

Dunyvaig and Hinterland Assessment Project DHAP

2019 Fieldwork at
Dunyvaig Castle,
Isle of Islay

Steven Mithen
September 2019

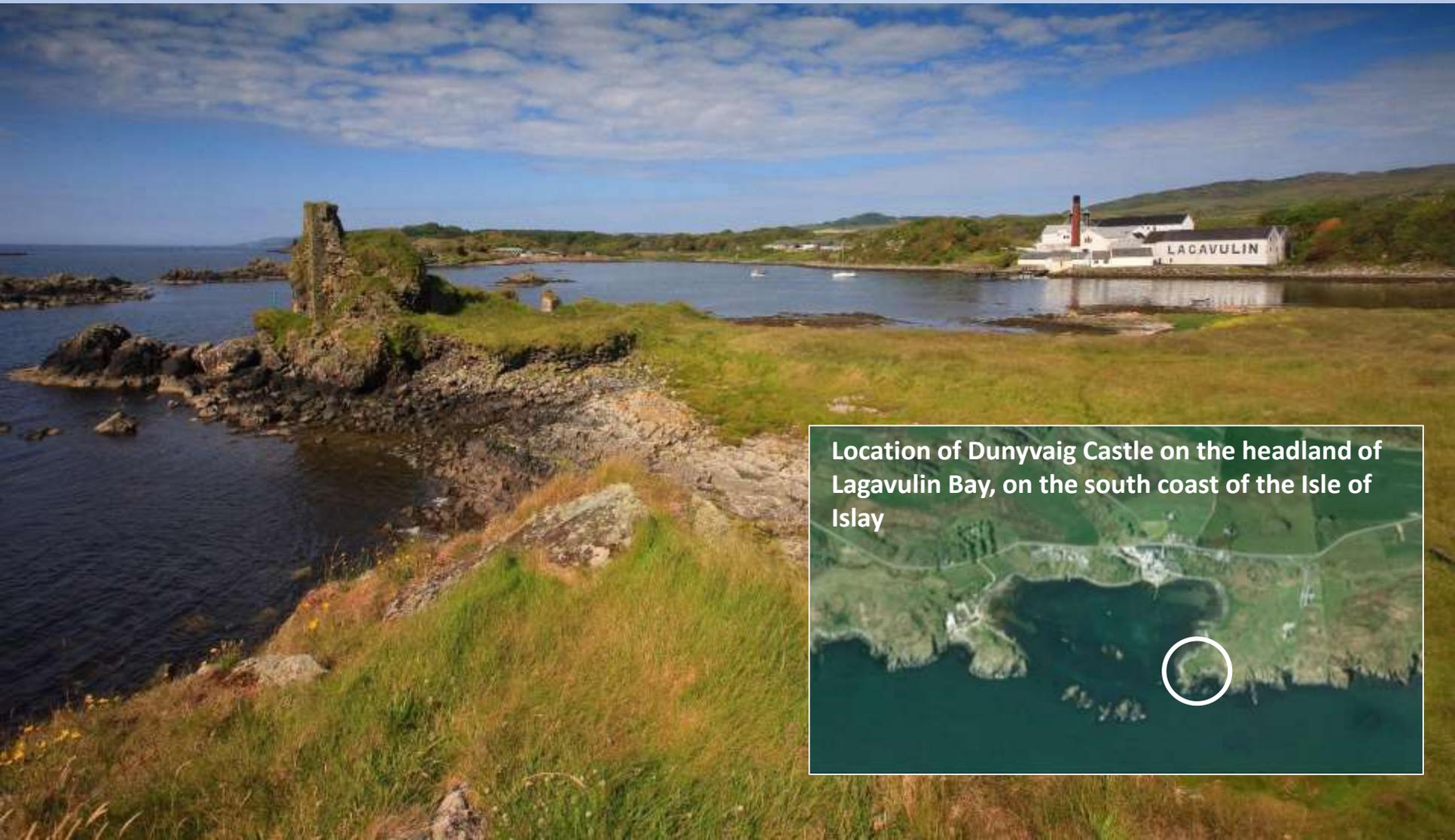
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Dunyvaig Castle was the naval fortress for the MacDonald Lordship of the Isles 1336-1493 and was fought over between the Campbells and MacDonalds in 17th centuries. The DHAP is undertaking a two-year archaeological assessment of the castle and its hinterland, 2018-19



Location of Dunyvaig Castle on the headland of Lagavulin Bay, on the south coast of the Isle of Islay

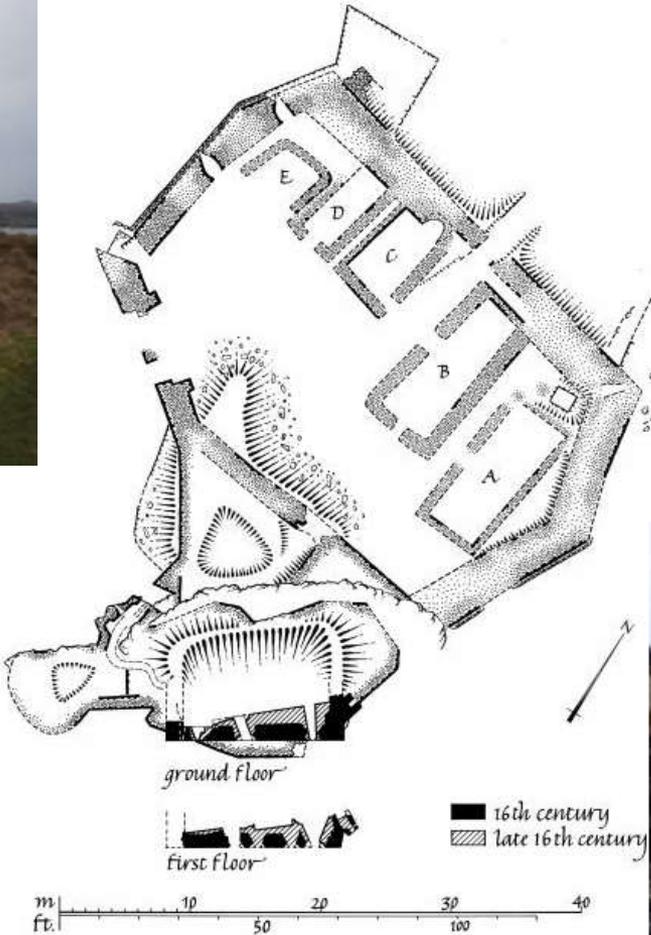


Dunyvaig Castle was surveyed by the RCHAMS in the 1970s, and is well known for its prominent tower and sea-gate. Its eastern wall is suffering erosion. Five buildings of unknown date and function are evident within its courtyard.

The sea gate



The tower



The eastern wall



The Dunyvaig and Hinterland Assessment Project is led by Islay Heritage as a means to achieve its charitable aims. The project is supported by the University of Reading, that uses the DHAP as an archaeological field school.

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Research

To learn about the castle, its environments and hinterland, and the role it played in the political, social and economic history of the 12th-17th centuries

Education

To use the excavation as a training school for University students and volunteers, as a resource for Islay Schools and a subject for educational, but entertaining, visits and talks about Islay's heritage

Recreation

To transform Dunyvaig into an attractive, safe and informative heritage centre

Conservation

To conserve and protect the castle

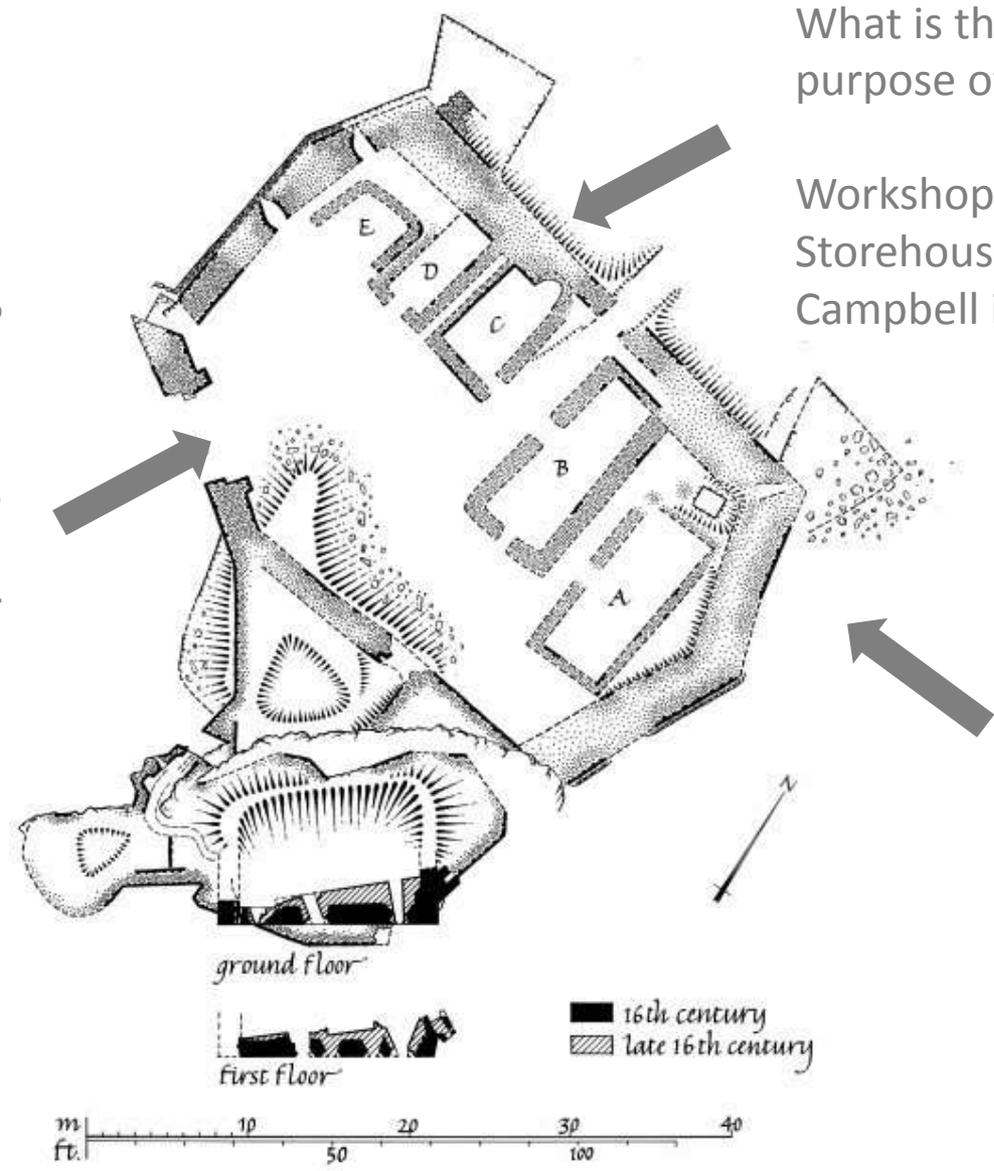
The DHAP is evaluating the potential of the deposits at Dunyvaig to address a suite of research questions that include ...

When was the castle first built?
By whom?
What was it used for?

What is the date and the purpose of these rooms?
Workshops for ships?
Storehouses for traded goods?
Campbell inserts?

Were ships dragged through the sea gate for winter storage and repair?

When were these walls constructed and what lies beneath?



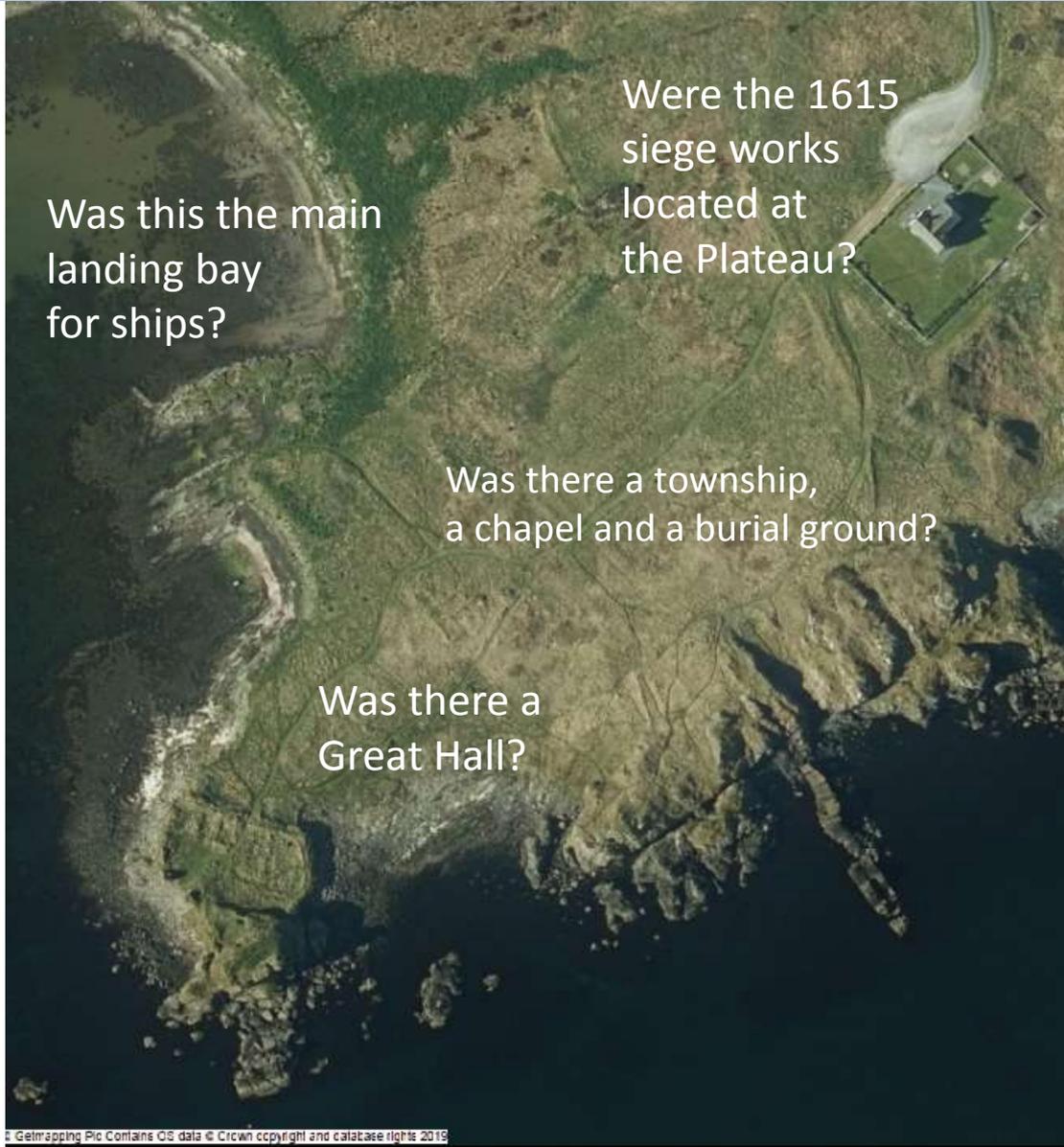
There are further questions to address about the area in the immediate vicinity of the castle

Was this the main landing bay for ships?

Were the 1615 siege works located at the Plateau?

Was there a township, a chapel and a burial ground?

Was there a Great Hall?



The DHAP was started on 12 August 2018 with a piped procession to the site to begin the first season of fieldwork



Three evaluation trenches were excavated in 2018

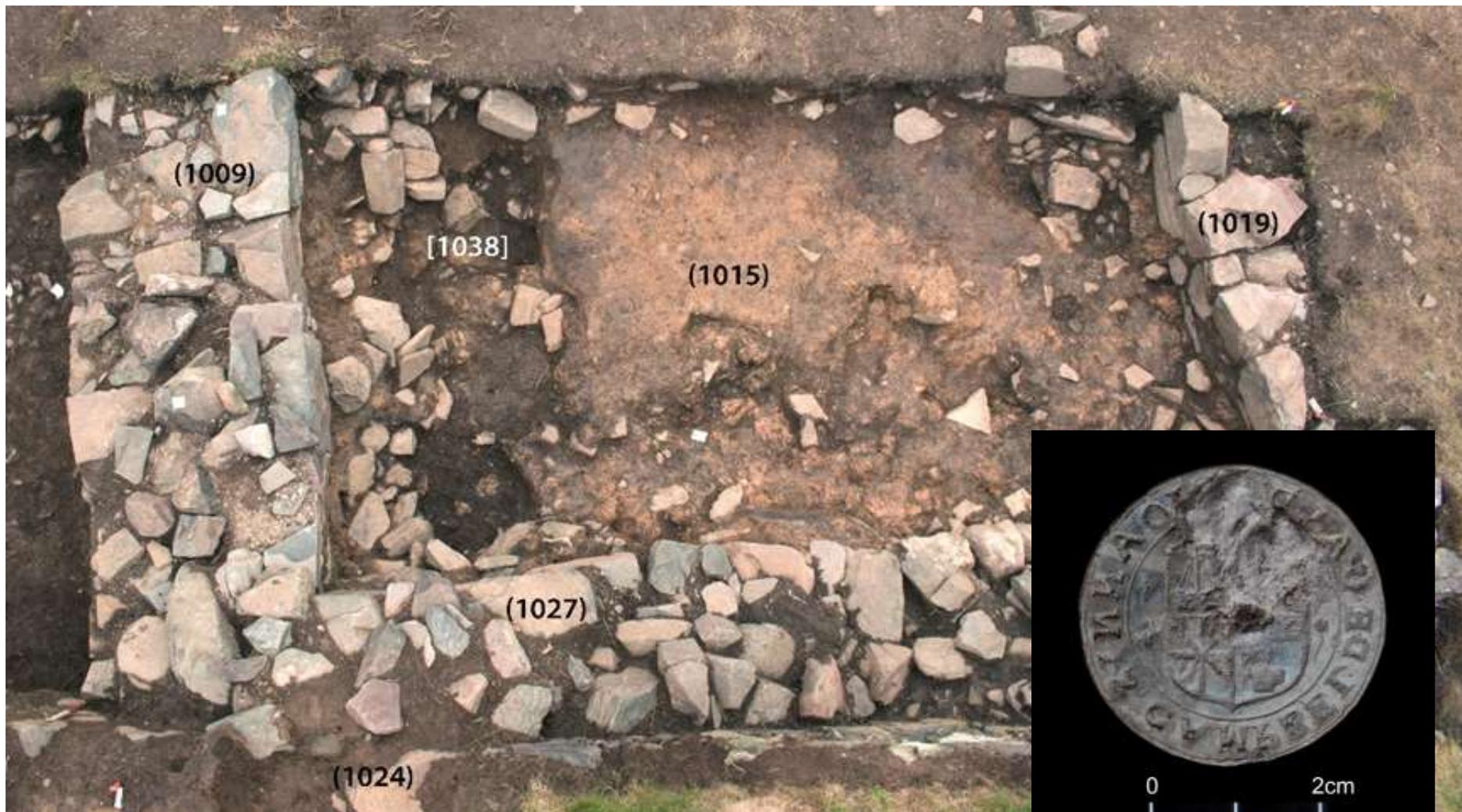


Trench 2

Trench 1

Trench 3

The seal matrix of Sir John Campbell of Cawdor was found on the floor of a building within the courtyard, excavated in Trench 1, 2018



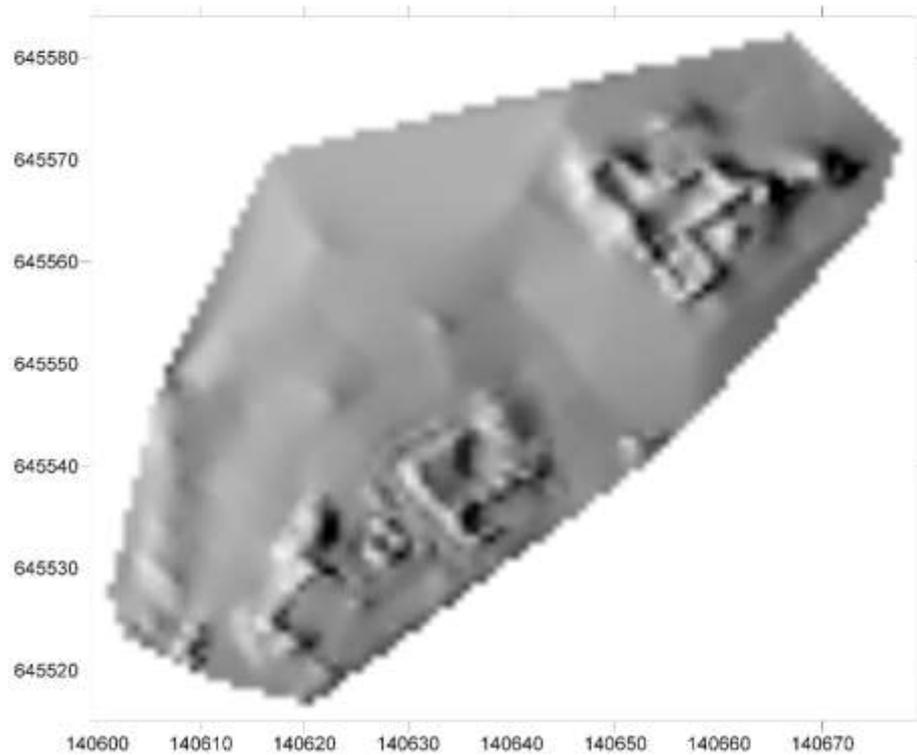
Sir John Campbell's seal matrix has been cleaned and is now on display in the Museum of Islay Life, Port Charlotte



The 2019 excavation team consisted of 10 staff and 30 students and volunteers.

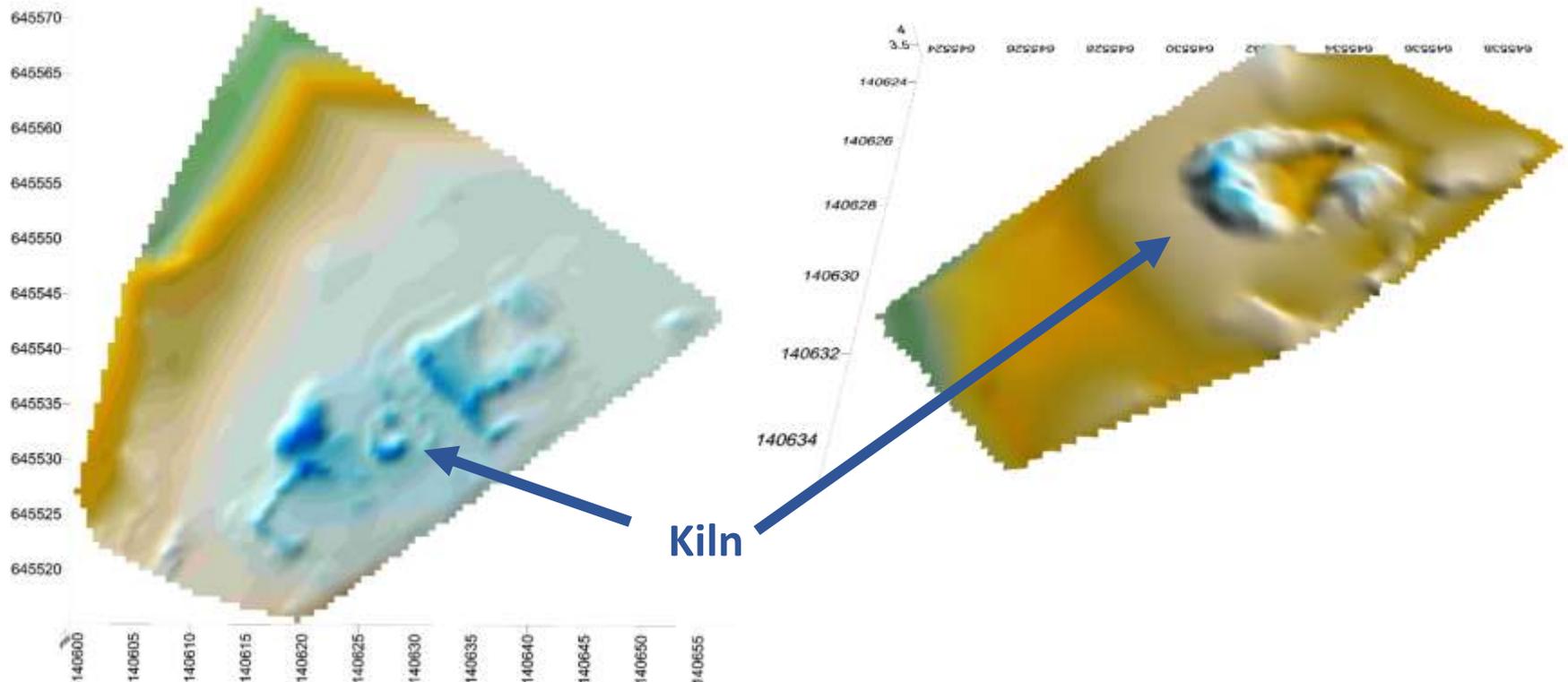


The 2018 survey of the castle was extended to the area outside of the castle walls where a new complex of buildings was identified



One of the newly discovered structures was a kiln. We have yet to determine what type of kiln, but are intrigued as to whether this might be the 'Malt Kiln of Dunnyveg' referred to in rental of 1686.

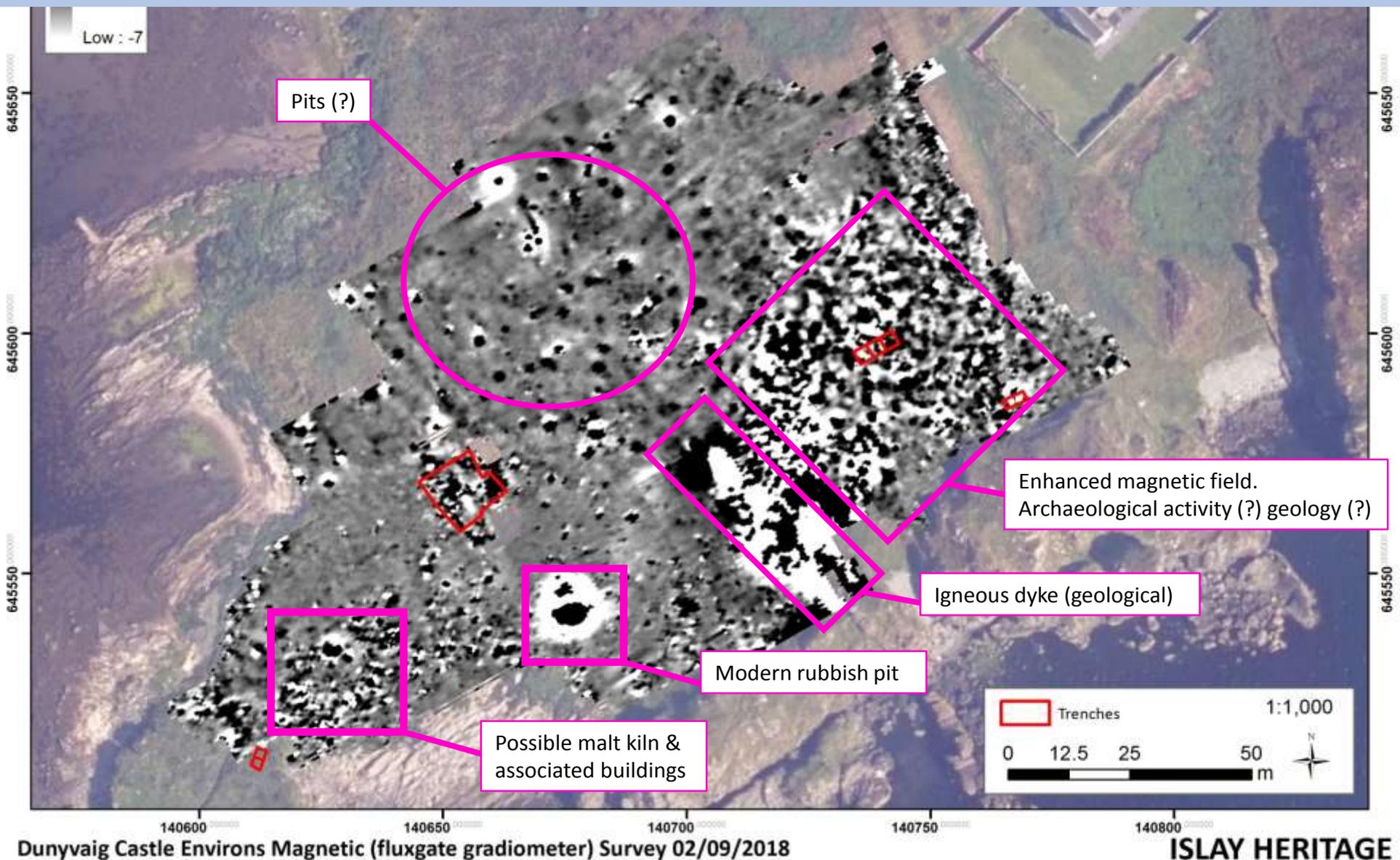
- 'Rentall of Ila: Beltan sett 1686:
- Myln of Dunnyveg set to Donald Campbell and payes of money rent, of ait meill, of pultrie fowlies;
- Brewseat of Lagmullin set to Robert Wallace;
- Malt Kiln of Dunnyveg set to Donald Browne with the duelling house and yard
- Surneg, with licence of brewing set to William Fraser



The 2018 geophysics survey outside of the castle walls using resistivity was supplemented in 2019 by a magnetic survey led by Rob Fry. This method is especially useful for detecting areas of burning below the ground surface



The magnetic survey produced many anomalies – the areas of black – that might indicate area of human activity.



Three test trenches (4, 5 & 6) and three evaluation trenches (1b, 2 and 3) excavated in 2019



Test Trench 4 was excavated over an area of a geophysical anomaly. This was found to derive from underlying beach deposits – the excavation provided a valuable insight into the geology of Dunyvaig



Trench 3 continued to explore buildings outside of the castle discovered in 2018



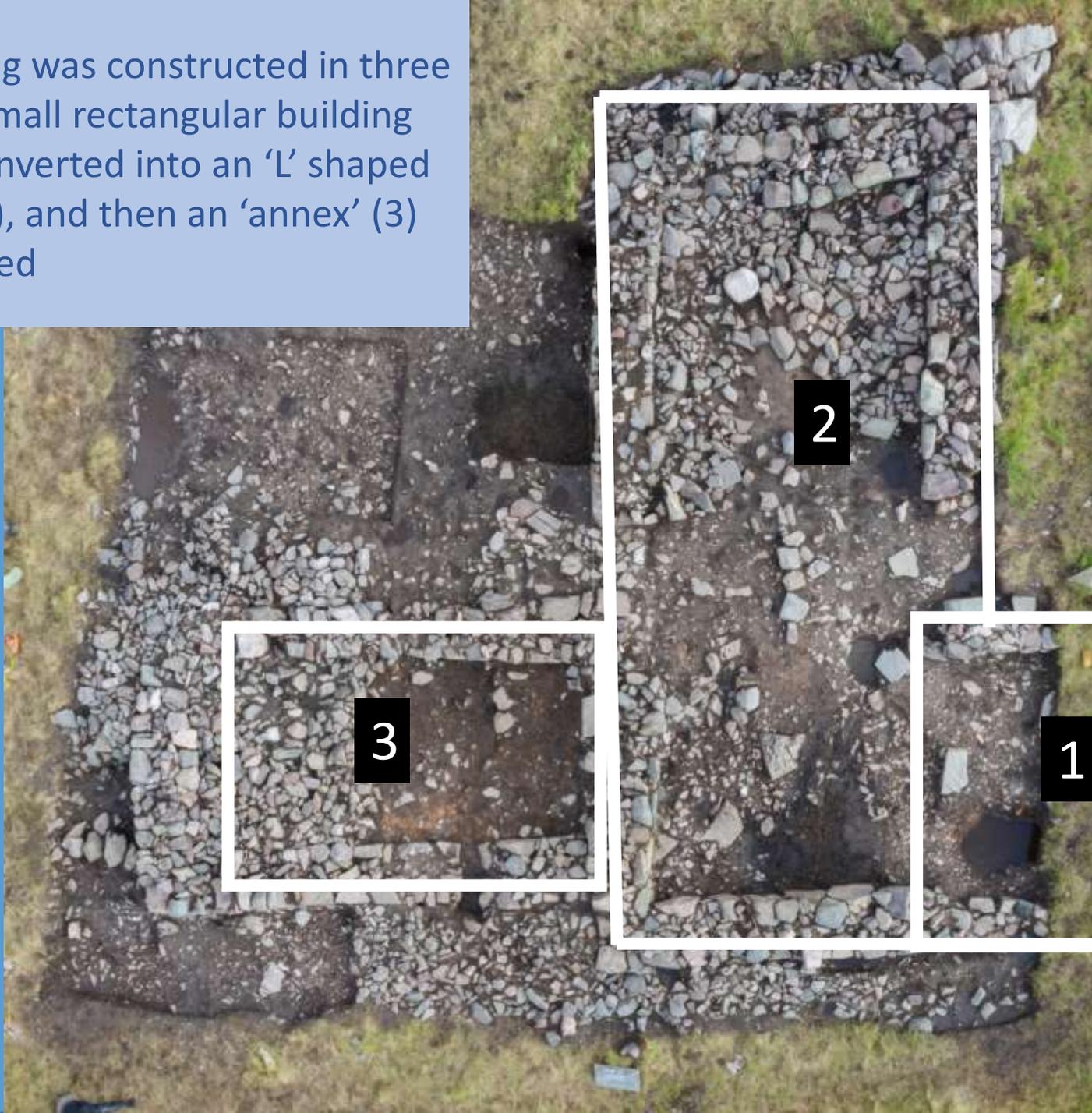
Roddy Regan led the excavation of Trench 3, exposing a large 'T' shaped building



The thick walls of the building suggests a substantial structure, with much of the rubble coming from the collapse of its gable ends



The building was constructed in three stages: A small rectangular building (1), was converted into an 'L' shaped building (2), and then an 'annex' (3) was attached



The 'annex' has a heavily burnt clay floor, above which traces of a burnt thatched roof were found. The intensity of burning on the floor, iron slag and a flue indicates metal working was one of the activities within this building



Three coins were found on the floor and rubble of the building. Although poorly preserved, they have been identified as 17th century 'Turners', issued during the reign of Charles 1



Comparative coins



Charles 1, monarch 1625-1649

1 Turner,
Two pence Scots, equal to
one sixth of an English
penny

Other finds from Trench 3 included a fragment of a decorated clay pipe, musket balls and the handle from an iron cauldron



Trench 1b was located on the outside of the courtyard wall



Kevin Standage led the excavation of Trench 1b



Below the facing stones of the courtyard wall and their foundations, was a spread of rubble and mortar that had collapsed from the wall



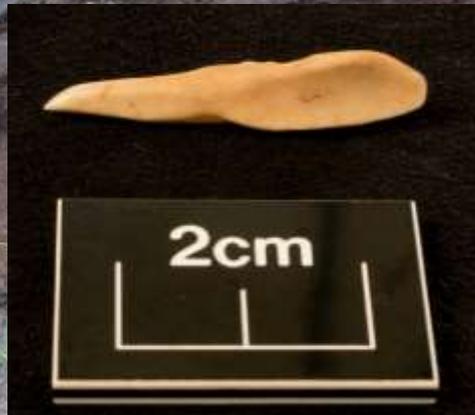
The foundation stones had been constructed above a stone and gravel platform, which might have been used for a earlier wall



Below the platform, the deposits contained large quantities of animal bone from cattle and pig, with many of the fragments showing signs of butchery - kitchen waste



Other finds from Trench 1b included a fragment of decorated glass, a bone point and a probable bone 'pin beater', a tool used in weaving



Finds processing in the field began with washing



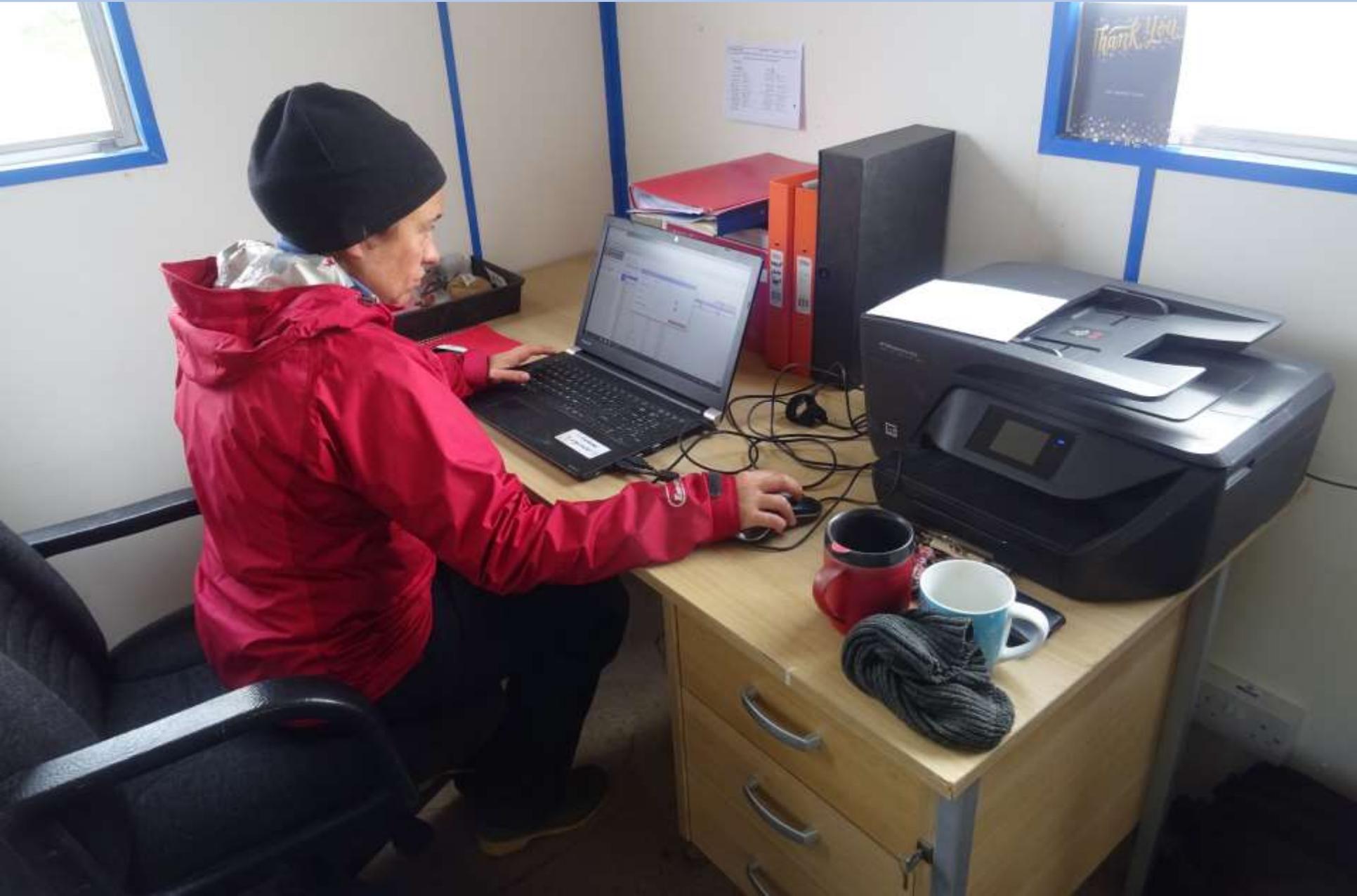
Dr Jenny Ellison undertook immediate conservation work on the fragile finds such as the coins



Dr Ingrid Mainland from the University of Highlands and Islands undertook an assessment of the animal bone



Rosa Campos Blade, the project Finds Supervisor in-putting records into the Dunyvaig IADB (Integrated Archaeological Data Base)



Bulk samples of the excavated deposited were washed through sieves and the residues sorted to find the tiniest artefacts and environmental remains



Sorting sieve residues is a meticulous and time-consuming task, but one essential for the recovery of all information from the excavation



Dr Rowena Banerjea extracted blocks of sediment through archaeological deposits for microscopic analysis



Dr Darko Maricevic, the Director of Excavation, in the site office with Dr Sarah Elliott (left) a specialist in environmental archaeology, and Sarah Lambert-Gates the project's digital and social media supervisor (and musician)



The 2019 excavation continued excavation of Trench 2, assessing the archaeology of the sea-gate



Bunny Waring led the excavation of Trench 2



At the end of the 2018 excavation



Four horizons during the excavation of Trench 2



Horizon 1: extent of 2018 excavation



Horizon 2: rubble, with suggestion of structure, thought to be a slipway



Horizon 3: Stone-built platform



Horizon 4: Flight of steps adjacent to the stone platform

Excavation in Trench 2 exposed a stone platform and a flight of steps that had been constructed within the sea-gate, indicating a substantial change of function, most likely in the early 17th century



At a later date, a thick layer of turf was built over the stone platform, and then sediment was backfilled over the steps



The sea-gate steps of Dunyvaig compared with the harbour steps at Bowmore



Finds from Trench 2 included medieval pottery, another pin beater and a decorated piece of copper



The fragment of copper is possibly part of a medieval brooch.



The fragment of copper carries decoration which is strikingly similar to that around the Campbell coats of arms in Stirling Castle. Is that just coincidence?



Tea break – on a good weather day!



The dig welcomed many visitors and provided a programme of events for the Islay community, organised by Claire Waymark and Kerry Baker



Dunyvaig Artists' Day with local artist, Dietmar Finger



A visit from the Islay Chit-Chat Strollers



All five primary Schools from Islay and Jura visited the excavation to learn about the world of work of an archaeologist



Undeterred by the rain!



The Dunyvaig Medieval Family Fun Day on 24 August brought many visitors to the excavation to learn about the finds and try out some medieval activities



Archery returned to Dunyvaig, courtesy of Islay Archers



Arts and crafts in the Lagavulin Malt Mill ...



With the Dunyvaig Medieval Household, otherwise known as Susan Campbell, Mary Bevan and Kerry Baker, demonstrating spinning, medieval food and the use of the seal



The Campbell seal was back in use – thanks to a lino cut by Jane Taylor



Steven Mithen and Tessa Blackie, the Project Finds Assistant, visiting the Port Mor Lunch club to give a presentation about the excavation and show some of the finds



Backfilling Trench 1 involved protecting the exposed face of the castle wall by building a new wall in front of it from the excavated rubble before returning all of the soil



Backfilling Trench 2 involved burying the steps again below the excavated rubble and then returning all of the soil



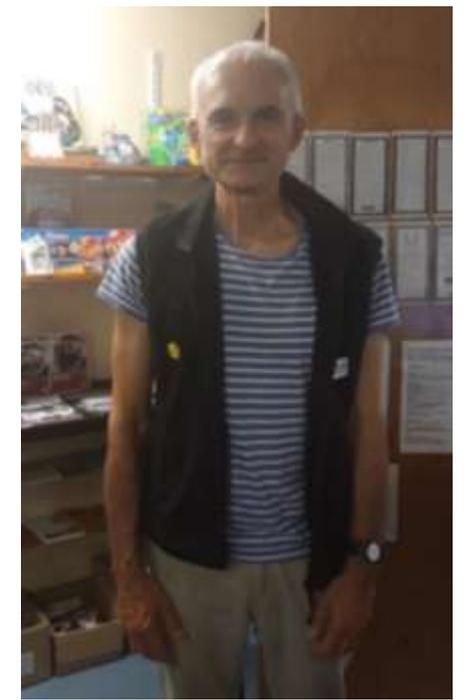
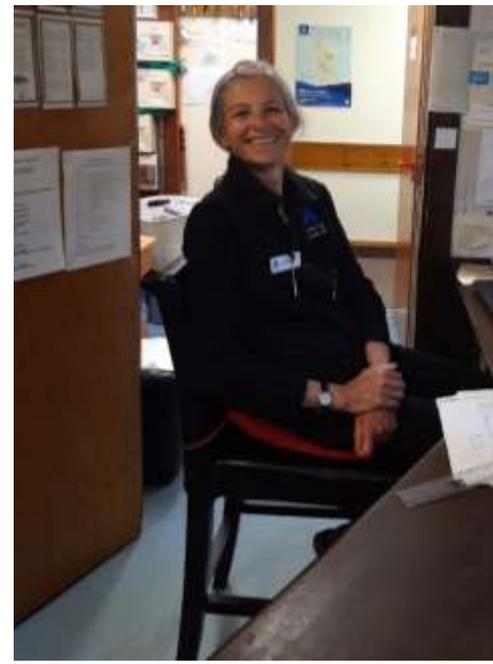
Backfilling Trench 3 was undertaken in the rainiest day of the whole field season



The staff, students and volunteers worked extraordinarily hard in appalling weather to complete the backfilling on time



The whole team are especially grateful to our wonderful cook, Ishbell Capper, to Karl and Lorna at the Port Charlotte Hostel where we stayed, and to the bus drivers from Islay Coaches who took us from Port Charlotte to Dunyvaig and back every day



Willie Currie , whose house overlooks the castle, provided the team huge support throughout the dig. Rory Williams-Burrell, the Project's Environmental Assistant, was delighted to present him with a memento of the dig



At the dig's closing event in the Ramsay Hall, Steven gave this presentation to our guests who had an opportunity to see and handle some of the finds. Sarah then performed her new song, 'The Ballad of Dunyvaig' – its world premier!



The project staff are now writing reports and then returning to their other work, while the students have returned to their studies or graduated and begun work as archaeologists elsewhere. We hope to return in 2020



With thanks to Islay Heritage and the University of Reading for funding support, to Lagavulin and Historic Environment Scotland for their permissions, and to all of our supporters and friends on Islay

The Ballad of Dunyvaig

1. War rebellion, battle siege. Taken torn from Leige to Leige.

Ragged castle by the sea show to me your dark history.

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the rock?

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the stones?

Oooooooooooooooooo

2. Somerled, his army drove the Vikings GO, for Scotlands lands and seas are ours again.

A hundred years or more McDonald lordship take, the land is yours Queen Mary says to James.

3. Sir Lachlan Mor Macleod he ravaged Islay then. Beseiged Angus McDonald at our Dunyvaig.

In 1598 a battle turned the table round, but James the 6th decrees it, now it is the Crowns.

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the rock?

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the stones?

4. 1610 is granted; Bishop Knox of Isles. But then beseiged by Ronald Òg, McDonald's son.

Then taken by his brother Angus Òg, and cousin Coll Ciotach; Collonsay his home.

5. But just as soon the Royal Charter grants the Isle, Sir John Campbell of Cawdor's forces take the pile.

And this part of the story links us to the past. A year ago the Campbell seal was found at last!

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the rock?

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the stones?

6. We come here to the castle ev'ry summer five, to seek the story true, to reconnect the lives.

As we disturb the soil, we move away the stones. What secrets do you keep with cannon, turf and bone?

7. The ancient walls emerging, battered by the wars, and then one fateful day a happy cry was heard!
The gather round the treasure, what so can it be? The seal that once was hidden for its sanctuary.

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the rock?

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the stones?

8. And so we must imagine in 1615, McDonalds and Ciotach once again beseige.
The seal of Campbell hidden in the wall or under floor. And cannonball to batter, tumble, buried all.

9. And so this song must end but story carry on. For every summer we must come and find out more.
The tale of this old castle, Lagavulin Bay, the chapter next it must await until another day.

What hides below the heather, sleeps within the soil, rests under the rock?

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