of destruction and reuse surely points to a place of lasting strategic and probably political significance. There seems little reason to doubt that Dundonald was the *caput* of Kyle, and we are probably justified in thinking of it as a royal centre, but how far its influence stretched in the Early Historic period is probably beyond speculation.

THE COMING OF THE STEWARTS

During the earliest period of the Anglo-Norman settlement, the lands of Dundonald, situated in the northern half of Kyle, formed part of the extensive estates of Walter, son of Alan. A charter of Malcolm IV issued in 1161 or 1162 refers to Walter as the king's steward (*dapifer* or *senescallus*) and makes it clear that the office (*senescalcia*) had been bestowed on him by Malcolm's grandfather,

David I. As steward, Walter the Stewart would have been in charge of the day-to-day running of the royal household and was in constant attendance at court, as may be seen from his witnessing of royal charters (cf. RRS I, 31–2). In addition to confirming to him David's grants of Renfrew, Paisley, Pollock, 'Talahret', Cathcart, Dripps, Mearns, Eaglesham, Lochwinnoch and Innerwick (East Lothian), Malcolm also granted Walter the demesne of Partick as well as Inchinnan, Stenton, Hassenden, Legerwood and Birkenside, and for his lodging a toft in every burgh and demesne in the land (RRS I, 225–6, no. 184).

It is not known for certain when or from whom Walter received the northern half of Kyle, which later came to be known as 'Kyle Stewart', or 'Walter's Kyle', as the royal charter that would have conferred it to him has not survived. Although no mention of this estate is made in Malcolm's charter of 1161–2, the witnesses to it include Gilbert, son of Richer, Walter's tenant in Tarbolton in Kyle. Walter's Kyle estate may therefore already have been in his hands by that date, having been granted him by David I or Malcolm IV (cf. RRS I, 286, no. 310; cf. 39). A date around this time also appears likely for other reasons. A feature of the reigns of David I and Malcolm IV was the creation of large fiefs in the south-west of the kingdom to strengthen the western approaches against attack from Galloway, the Isle of Man and the Western Isles and gradually bring them under royal control. Cunningham, for example, with its *caput* at Irvine, was probably created by David I between 1136 and 1153, and was certainly in the hands of Hugh de Morville by c. 1162 (Barrow 1980, 46, 58–9, 62, 72 n.64).

In 1159, Walter the Stewart had accompanied Malcolm IV on an expedition to France with Henry II of England. On his return, Malcolm faced a revolt led by Earl Ferteth, who with five other earls besieged the king in Perth. When the coup failed, the rebels took refuge in Galloway, where the king pursued them with three armed expeditions (Anderson 1922 I, 244–5). Although the names of those who accompanied Malcolm are not recorded, it seems reasonable to assume that Walter the Stewart would have been among them. Another threat to the stability of the realm was posed by the rise of Somerled, a Gallo-Norse leader, who carved out an extensive lordship for himself on the western seaboard at the expense of the Norse kingdom of Man and the Isles. In the 1150s he made a bid for power in alliance with the sons of Malcolm Macheth. Although the attempt failed, Somerled remained a threat to the Scottish kingdom until he was finally defeated and killed at Renfrew in 1164. The Melrose chronicle relates:

Somerled, the under-king (*regulus*) of Argyll, who had been in a state of wicked rebellion for twelve years against his natural lord, Malcolm, king of Scotland, landed at Renfrew, with a large army which he had collected together in Ireland and various places; but at length God's vengeance overtook him, and he and his son (Gillabrighte), and a countless number of his followers, were there slain by a few people of that district. (Stevenson 1988, 13; cf. Anderson 1922 II, 254–5)

It seems more than probable that the royal forces on this occasion were commanded by Walter the Stewart, who held the fee of Renfrew from the king.

Although Walter chose Renfrew around 1163 as the location for the priory that a few years later was to merge into the new abbey of Paisley (Cowan and Easson

1976: 64–5; Barrow 1980, 67), such religious patronage does not necessarily mean that he regarded Renfrew as his main *caput*. In a later grant of various lands and churches to the priory at Renfrew, the Stewart donated the tithe ‘of all my rents from all my lands except Kyle’. In contrast to the lavish grants that he made elsewhere, those that he made within Kyle were relatively modest, amounting to no more than a piece of land in the later parish of Monkton and the church of Prestwick (Innes 1832, 6). This lends support to the view that it was in Kyle that he retained his largest unit of demesne land. In fact it was not until 1222–38 that Walter’s grandson, Walter II, donated the churches of Dundonald (with its chapels of Crosby and Riccarton), Senechar and Auckinlek to Paisley Abbey (Innes 1832, 18). Since such donations would only have been made from the demesne land of the Stewart, this also suggests that Walter I and his successors retained a significant amount of demesne in Kyle, including Dundonald itself, and significantly more than in any of his other mainland fiefs.

Other evidence also suggests that Kyle, and Dundonald in particular, held special prominence among Walter’s fiefs. In one of his charters, dated c. 1163–70, there is listed among the witnesses a man named ‘Richard, my clerk’ (*Ricardo clerico meo*) (Innes 1832, 6). The same clerk appears in various charters that were either made by or witnessed in the presence of Walter or his son, Alan; but in other charters associated with Walter and Alan that were made in their absence, Richard is described as ‘clerk of Dundonald’ (*clerico de Dundonald*, or *Dundouneaud*) (Innes 1832, 99 and 113). This suggests at the very least that an important member of the Stewarts’ administrative staff was actually based at Dundonald, where he possibly also served as chaplain.

In view of its significance among the Stewarts’ fiefs and the position that it occupied as a *caput* of Kyle Stewart, it is highly probable that Dundonald would have been provided with a castle of some sort, if not during the lifetime of Walter I then most certainly during the time when his son, Alan, was Stewart (1177–1204). It was during this period, in 1197, that a new royal castle was erected at Ayr (Barrow 1980, 46; Anderson 1922, II, 348). In 1234, during the period when Alan’s successor, Walter II (1204–41), was acting as Stewart of Scotland (*senescallus*), the Gallovidians rose in revolt and, according to the Melrose Chronicle, ‘devastated with fire and sword some of the royal lands contiguous to themselves’ (Stevenson 1988, 60–1; Anderson 1980, II, 494–5). Kyle Regis may well have been the area affected by this incursion; and, when King Alexander II led an army into Galloway to crush the rising the following year (Anderson 1980, II, 495–8), Kyle Stewart and its lord may be expected to have played a significant strategic and logistical role. Among the witnesses to Walter II’s charters we find Nicolas, the parson of Dundonald (*persona de Dundovenald*), and his brother William (Innes 1832, 19 and 40).

Alexander, the 4th Stewart of Scotland (1241–83), who defeated the Norwegians at Largs in 1263, was also sometimes referred to as Alexander ‘of Dundonald’ (RMS I, 509 n.2). However, no mention is made of any castle at Dundonald, before the late 13th century. One of the first references is made by an unreliable source, the 17th-century historian Hugh Macdonald, who relates how Angus, lord of the Isles, assisted Robert I in holding Dundonald against the English during the Wars of Independence (Macphail 1914, I, 14–16). The first

certain mention of the castle is in a charter dated between *c.* 1283 and 22 July 1298, by which James, 5th Stewart, granted some land near the castle to the clerk, William ‘del Schaw’ (Dillon 1966, 32–6; Barrow and Royan 1985, 182). The lack of any documentation before this period, however, is by no means unique in the study of Scottish castles. Many major castles known through excavation or by other means to have been in existence in the 13th century or earlier fail similarly to appear in any written record (Fig 4).

James Stewart forfeited his lands, including Dundonald, on 31 August 1298, following his support of William Wallace during the Wars of Independence. They were granted by King Edward I to Sir Alexander Lindsay and others, and then within the same year to Henry de Lacy, earl of Lincoln (CDS II, 257, no. 1006; cf. Barrow 1976, 144 n.1; Barrow and Royan 1985, 177–8). Although James Stewart submitted himself to the king’s will and regained his estates in November 1305 (CDS II, 463, no. 1713), they were soon back again in the hands of de Lacy, who held them until 23 October 1306, when James Stewart again submitted himself to Edward I at Lanercost Priory in Westmorland (CDS II, 494, no. 1843; 496, no. 1857; cf. Barrow 1976, 189, 217–8; Barrow and Royan 1985, 180).

James’s brother, William le fiz le Stywarde, had paid homage to Edward I at Berwick on 28 August 1296 (CDS II, 203). He evidently continued to serve the king during the latter’s Scottish war, but was fined a ‘rauncun’ of £50 for harbouring his brother against the king’s peace. In the petition that he sent to Edward in 1307, asking for a partial remission of his unpaid fine in consideration of his good service, he is named William Dundonald (CDS IV, 381, no. 1836). William had most likely inherited this name from his father, Alexander of Dundonald, though it is more difficult to say whether this should be taken to mean that he actually held the castle of Dundonald at any time.

THE ROYAL CASTLE

The lordship of Dundonald often seems to have been held by one of the Stewart’s sons, usually, though not always, the eldest. During the 1360s, for example, while Robert the Stewart (later King Robert II) was holding the earldom of Strathearn, his eldest son and heir, John Stewart (later Robert III), was known as lord of the barony of Kyle (*dominus barronie de Kyle*) (Innes 1832, 29 and 69; cf. RMS, I 177–8, no. 491 [1369]). Dundonald continued to play an important role after Robert II’s accession to the throne in 1371. We find him issuing charters there in early December of that year (RMS I, 135–6, no. 378; 138, no. 392; 145, no. 407; 154–6, no. 428; 197, no. 540) and again on 25 December 1389 (RMS, 303, no. 803). According to the early 15th-century chronicler Andrew of Wytoun, Robert II’s death on 19 April 1390 occurred ‘at Dundownald in his cuntre’ (Laing 1879, 44; Amours 1908, 264–5), while Walter Bower, writing of the same event in the 1440s, specifically mentions that the king died in the castle (Watt 1993, VII, 446; cf. Nicholson 1974, 203–4).

Robert II’s successor, Robert III, also made frequent visits to Dundonald (Fig 5). He issued charters there in March 1391 (RMS I, 303, nos 803–4), July 1391 (RMS I no. 836), February 1393 (RMS II 516, no. 2429), November 1404 (RMS II 87, no. 378), January 1405 (RMS II no. 379; 92–3, no. 403), and October 1405.

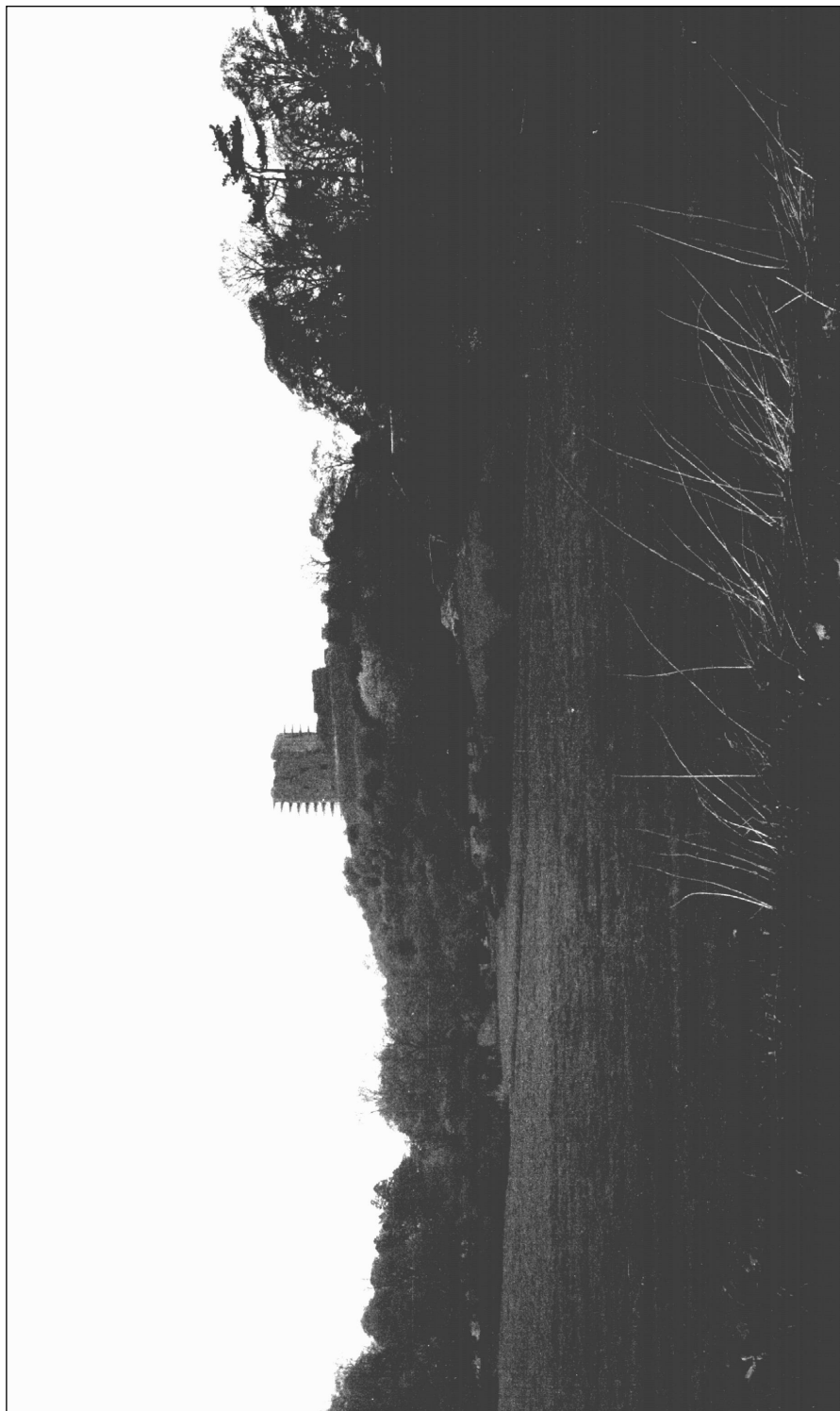


Fig 4 The site from the SE with conservation scaffolding in position.



Fig 5 The site from the NE at the time of the excavations.

Wyntoun claims that Robert III also died at Dundonald, on 4 April 1406 (Amours 1908, vi, 415), but other sources, including Bower, record on better authority that he died in his castle of Rothesay, on the Isle of Bute (Watt, VIII, 62, 177 and 178; ER III, xcν–xcvi). John Stewart, the natural brother both of the late king and of the guardian of the realm, Robert, duke of Albany, is referred to in 1407 and 1415 as John Stewart of Dundonald. This designation may simply mean that he had been born there; but it could equally well indicate that he was holding the castle after his father's death (RMS I, 380, no. 900; RMS 650, app. 2, no. 1976).

James I seems to have taken the castle into his own hands when he returned from exile in England in 1424. In 1426, on the king's authority, £16.13s.4d. was paid from the account of the custumars and bailiffs of Ayr to Fergus Kennedy for repairing the king's castle at Dundonald and the park there (ER IV, 401). The account rendered for the period May 1433–June 1434 by Thomas Kennedy, bailiff of the royal estates in Carrick and elsewhere, including Dundonald, gives the annual income from the lands of Dundonald as £47.17s.8d., a value that was to remain relatively stable over the next fifty years. Out of this sum the following payments were recorded in the same account: 13d.4d. (one merk) from the lands of the *Holme* given in alms, as from ancient times, to the chaplain who celebrated in the chapel of St Ninian, near the castle (*prope castrum*); £1.6s.8d. for the royal park of Dundonald; £3 to the gatekeeper and two watchmen in the castle; £2 for mowing the meadow of Dundonald and making hay; and £1.1s.9d. for the wages of the stable-hands who cared for the king's horses during the period of the account (ER III, 594–6).

The comptroller's account for 1449–50 records the receipt of a grassum payment of £12 from Gilbert Kennedy for his entry into the lands of Dundonald (ER V, 395). As bailiff for the earldom of Carrick, Kennedy rendered a series of accounts for the royal lands of Dundonald from July 1450 until July 1479 (ER V–X, *passim*). For most of that period the annual income due from Dundonald was £49.0s.8d. Out of this, £16.6s.8d. was paid annually to Alan, Lord Cathcart, for lands in Dundonald that he held in feu from the king. The residue of £32.14s. seems from the start to have been withheld by Kennedy himself and was only mentioned in the accounts presented from 1456–7 onwards, although in that year the sum was accidentally given (at least in the published version) as £31.14s. Of this withheld sum, eleven merks (£7.6s.8d.) were to be paid to the chaplain, while the remainder, which in normal years would have been £25.7s.4d., was retained by the comptar (ER VI, 341–3; ER VII, 27, 388, 450, 562). In the account for 1468–69, the short paragraph that had been inserted since 1456–7 to explain this withheld money was expanded to include the additional detail that the sum retained by the comptar himself was in respect of his custody of the castle (*pro custodia castri*) (ER VII, 646); and, in the 1473–4 account, the chaplain is described as 'celebrating in the chapel of Dundonald' (ER VIII, 297). It is probable that Gilbert Kennedy had been keeper of the castle from the time of his first entry into the Dundonald lands, despite the apparent lack of any other record to that effect. In the account for 1467–8, however, he is referred to as Lord Kennedy, bailiff of Carrick (ER VII, 562–4), and in the following one for 1468–9 he is styled Lord Kennedy, king's chamberlain in the county of Carrick and lord of Dundonald (ER VI, 646–7). In addition to the normal payments made to Lord Cathcart, to the

chaplain and to Lord Kennedy himself, the account for 1466-7 also included a sum of £3 paid from other sources to the comptar for the expense of imprisoning certain wrongdoers in the castle of Dundonald, on the king's orders (ER, VII, 452).

LATE MEDIEVAL TENANTS AND TACKSMEN

From 1477, Gilbert Kennedy's accounting in respect of Dundonald began to fall into arrears, apparently because of the non-payment or non-collection of rents (ER, VIII, 404-6, 512-13, 614-15). When his son, John, succeeded him as Lord Kennedy and chamberlain of Carrick in 1481, he inherited more than £100 of arrears, even after £64.15s.4d. had been effectively written off (ER VIII, 614-15; IX, 122-3). The arrears continued to mount in succeeding years (ER IX, 195-6, 273-4, 408-9, 495-7), until in the account for 1487-8 there is no mention of Dundonald at all (ER X, 16-18). The reason why John, Lord Kennedy, was unable to put the Dundonald accounts in order after his father's death seems to have been that the castle and lands were either never under his control or, if they were, quickly passed out of it. For in December 1482, James III had granted the custody of the castle to Alan, Lord Cathcart, on the same terms on which it had earlier been held by John Ross of Montgrenane, namely for the tenure in free barony and in feu for 1s. a year of the domain lands of Dundonald (Dundownald) and the lands of Balrassy, Parkthorn, Auchinche, Bogside, Galriggs and Gudelandis in Kyle Stewart (RMS II, 320, no. 1530).

In the account for August 1488-August 1489, John Kennedy was finally excused answering for the lands of Dundonald, 'because John Wallace of Craigie has custody of its castle and is occupying the lands of its barony, for which he is answerable' (ER X, 125). The arrears from the years 1477-82, amounting to £227.11s.4d., were eventually written off in 1492 (ER X, 327-8).

In the years following, the lands of Dundonald were let to a succession of tacksmen. From 20 July 1508 they were let for eight years to the Lord Lyon King of Arms; but on his death, they were let on similar terms, on 6 December 1512, to Sir David Hume of Wedderburn and his son, George. As well as the lands mentioned in 1482, they included the Mains and the Reedbog mill and meadow (ER XIII, 656-7). Hume was forfeited in 1518, and on 16 June the lands were thereupon leased for five years to Mr John Campbell of Thorntoun, treasurer, and his wife Isabella (ER XIV, 347, 487). Campbell had relinquished the lease by 30 January 1520, when William Wallace, the tutor (or guardian) of Craigie, and his wife, Elizabeth Campbell, took seisin for the rest of the term (ER XIV, 455, 487). On 15 August 1526, Wallace was granted the feu of the lands of Dundonald, including the mill, woods and castle (*cum molendino, silvis et fortalicio*), thereby increasing his security of tenure (RMS III, 82, no. 367). Following Wallace's death, the estate passed in May 1531 to his son, William (ER XVI, 490, 534). On 20 May 1536, however, after the death of William Wallace junior, James V granted the lands and castle of Dundonald to Robert Boyd of Kilmarnock and his wife Helen Somerville, revoking the earlier grant made during his minority to William Wallace senior (RMS III, 353, no. 1583; 371, no. 1668). Boyd, however, was unable to evict the sitting tenants, despite making two attempts to do so by force in 1538 and 1541. In 1543, he therefore resigned his rights in favour of John Wallace,

tutor of Craigie (ER XVIII, 35), though it was not until 1545 that Wallace and his wife, Katherine Kennedy, received charters of confirmation (RMS III, 737, no. 3136; 740, no. 3151). In April 1543, John Wallace also obtained a grant of the glebe, manse and other ploughlands associated with the chapel of St Ninian in Dundonald from the chaplain, Thomas Hucheson (RMS VII, 569, no. 1578).

John Wallace is recorded paying £40 in feuferm for Dundonald in 1558 (ER XIX, 76); but from 1564 until 1573 the lands were in the hands of the crown (ER XIX, 429). Another John Wallace of Dundonald took seisin in January 1573 (ER XIX, 429), and in October of that year and again in March 1575 he and his wife, Agnes Stewart, received feu charters for the domain lands in Dundonald known as Burnside (RMS IV, 564, no. 2149; 640, no. 2381). The castle and the lands associated with the chaplainry remained in the hands of the Wallace family until the early 17th century (RMS VIII, 652–3, no. 1916 [1632]). By 1588–9, however, John Wallace of Dundonald had moved residence to nearby Auchans Castle, which had been in the family's possession since 1527 (ER XXII, 25, 112, 187).

THE DEMISE OF THE CASTLE

From the 1590s onwards, all estate business was conducted at Auchans. Dundonald, however, continued to be used as an occasional lockup for local minor offenders. In 1607, for example, a woman was confined for two days and two nights in the castle for 'a relapse in the usual offence' (Gillespie 1939, 335). The evidence of wills and charters also indicates that Auchans remained the Wallace family's principal residence from this period (NAS GD8/379; NAS RS11/3, fols 255r–255v; NAS CC8/8/27, fols 214v–216r).

In 1632, burdened by debt, John Wallace's grandson, Matthew Wallace, was obliged to sell the lands of Dundonald to James Mathieson. In 1638, however, the lands of Dundonald, including the manse, glebe, arable land and meadow associated with the chaplainry of St Ninian, were sold to Sir William Cochrane of Cowdon. Charles I's charter of 5 March, which confirmed Cochrane and his wife, Euphenia Scott, as joint feu-holders, also erected the kirktoon of Dundonald into a free burgh and granted Cochrane the right to elect the bailiffs and to build a tolbooth and market cross (RMS VIII, 289–90, no. 805). Cochrane also acquired Auchans Castle, which he appears to have extended in 1644 (MacGibbon and Ross 1887, II, 179). It was there, in May 1648, that he settled the lands of Dundonald on his wife, during her lifetime (RMS IX, 735, no. 1979). Cochrane was granted the title Lord Cochrane of Dundonald in 1647 (RMS IX, 702, no. 1885) and became the first earl of Dundonald in 1669; he died and was buried at Dundonald in 1686. The estate was sold by the sixth earl in 1726, but he retained the castle, which by then was quite ruinous.

On 1 November 1773, the castle was visited by Dr Samuel Johnson, accompanied by James Boswell, who has left us the following account of their visit:

As we passed very near the castle of Dundonald, which was one of the many residences of the kings of Scotland, and in which Robert the Second lived and died, Dr Johnson wished to survey it particularly. It stands on a beautiful rising ground, which is seen at a great distance on several quarters, and from whence

there is an extensive prospect of the rich district of Cunninghame, the western sea, the isle of Arran, and a part of the northern coast of Ireland. It has long been unroofed; and, though of considerable size, we could not, by any power of imagination, figure it as having been a suitable habitation for majesty. Dr Johnson, to irritate my old Scottish enthusiasm, was very jocular on the homely accommodation of ‘King Bob’, and roared and laughed till the ruins echoed. (Boswell 1796, 392)

The castle was scheduled in 1920. After some concern about decay of the fabric and misuse for agricultural purposes, it was finally placed in State guardianship by the earl of Dundonald in 1953. A campaign of restoration then commenced, a notable feature of the work being the narrow-gauge railway which ascended the hill to transport materials to the site. The *Evening Times* for 1 March 1955 reported on the work:

Home of royalty at one time, 800-year-old Dundonald Castle is showing alarming signs of its great age. Deep cracks are slitting the thick walls, and the whinstone which forms its massive structure is crumbling as the lime, which binds it, rots. To preserve it for the nation, the Ancient Monuments Division of the Ministry of Works has taken over.

Men skilled in the delicate work of preserving buildings of great age have moved in, hauling their whin dust, cement and tools up the 800ft hill to the castle by means of a small-gauge rail track.

It was in conjunction with this work that a programme of archaeological excavation was undertaken in 1986–8 and 1993. The Friends of Dundonald took over visitor management, opening a visitor centre in 1997, while Historic Scotland retains responsibility for conservation of the fabric.