

Ben Lawers

National Nature Reserve



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KILTYRIE HIDDEN HISTORY TRAIL

A hardworking landscape

People have lived and worked in this landscape for thousands of years. This trail reveals patterns of survival and adaptation in the land and its people.



This **sickle fragment** was one of the many finds excavated during the Ben Lawers Historic Landscape Project. The form and function of a sickle have changed little in hundreds of years. A symbol of hard graft, it represents the spirit of those who worked the land over centuries of change.

"For some people an archaeological site is just a pile of old stones but if you were to remove all these elements from the landscape it would be a far less interesting place."

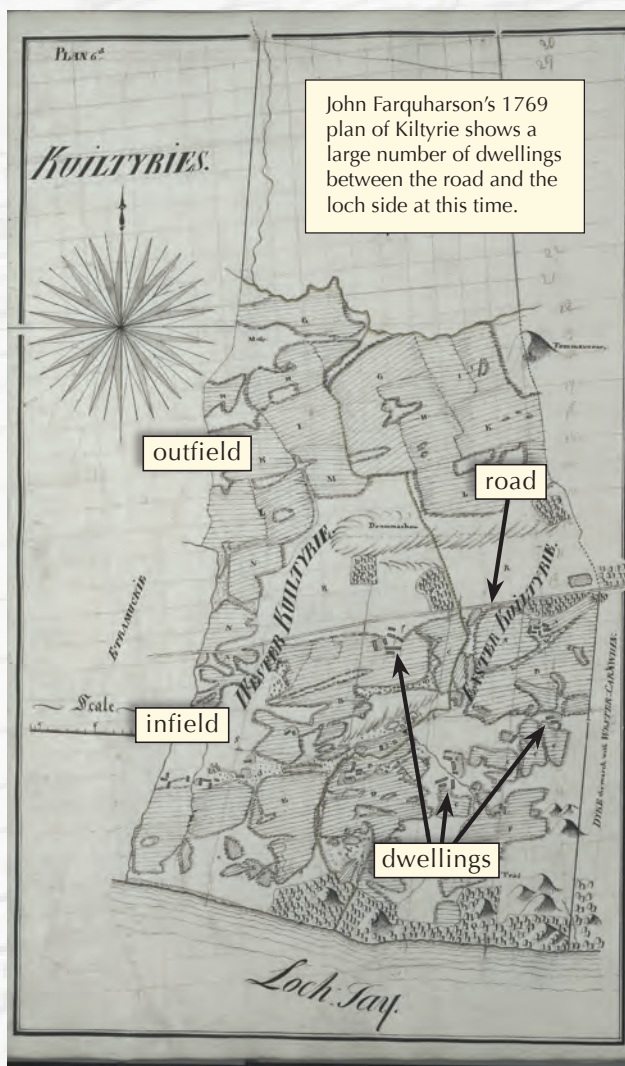
Derek Alexander, Head of Archaeology at the National Trust for Scotland



Pressure to improve

Until the late 18th century the fertile land around Loch Tay was divided up into traditional 'runrigs'. Individuals or families were allocated these rigs (or strips) of land to grow crops. By the 1770s estate records reveal concern at overcrowding in the area.

A new system was introduced from 1790 to improve what estate authorities considered the 'old confused way'. New settlements, hamlets and villages were formed. Larger and fewer single tenant farms were created, paying rent to the estate. This sifted those who had the ability, money and desire to work the land from those who did not.



Self improvement

Kiltyries was one of the new farms, created on former rough grazings or 'outfields'. This was the first time people had tried to create a living solely from the ground between the road and head dyke. It wasn't easy as outfields needed improving to grow any crops. Those hardy souls who were granted the land had first of all to clear the stony ground, create field dykes and then build their own homes and byres.

Landlords considered that if tenants worked hard they could improve their lot. Those without the means left to seek labour or service in the newly created villages and growing cities, or in some cases emigrated, leaving a more manageable population to build a life within the new system.

Chief to landlord

As economic pressures forced estates to pay their way, landowners appointed factors to collect rents from tenants. One estate factor, in 1831, described a 'superfluous population, useless beasts of burden ... they consume the produce of the soil, and are a very heavy tax upon the proprietor.' Traditional ties were damaged and the old patriarchal system was replaced by the cold bottom line.

Change caused upset among tenants, who responded from the 1790s with both group and individual petitions appealing for access to land, grazing rights or fairer rent levels. Tenants' petitions call on old ties and loyalties, emphasising the recruits their families had supplied for military service of the estate. One tenant humbly describes himself as 'an obedient and dutiful child'.

Change and change again

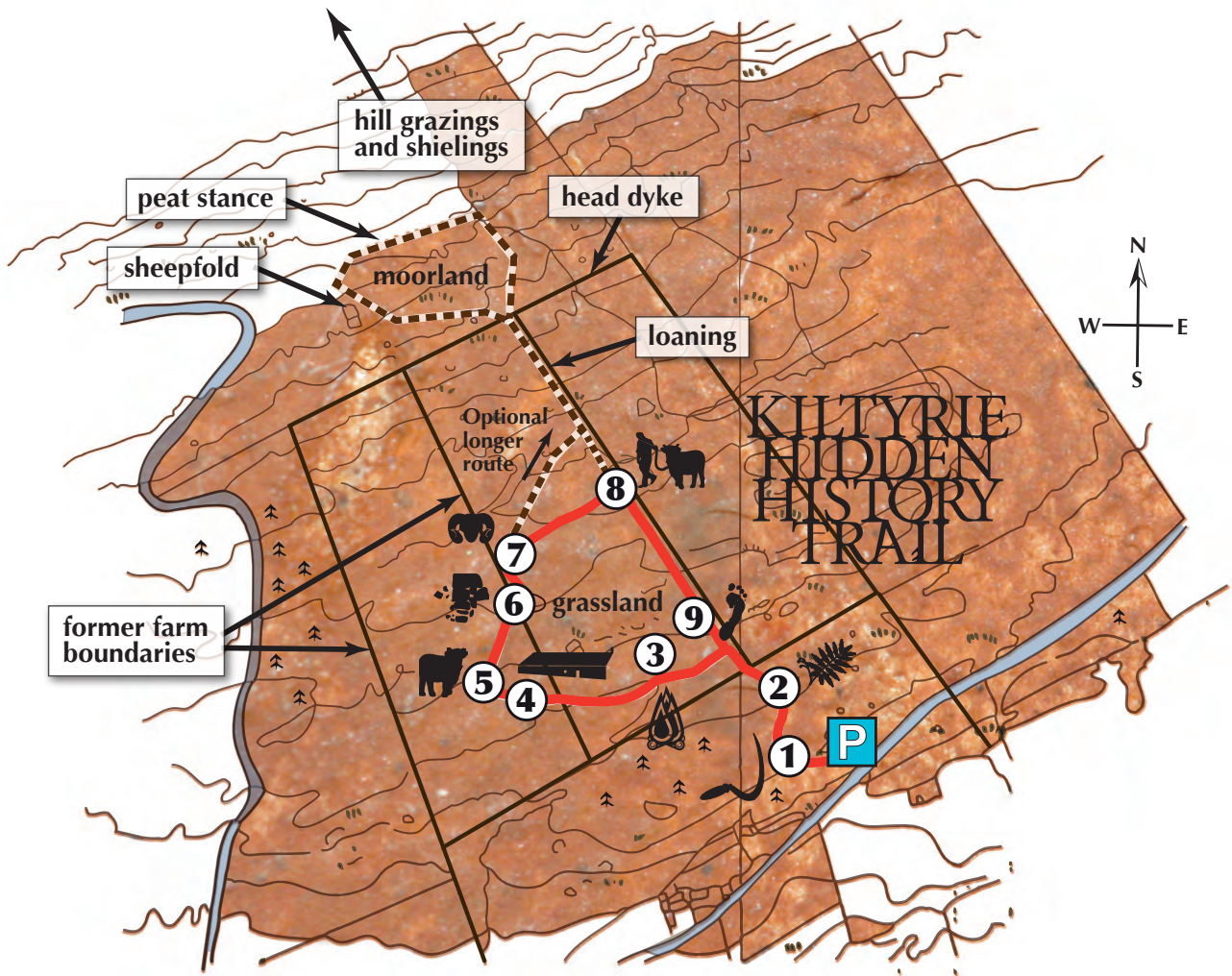
The new outfield system was short-lived as wider economic factors and poor harvests in the 1820s–30s increased the pressure on the land once more. Estate records reveal appeals to the landlord for a delay in rent payments and tenants fearful of eviction. The outfield system was not turning a profit, so by the 1840s more profitable sheep farms were herded in.

Farmers either adapted or moved on. Homes made of stone – cleared from the very soils they had to work – were broken up to make the sheepfolds, and the footprint on the land changed again. Kiltyries' population fell by a third between 1769 and 1841, and by 1891 it was only around 15% of what it once had been.



Peat-cutting spade found in the barn near the farmstead (site 4).

KILTYRIE HIDDEN HISTORY TRAIL



Follow the Kiltyrie Hidden History Trail to find out what we uncovered in this landscape.



You are now walking the route of the **original track** that once led from the pre-18th-century settlements on the lower ground, closer to the loch, to the outfields where cattle were grazed. This rougher ground is where the new outfield settlement was created. It was divided into four plots under the name of Kiltyrie.



There has been **woodland** here since before 1769. Wood was a precious resource for building, tools and fuel. The Trust replanted this area with native species, such as birch and rowan, and fenced it off to protect them from grazing deer and sheep. It is now regenerating naturally.



This structure was a stone **limekiln**, built in the early 19th century as part of the estate improvements. Limestone, coal and possibly peat were burnt inside to produce quicklime which, when mixed with water, produced lime. Lime neutralised the acid in peaty soils to help crops grow and was painted onto buildings as a protective limewash. **Caution:** please do not climb on the structure as it is unstable.



Main trail distance: 1.75km (1 mile), with an ascent of 40m (130ft)
Time: approx 1 hour



Optional longer route (unmarked): an additional 1.25km (¾ mile); allow an extra 45 mins. **Take care:** this extended route includes a steep climb (ascent of 60m (196ft)) and often wet, muddy terrain.

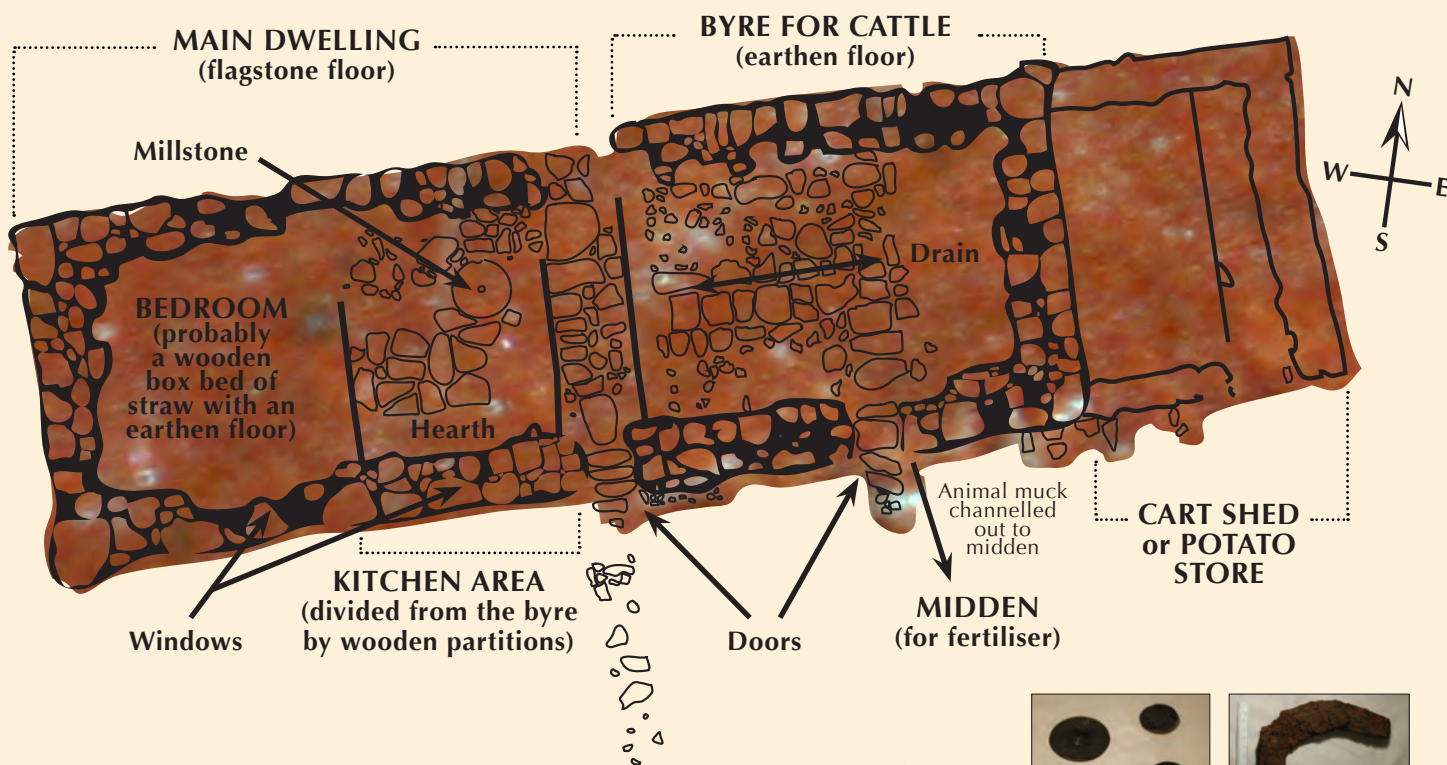
Please note: the ground is rough and boggy in places so wear sturdy footwear; sheep and cattle may be grazing so respect the land and livestock; leave gates as you find them; keep dogs under control.



This ruined building is part of a **farmstead**, excavated in 2003. Estate records indicate that it was built by Duncan MacPherson in 1798 as part of the new outfield settlements. You can visit a rare surviving example of a similar dwelling at Moirlanich, near Killin. www.nts.org.uk/Property/Moirlanich-Longhouse/

SITE 4 – PLAN OF DWELLING

The building had walls of stone, a timber frame and a thatched roof (most likely heather). The people lived at one end, and their animals at the other. The location and date of finds suggest the house was occupied in two phases, but by 1864 it was roofless and uninhabited.



Some of the finds excavated from site 4.



Metal buttons



Horseshoe



Clay pipe fragments



Pottery fragments



Glass shards



This slightly **sunken trackway** was for driving animals to the summer shieling grounds. In the 17th and 18th centuries, people led their cattle up to the higher ground to graze, away from growing crops. The raised earth banks protected the crops on either side from heavy hooves.



This is the edge of the **field boundary** between one of the four 'new farms' that made up Kiltyrie. Tenants cleared stones from the fields to make the dykes and improve rough soil for crops.



Two **turf and stone banks** which enclosed small plots of cultivated land, on the 1769 map, are still visible. Look uphill and trace the well-trodden shieling tracks. The **sheepfold** was built in 1848 from the stone of a nearby building. From the 1840s, commercial sheep farming replaced the short-lived outfield farms at Kiltyrie.

■ ■ ■ ■ At the dyke head, follow the peat track to the sheepfold. As the track curves back you will see small rectangular stone structures, used for drying peat. Further along you will pass sites of medieval settlement, now just visible as turf humps.



Two parallel banks plot a **loaning** (or trackway), running straight uphill. This was used by those who lived below the outfield settlements as a bypass route to drive their cattle past the 1790s plots to the open hill ground.



A band of limestone runs across the hillside. Look out for **rocky hollows** where limestone was quarried for burning in the limekiln (site 2). Walking downhill, you are **tracing the footsteps** of people and cattle over 200 years ago.

Excavation and research has helped to unearth the hidden history of this hillside and its people, but this is a story of rural change and depopulation seen right across Perthshire and the Highlands at this time. The landscape is always changing, but the basic human requirement for a roof over our heads and work to provide food to eat remains constant.



The National Trust for Scotland

The National Trust for Scotland is an independent charity with the aim of conserving, managing and promoting Scotland's cultural and natural heritage. We depend on our members and visitors to enable us to continue our work, both now and in the future. Please support us in achieving this aim; join the Trust at Ben Lawers and contribute directly to the management work on the reserve, or join online at www.nts.org.uk

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If you enjoyed the trail, why not visit the **Edramucky Trail**, where there are more remnants of past land use, and enjoy some of the flowers and wildlife on the lower slopes of Ben Lawers?

For more hidden histories within Scotland's landscapes, visit Ben Lomond's Ardess Hidden History Trail: www.nts.org.uk/Property/Ben-Lomond/

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John Farquharson's 1769 plan of Kiltyrie © National Records of Scotland, RHP973/1/6