



## Case information

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Case ID	300009808
File Reference	AMH/3333/2/1
Name of Site	Ardtaraig, chapel W of, Glentarsan
Local Authority	Argyll and Bute
National Grid Reference	NS 05666 82676
Designation No. (if any)	SM3333
Case Type	Amendment
Received/Start Date	01/05/2015
Decision Date	19/09/2016

## 1. Decision

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The monument was first scheduled in 1973 and the documentation does not conform to current standards. The assessment against criteria demonstrates that the monument continues to be of national importance. The decision is to update the entry in the schedule as **Ardtaraig, chapel and enclosure, 155m W of.**

## 2. Designation Background and Development Proposals

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### 2.1 Designation Background

The monument was scheduled in 1973.

### 2.2 Development Proposals

There are no known development proposals.

## 3. Assessment

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### 3.1 Assessment information

The site was visited on 20/05/2014.

### 3.2 Assessment against designation criteria

An assessment against the Scheduling criteria has been carried out (see Annex A). The monument was found to meet the criteria for scheduling.

The designation criteria are published in the Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.

<https://www.historicenvironment.scot/advice-and-support/planning-and-guidance/legislation-and-guidance/historic-environment-scotland-policy-statement/>

### 3.3 Other considerations

N/A

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## **ANNEX A – Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria**

### **Ardtaraig, chapel and enclosure 180m W of**

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## **1 Description**

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The monument is the remains of a chapel within a sub-rectangular enclosure. The chapel is visible as a rectangular stone-walled structure and the enclosure is defined by a low earth and stone grass-covered bank. A cross-incised stone is located at the entrance to the enclosure through the southwest bank. The monument is likely to date to the Early Christian period (around 550 to 900 AD) and is located on a level terrace at about 10m above sea level on the eastern bank of Loch Striven.

The chapel is rectangular on plan measuring approximately 9m northeast by southwest by 5m transversely with rubble walls standing to an overall height of 0.6m with the entrance in the northeast wall. Internally, a large stone slab partially buried under the turf is visible at the northeast end and there is a cross-wall about 1m from the southwest wall. The chapel is surrounded by a sub-rectangular enclosure measuring approximately 18m northeast by southwest by 16m transversely within earth and stone bank standing to an overall height of about 0.5m. The enclosure has been reduced to a scarp on the north side. The entrance to the enclosure is in the southwest wall and incorporates an Early Christian cross-incised stone. The cross-slab is roughly rectangular, 0.95m by 0.58m, and on the north face is the pecked and grooved outline of a Latin cross.

The scheduled area is sub-rectangular on plan and includes the area described above and area around it in which evidence for the monument's construction, use and abandonment is expected to survive, as shown in red on the accompanying map. The scheduling excludes the element of the modern fence. The monument was last scheduled in 1974 but the documentation did not meet current standards; the present scheduling rectifies this.

## **2 Assessment Against the Scheduling Criteria** (Historic Environment Scotland policy statement June 2016, Annex 1, pp. 48-50.)

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### **2.1 Intrinsic Characteristics**

The monument exhibits good field characteristics with upstanding walling, an earth and stone enclosure and an Early Christian cross-incised stone, which although probably not in its original location almost certainly came from the site. The dimensions and shape of the building resemble those of other small early medieval chapels in Argyll. The chapel contains an internal cross wall and is slightly longer than other chapels in Cowal, perhaps indicating later alterations. The large slab at the northeast end of the building may relate to the construction of the altar which would have been erected against this wall. The upstanding remains appear stable,

while the cross-incised stone has been repaired in the past. There is high potential to examine in detail the construction and form of the chapel, its date and development sequence, and its relationship with the enclosure. It is possible that graves remain in situ, either within the chapel or enclosure, with potential to enhance our knowledge of status and burial practice at Early Christian ecclesiastical sites. Soil conditions will influence the extent to which bone survive but there is the potential that burials can reveal evidence for health, diet, illness, cause of death, and perhaps the types of activities people undertook during life. We can expect that relatively complex archaeology will survive, perhaps including evidence for an earlier chapel and/or other ecclesiastical buildings and burials.

The dating and chronology of Early Christian chapels in Cowal is not well understood but the form, fabric and dimensions of the chapel and surrounding enclosure suggests that the chapel dates from the Early Christian period. The form of the cross-slab supports this dating and interpretation, and adds to the monument's significance. The monument's primary function would have been spiritual serving as the focus for religious life and worship for nearby communities.

## 2.2 Contextual Characteristics

Argyll is particularly rich in Early Christian ecclesiastical sites. In Cowal alone, there are 19 recorded ecclesiastical sites, including ten chapels, which provide evidence for Christian burial and worship. The chapels are of similar drystone construction and dimensions, and the majority are surrounded by sub-rectangular enclosures and associated with wells or springs. Ardtaraig is a significant example which is representative of the Early Christian chapel sites in Cowal. The monument can be usefully compared to the other chapel sites in Cowal to add to our understanding of their origin and chronology. Ardtaraig has the additional potential to inform our understanding of the evolution of these structures as it is longer than other examples and has been potentially altered. Wider comparative and distribution studies of ecclesiastical sites can also increase our knowledge of the origin and spread of Christianity in western Scotland. There is potential to examine the chapels in relation to early medieval settlement pattern, enhancing our understanding of the organisation of Early Christian worship.

Further examination of the carved stone from the site has the potential to increase our understanding of these monuments and to better understand the chronology and evolution of Christian carved stones in Argyll and more widely across western Scotland.

## 2.3 Associative Characteristics

N/A

### 3 Purpose and implications of scheduling

The field investigation concluded the site is in a stable condition and well preserved. There are no immediate threats to the preservation of the monument. Designation as a scheduled monument is therefore the most appropriate mechanism to secure the preservation of the monument, and ensure the recognition of its national importance.

### 4 Assessment of national importance

This monument is of national importance because of its inherent potential to make a significant addition to our understanding of Early Christian ecclesiastical sites in Scotland. The chapel, cross-incised stone and the surrounding enclosure are reasonably well preserved and can be expected to provide information for the origins, organisation and spread of Christianity in western Scotland during this period. There is potential to examine in detail the chapel, its date and development sequence and its relationship with the enclosure in which it is located. The cross-slab has the potential to make a significant contribution to our understanding of early Christian art and help refine our understanding of the dating sequence and use of this site. We can expect relatively complex archaeology will survive, perhaps including evidence for an earlier chapel and burials and potential later alterations. The monument's significance is enhanced by the capacity to compare it with other ecclesiastical sites in Argyll. The loss of this monument would significantly diminish our future ability to appreciate and understand Early Christian churches in Argyll and the role they had in the spread and organisation of Christianity in western Scotland.

### 5 References

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Historic Environment Scotland <http://www.canmore.org.uk> reference number CANMORE ID 40517 (accessed on 20/05/2016).

The West of Scotland Archaeology Service Historic Environment Record Reference is 5095 (accessed on 20/05/2016).

Paterson, M 1970 Cowal Before History. Cowal Archaeological Society

RCAHMS (1992a) The Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historic Monuments of Scotland. Argyll. An Inventory of the monuments: Volume 7: Mid-Argyll and Cowal: Medieval and later monuments. Pages 49-50

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