

# DUNURE

The Geographical and Historical Significance of Dunure and Fisherton  
in the setting of North Carrick, Ayrshire



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## The Setting

The village of Dunure, with its castle, sits on the coast of the Firth of Clyde in the historic district of Carrick, part of the county of Ayrshire .



Fig 3: Dunure Village

Along with its northern extension of Fisherton, Dunure is backed by the Carrick Hills whose summits, running from Brown Carrick, 278m (913ft) and 287m, Black Top Hill, 225m (739ft) and Knoweside Hill, 281m (923ft), form an arc running parallel to, and about 2km inland from, the coast.

The village faces north-westward and commands a fine view of the Firth and beyond. On a clear day the panorama embraces the Antrim Coast of Ireland, Ailsa Craig, Southern Kintyre, Arran, North Kintyre, Cowal, Bute, the Cumbraes, the Renfrew Heights and the north Ayrshire coast. The peaks of Ben Lomond and Ben More can also be seen in the far distance. The view is renowned for its fine sunsets and one is very much aware of the annual apparent movement of the sun, which sets over the north of Arran at the summer solstice and south of Ailsa Craig at the winter equivalent. (See Figs 2a & 2b)

On the farther side of the Carrick Hills lies the historic town of Maybole and the castle of Cassillis; to the north lies the ancient burgh of Ayr ; while to the south lies Culzean Castle.

These, along with the Firth of Clyde, provide the historical setting for many of the events which have influenced the growth of Dunure and Fisherton.

The latter is the location of the original church of Kirkbride , the Victorian church of Fisherton, which was built in 1843, Fisherton Primary School and earlier school house, the Smithy and also the iron-age hill fort of Dunduff which predates the newer castle.

## Introduction

The accompanying information is intended to give a comprehensive background, which will place Dunure in its Ayrshire setting of the ancient district of Carrick.

Dunure's geology and geography have played a significant role in determining what mankind has been able to do with the environment, depending on the particular culture, the technological achievements, the political climate, the personal ambitions of individuals and the will of the community. All of these within a delightful landscape, enhanced by interesting wildlife and wonderful views, have combined to make Dunure a very special place, whose heritage of Castle and Harbour is worth preserving; and, since we in Dunure are a vibrant, forward-looking community, worthy too of enhancement.



*Fig 1: An aerial view of Dunure Harbour, the Castle and Castle Park in 1977*

This photograph clearly shows the castle standing to the edge of the raised beach above the cliff edge. Beyond this lies the line of off-shore rocks which makes access for boats onto the shingle beaches so difficult at high tide and impossible at low tide. Indeed this necessitated the development of the harbour, the protective breakwater and North Dyke along the side of the harbour and the foreshore. Later development of the village took place above the old raised beaches whose cliffs are clearly marked by the line of trees.

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The latter is the location of the original church of Kirkbride<sup>iii</sup>, the Victorian church of Fisherton, which was built in 1843, Fisherton Primary School and earlier school house, the Smithy and also the iron-age hill fort of Dunduff which predates the newer castle.

<sup>i</sup> Today the southern part is known as South Ayrshire.

<sup>ii</sup> Celebrating its eight hundredth anniversary as a burgh, this year, 2005.

<sup>iii</sup> Remains of a Celtic Cross slab were found within the ruins in 1927. It is similar to a cross found in Northern Ireland and dated to the 10<sup>th</sup> century. See Dunure WRI Ed. Forsyth

## The Geography and Geology

The Carrick Hills were formed by volcanic rocks comprising basalt and andesite dating from the Lower Old Red Sandstone period. Some of the basalts are extremely hard and resistant, and they form a line of sea cliffs, promontories and offshore rocks which run from the north end of Culzean Bay in the south to Bracken Bay in the north. (See Figs 4a & 4b) All these features, together with the coves and inlets, have been named by the local fishermen.

To the north-east and south of the Carricks lie Upper and Lower Old Red Sandstones. These can best be seen in the line of cliffs at the south of Bracken Bay. (see Fig 5 below)

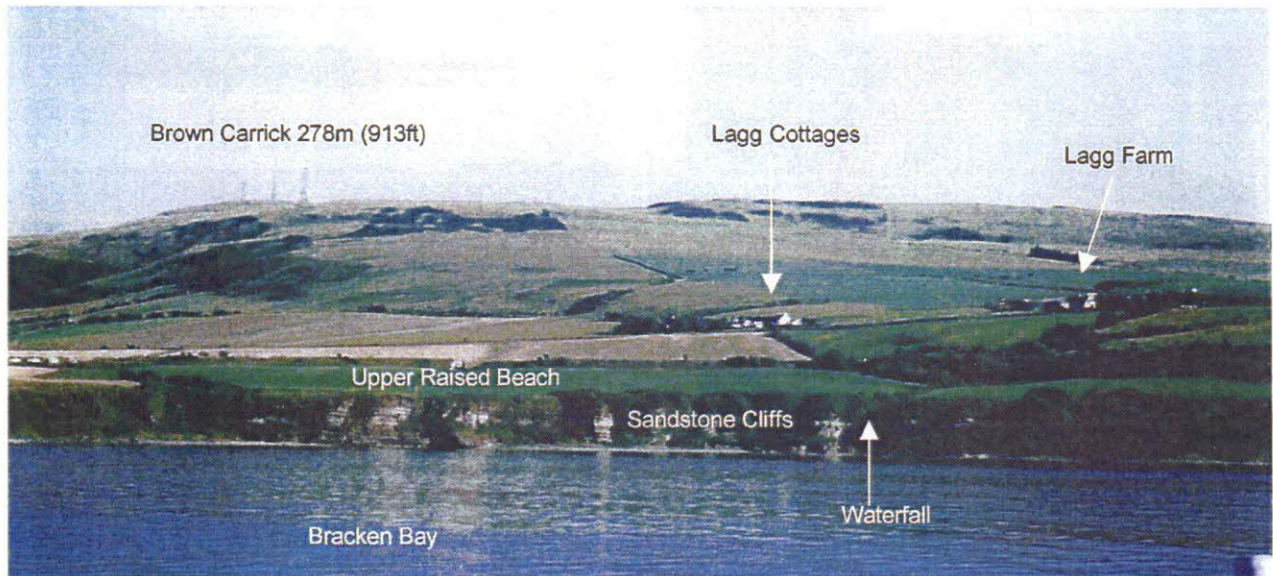


Fig 5: Red Sandstone cliffs at Bracken Bay

The north of Bracken Bay is formed by calciferous sandstones and cementstones but these are intruded by the volcanic rocks of the Heads of Ayr which rise up to an imposing 77m (254ft). (see Fig 4)

There are areas of conglomerate sandstones in the lower lying areas around Dunure and on the coast at Drumbain, where the line of contact between the conglomerate and the overlying lava can clearly be seen on the foreshore.



Fig 6: The lava flow is shown dark brown (with yellow lichen) above the paler, whitish-pink conglomerate in which can be seen pebbles and stones of various hues.

The Carrick lavas are well known for their semi-precious gemstones and fine examples of agates, jasper, bloodstone and onyx have been found among the coastal pebbles and on the surrounding ploughed fields<sup>iv</sup>. These same basalts have provided building stone for the harbour, for the older houses in the village and surrounding farms and steadings. Some of the local sandstones were used for topping the harbour walls, for the construction of the lighthouse, for facing the doors and windows of the castle, and for the adjacent dovecot. (see fig8 below and figs 25 and 26 on page 24)

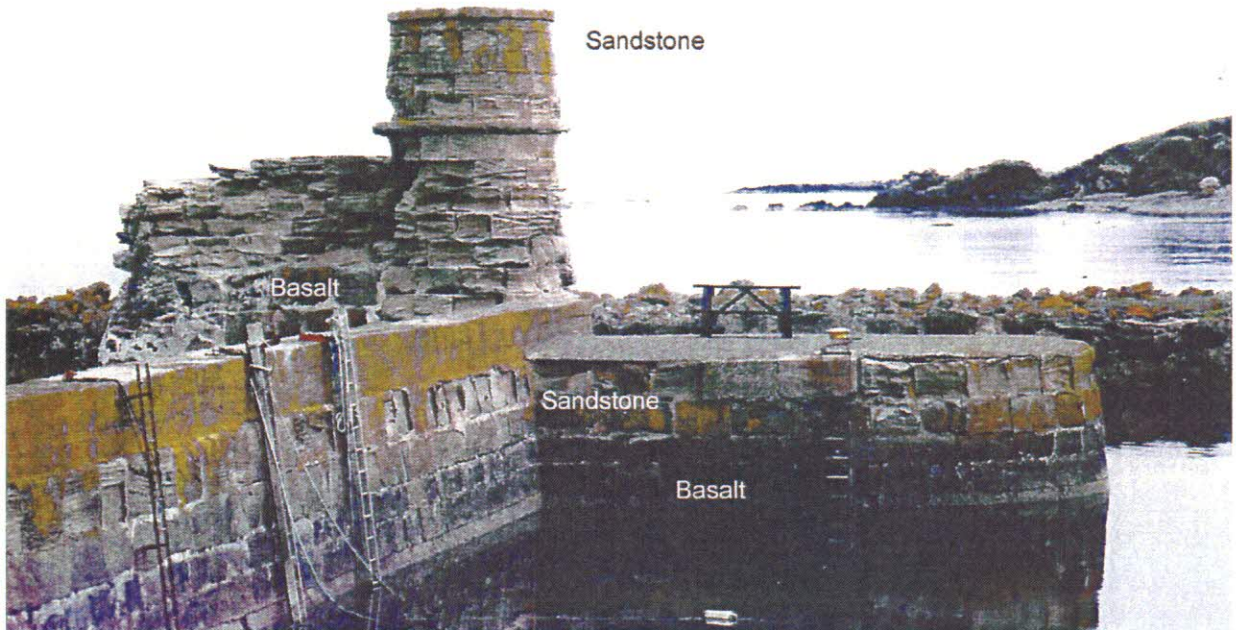


Fig 7: Lighthouse and adjacent harbour walls



Fig 8: Castle doorway showing sandstone facing and arch. Note the horizontal lintel with the keystone arch above.

<sup>iv</sup> Examples of these can be seen in the local harbour gift shop.

### Effects of the Ice Age

One of the major influences on the landscape was the Ice Age, whose last major advance occurred between 20,000 and 12,000 years ago. It had largely retreated by 1,000 years later. There was however another readvance of the ice, known as the "Loch Lomond Stadial", between 9,500 and 8,000 years ago. This was followed by a rapid thaw. Each time the ice melted, the sea level rose and formed new shorelines, but the story was complicated because the land, relieved of its weight of ice, rebounded. The result of this interplay of rising sea levels and rising land was the creation of raised beaches.

The earlier and higher raised beach is known as the Late Glacial which lies between 20 and 30m (65-100 ft) above today's sea level. The more recent raised beach is known as the Postglacial, with deposits up to 15m (50ft) above sea level.

The upper raised beach can be clearly seen in the Castle Park, where it is so level that a football pitch along with car parking facilities have easily been created. (see Fig 9 below)

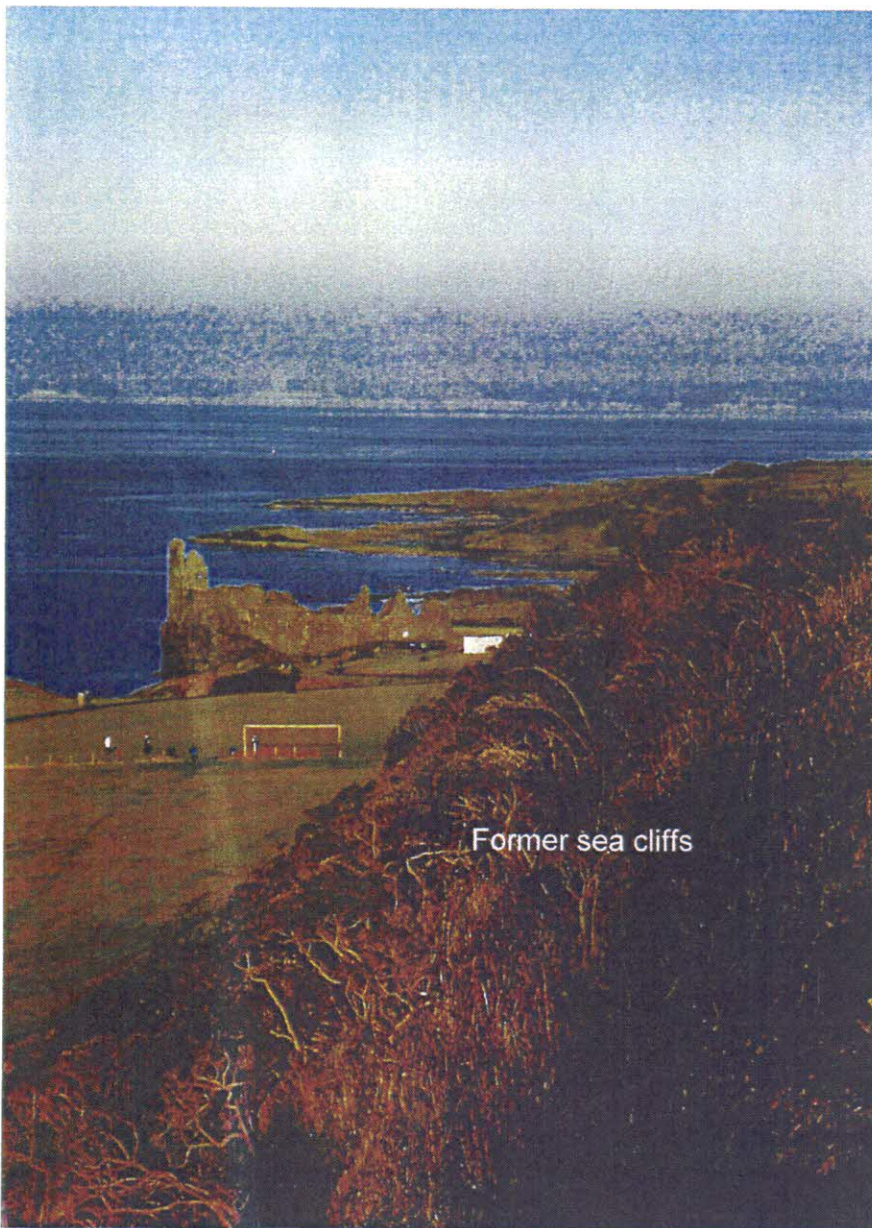


Fig 9: Castle park the upper raised beach

To the south of the football pitch good examples of the upper and lower raised beach can be seen. (see Fig 10)  
The lower raised beach also provided ground for the creation of the harbour area, the Seaview cottages and Dunure House. (see Fig 3 on page 5)

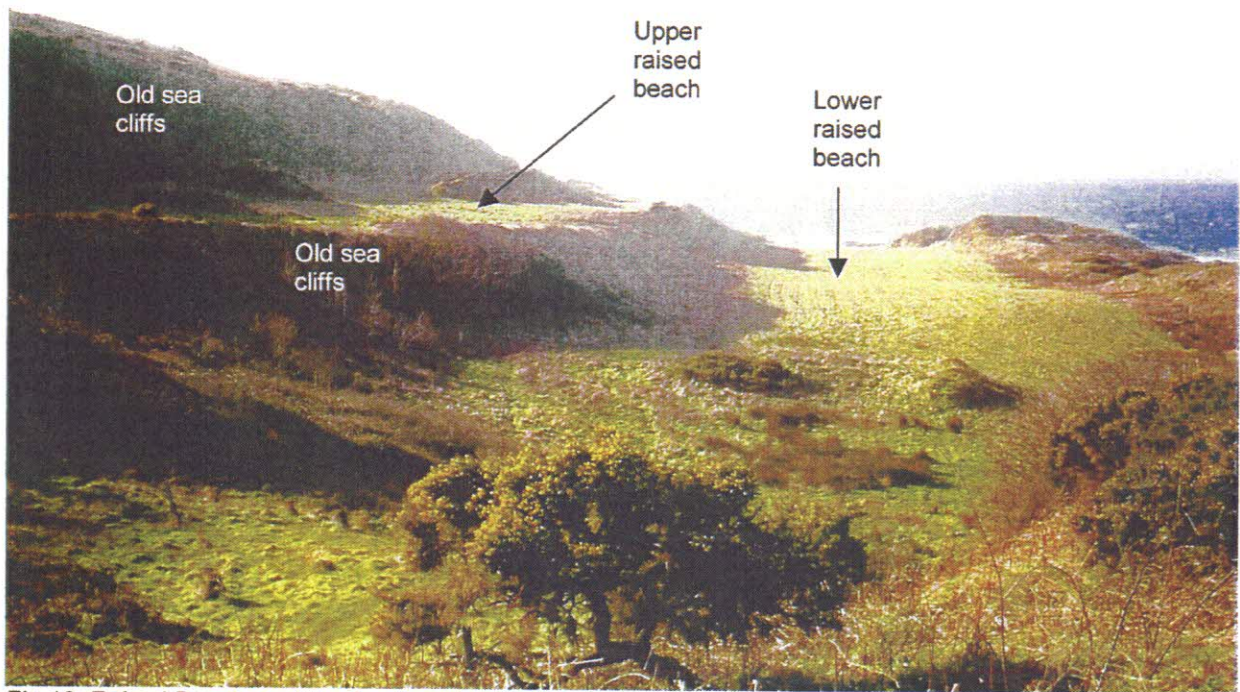


Fig 10: Raised Beaches at the South end of Castle Park

Farther north in the fields adjacent to Mulrhu Point<sup>v</sup>, three clear levels of raised beach can be seen. (see Fig 11 below)

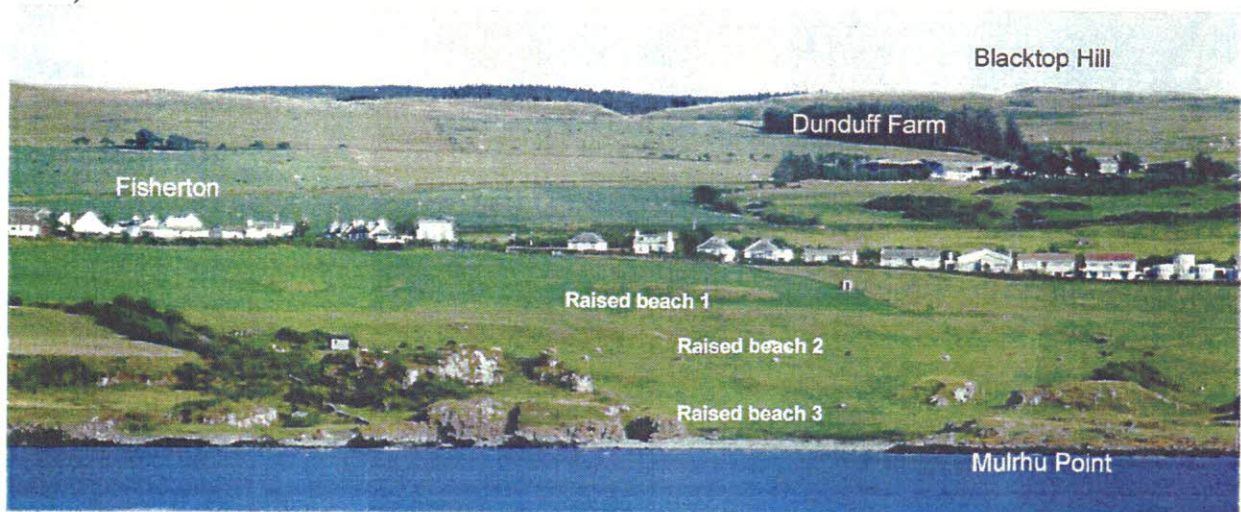


Fig 11: Raised Beaches at Mulrhu

<sup>v</sup> See Appendix 1 – Place Names



All these beaches are backed by cliffs of various heights; some, like those at the landward side of the Castle Park to the south of the village, are quite imposing.

The rebounding land left the streams sitting high above the new sea level and their waters have cut deep, steep-sided valleys in an effort to regrade their courses to the current level. Some of these are quite spectacular - for example the Mill Burn below Dunure Mains and the Fisherton Burn at Drumbain. But at Bracken Bay the down-cutting has not been dramatic and the stream falls over the cliffs as a waterfall from a height of around 25m (80ft). (see Fig 5 page 7).



Two steeply incised valleys. The upper picture shows a valley which contains several small waterfalls lying to the North of Dunure; the lower picture shows one which lies in the woods alongside Station Road between Fisherton and Dunure.



The Ice Age had other effects. It rounded and smoothed the hills and produced a knobby landscape which gave the name "Carrick" to the district.<sup>vi</sup>

Glacial till, often known as boulder-clay, was deposited widely over the landscape, and larger rocks and stones, known as "erratics", were carried down from the hills and mountains, some as far away as the Highland Edge. A fine example of a granite erratic, about 1m in height, lies at Mulrhu Point. (see Fig 12)



*Fig 12: Erratic at Mulrhu*

The great variety of coloured pebbles, composed of rocks other than the local lavas, agates and sandstones, were also brought by the ice and lend attractive colour and variety to the local beaches.

The effect of the ice has therefore produced a variety of soils – clay-based at higher levels and sandy, sometimes pebbly, on the raised beaches. The latter provide light soils which have developed into friable loams (the molehills in the Castle Park provide excellent examples). The clay soils are heavier and less well-drained. These have influenced the local farming and will be mentioned later.

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<sup>vi</sup> See Appendix 1 – Place Names

## The Spread of Settlement

With the final retreat of the Local Lomond Stadial Ice, about 8,000 years ago, the climate warmed and Mesolithic hunting/fishing/gathering peoples moved into the area. Mesolithic flints have been found along the Ayrshire coast with five finds noted between the River Doon and the north end of Culzean Bay.<sup>vii</sup> The tundra-type vegetation was replaced by woodland. The woods and the sea provided a rich variety of foodstuffs and raw materials for these early peoples. These came from roe and red deer, shellfish (mussels, whelks, clams and limpets), crab, lobster, mackerel, mullet, ling, salmon and trout, and certain edible seaweeds. Hazelnuts and berries would have supplemented their diet in summer and autumn.

Between 6000 and 5000BC there is evidence of pastoral, and later, crop farming moving into the Clyde area. These people would still hunt and fish to vary and augment their diet. Again there are recorded finds of polished stone axe-heads, three of which were recorded in the area around the Heads of Ayr. These finds indicate the presence of Neolithic farming people.

By medieval times a crofting type of economy had emerged with cottars houses along the coast, and this would have continued on until even after the Agricultural Revolution, when the Kennedy family introduced major improvements to Culzean and their surrounding estates in the 18<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>viii</sup>

Crofts are marked on the 1856 Ordnance Survey Map near the Castle, and at Mulrhu Point where the foundations can still be seen. (see Fig 13 below) They are also marked on the Armstrong Map (see Appendix 2).



Fig 13: Foundations of a Croft, Mulrhu Point

<sup>vii</sup> Morrison, Alex & Hughes, Isobel, **The Stone Ages in Ayrshire**, Ayrshire Archeological & Natural History Society, Ayrshire Monographs, April 1989

<sup>viii</sup> The Kennedy family had an enormous influence on Carrick in general and Dunure in particular and extensive reference is made to them in subsequent chapters.

Where the beaches are boulder-strewn, the stones were removed to allow small boats to be drawn up (see Fig 14 below) and a further example can be seen on the shore close to the castle on the large-scale OS Map of 1856 (see Fig 15 below). There are many examples of these cleared areas to the north of the village, in the stretch of coast between Muirhu Point and north of Drumbain.



Fig 14: Cleared foreshore

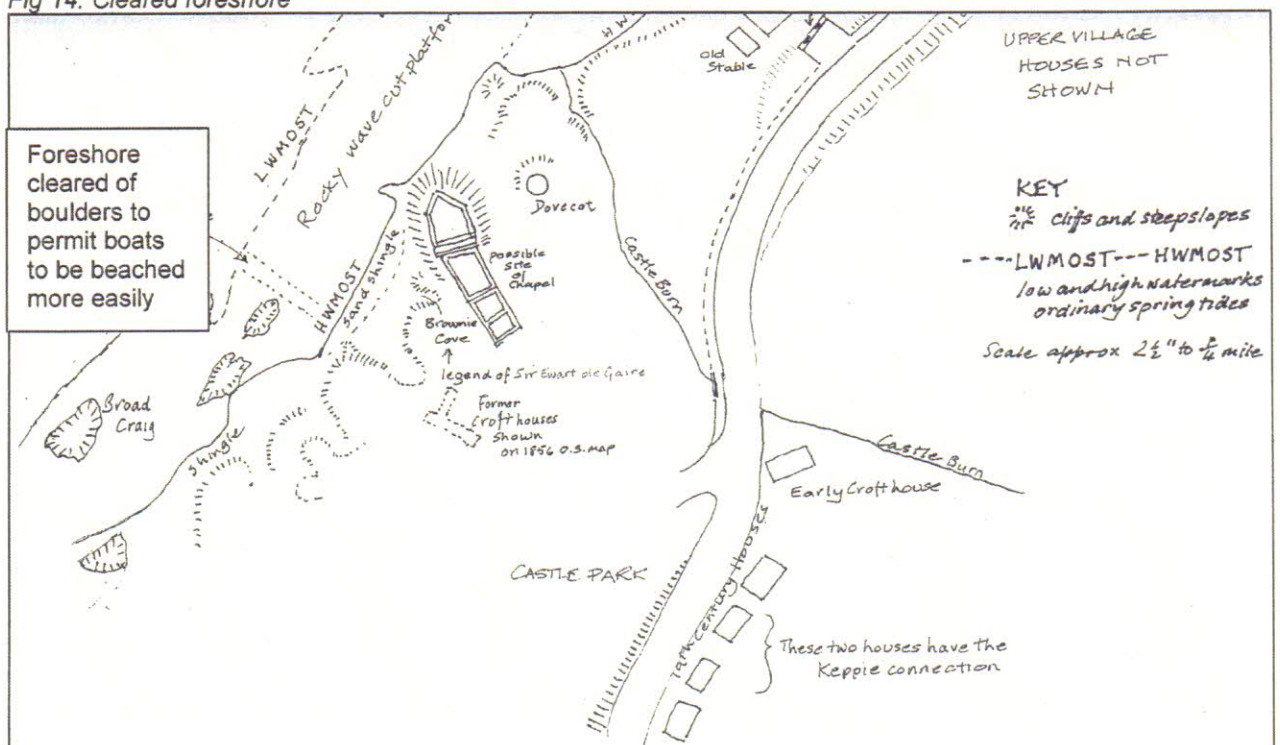


Fig 15: Map of Castle Park based on 1856 Ordnance Survey Map (with additions)

With the age of agricultural improvement came the establishment of bigger farms, enclosed fields, manuring, liming and draining of the soils. The farm holdings became larger and better breeds of livestock were introduced. Powerful draught horses were bred, and crops became more varied with improved cereals and root crops.

Large farmhouses with substantial acreages were built mostly inland from the coast. Some of the names are derived from the old Gaelic tongue<sup>ix</sup>, indicating that there were probably built on the sites of earlier settlements. Others with anglo-saxon names were recorded as early as the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries and still exist today.

Dunduff, which runs from the Carrick Hills to the sea, is a large farm of 490 ha (900 acres), including 90 ha of plantation, with sheep on the hills, stock cattle (including highland cattle), lambing sheep in the lower fields in winter and spring, and fodder and cereal crops. Knoweside also runs from the hills to the sea. (see Fig 16)



Fig 16: Knoweside

Drumshang similarly runs down to the coast and totals 500 ha (1,100 acres) divided equally between hill grazing and arable. Dunure Mains is rather smaller, totalling 180 ha (385 acres).

Several of the local farms are well-known and have a long tradition of winning prizes at the Ayr Agricultural and Royal Highland Shows. Balig and Humeston are prime examples.

Dairy farming is not as important as formerly and Dunure Mains and Lagg no longer have their dairy herds. There is a herd at Perryston, and Balig has recently introduced a large herd of Jersey cattle, which produce milk of a high butterfat content, for a specialist dairy at Stirling.

Between the wars, mechanisation increased but Clydesdale horses could still be seen working at Fisherton farm in the late 1960s. In earlier days, Clydesdales were pre-eminent as work horses. The most famous was known as the "Baron of Buchlyvie". Following a prolonged and costly legal dispute over his ownership between James

<sup>ix</sup> See Appendix 1 - Place Names

Kilpatrick and William Dunlop of Dunure Mains, which left the two men as joint owners of the horse, the Baron, which by now had won top prizes at the Ayr, Kilmarnock and Glasgow horse shows, was put up for sale at Ayr Mart in 1911. He was sold for the then princely sum of £9,500 (over £500,000 in today's money) to William Dunlop, the farmer at Dunure Mains. The Baron died three years later following a kick from another horse and was buried in the farm garden, but was later exhumed and his sizeable skeleton taken up to Glasgow for display in the Kelvingrove Museum.<sup>x</sup>

The Smithy (or Smiddy) cottage, (see Fig 17) which serviced all these farm horses, sits on the Dunduff Burn, just below Dunduff Farm. As well as shoeing horses, many other implements were forged and crafted. The local joiners, the McWhirters, were still using hand-made nails in local houses between the wars. The Smithy closed at the end of World War II.



Fig 17: Smiddy Cottage- the smiddy lies at the rear

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<sup>x</sup> For the full story see: Boyle, Andrew, **Ayrshire Heritage**, Alloway Publishing Ltd, 1990

### Water Power

The use of water power, using the hill streams from the Carricks, is recorded on Blaeu's Map of 1654<sup>xi</sup> where a "mil of Dunure" is shown downstream from the aforementioned Dunure Mains. The Armstrong Map of 1775 also shows mills on the Drumbane (Fisherton) Burn<sup>xii</sup> and Carwinshoch Burn, downstream from the present Laigh Kyleston Farm.

At Dunduff, the large barn to the south of the farmhouse sits above the Dunduff Burn and the situation of the mill wheel axle can still be seen in the wall. Farther upstream in a small wood lies the small dam from which water was released in a surge to drive the mill when the corn was being threshed.

At Dunure Mains the present building is one of the handsomest of mill buildings (see Fig 18 below). Built about 1780, similar to the Home Farm buildings at Culzean, it resembles the Adam style but uses rubble stone with sandstone facings on the doors and windows<sup>xiii</sup>. It stands three stories high with crow-stepped gables, topped by stone crosses, and is thought to have given rise to the phrase "ye can make a kirk or a mill o' it". The mill is no longer a working mill.



Fig 18: Dunure Mains Mill

<sup>xi</sup> See Appendix 2

<sup>xii</sup> Two spellings are used: "Drumbane" (for the burn) and "Drumbain" (for the house)

<sup>xiii</sup> Close, Rob, **Ayrshire and Arran – An illustrated Architectural Guide**, Pillans & Wilson, 1992, page 168

## Defensive Sites

### Early Sites

There are in the locality several ancient sites which pre-date that of Dunure.

Hill forts, probably of iron-age date, are found on the west of Bower Hill – the summit of the Heads of Ayr – and at Dunduff. (see Fig 19)

Rampart

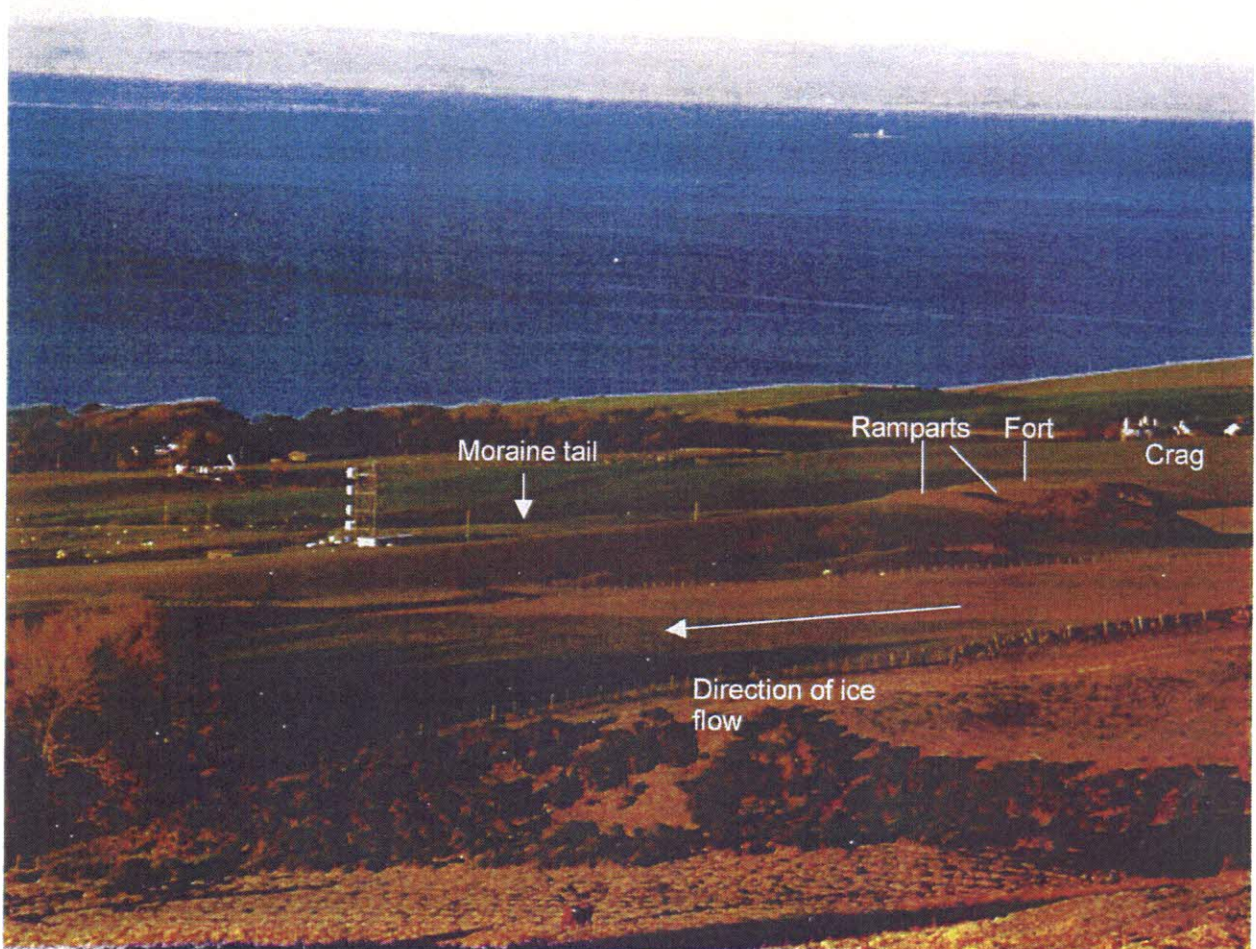


Fig 19: Dunduff Fort



Bowerhill Fort is a major vantage point, enjoying wonderful views over the Firth and adjacent countryside. Dunduff Fort sits on the summit of a crag and tail which was formed by the ice moving in a south-westerly direction, plucking the resistant lavas to form a crag and depositing a long classic tail of moraine on the protected lee side. This provided passageway to the fort which had to be protected by two ramparts, which would have been pallisaded, and ditches. These can still be seen. The fort is extremely small in area and would therefore only have been used in time of emergency. Close by is the recently constructed tower house which incorporates the foundations of Dunduff Castle. This was a ruined red sandstone building which was started in the 16<sup>th</sup> century; but it appears to have been abandoned at the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>xiv</sup> With doors and windows at ground level it is doubtful if it was conceived for significant defensive reasons. Nor does it appear on the earlier maps.

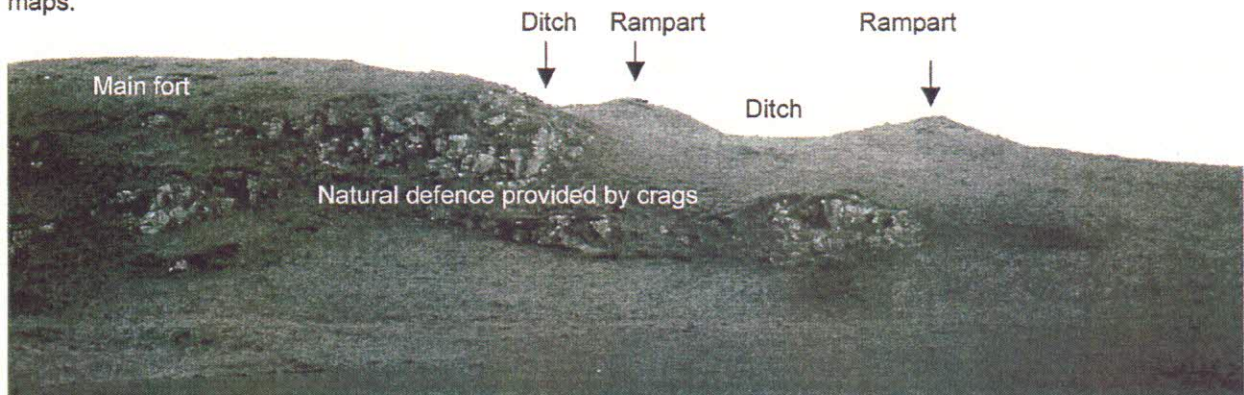


Fig 20: Dunduff Fort from the north

To the north of the Heads of Ayr lies Greenan Castle, which sits on a spectacular cliff formed by a resistant outcrop of consolidated volcanic ash. Like Dunure it was a Kennedy stronghold and was rebuilt by John Kennedy in 1603 on the foundations of an earlier castle. S.R Crocket describes the Castle and the murder of Sir Thomas Kennedy in Chapter 29: "The murder among the Sandhills" of "The Grey Man".<sup>xv</sup>

Greenan Castle is named and marked on Blaeu's map of 1654 and also on the Armstrong Map of 1775.<sup>xvi</sup> It is not marked as a ruin on the latter whereas Dunure Castle is.

<sup>xiv</sup> See Appendix 2: The Armstrong Map

<sup>xv</sup> Dunure WRI (Ed. Forsyth), **Dunure and the parish of Fisherton**, 1966

<sup>xvi</sup> See Appendix 2

Newark Castle<sup>xvii</sup> post-dates the foundation of Dunure. It does not appear on Gordon's 1636 map but the main tower predates that, for it is 16<sup>th</sup> century. It does appear on Blaeu's map, by which time some of its later 17<sup>th</sup> century additions were in existence. It did have defensive significance and formerly had a moat<sup>xviii</sup> and on the Armstrong map of 1775 has obviously acquired considerable significance, by which time Dunure Castle was a ruin<sup>xix</sup>. Newark also belonged to a branch of the Kennedy family and it was here that Mure of Auchendrane fled after the aforementioned murder of Sir Thomas Kennedy.

### Dunure Castle and the Kennedy Family

The castle was originally built on the rocky volcanic eminence which projects above the coastal cliffs and the upper raised beach (See Fig 21 below). The earliest part of the castle has been dated to the 13<sup>th</sup> century prior to the Scottish Wars of Independence, the first part of which started in 1297. This places it within the period when there was considerable Viking influence, which extended from the first half of the 9<sup>th</sup> century until the Battle of Largs in 1263. The lands of Dunure were, around the end of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, under the control of Walter de Champenais, but they later fell into the hands of the Kennedy family. John de Kennedy acquired the Castle and the Barony of Dunure, and later, in 1361, another John Kennedy acquired the lands of Cassillis. Kennedys from Dunure fought at the battle of Largs. At this battle Alexander III defeated the Vikings and this brought about the end of their influence in Southwest Scotland.



Fig 21: Dunure Castle and dovecot from the south. This clearly shows the tower walls on the rock far left, and the later 15<sup>th</sup> century section in the middle and the 16<sup>th</sup> century section on the right. Beyond is the dovecot.

<sup>xvii</sup> See Appendix 1 Place Names

<sup>xviii</sup> Tranter (1986)

<sup>xix</sup> See Appendix 2 The Armstrong Map

The seaward end of the Castle was rebuilt in both the 14<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> centuries, by which time there was a high tower house with a slated roof and fine sandstone features, such as window arches and the handsome fireplace which can still be seen in the outer wall (see Fig 22 below). RLS probably viewed the clachan through one of the two windows on the right – see page 38.

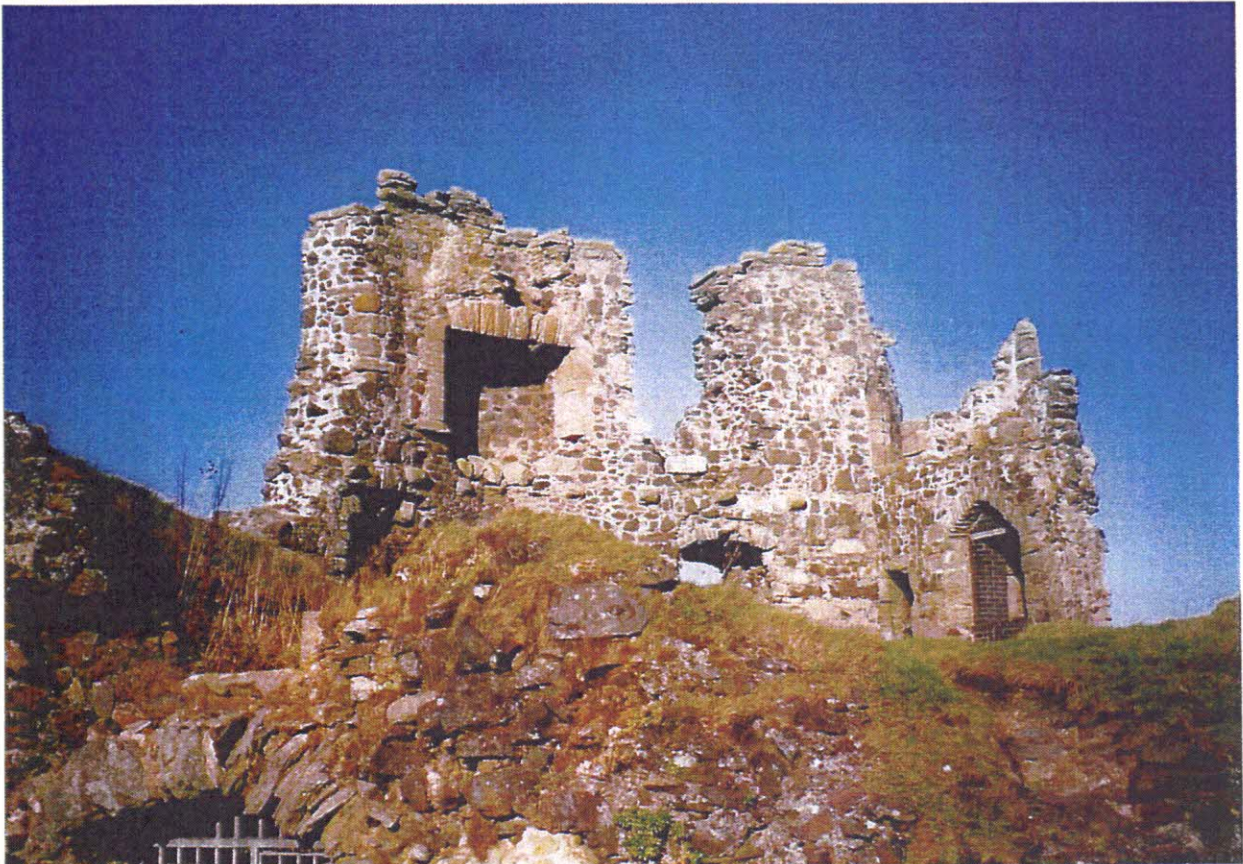


Fig 22: Fireplace at Dunure Castle (14<sup>th</sup>/15<sup>th</sup> century)

Dunure Castle, marked on Mercator's map of 1595<sup>xx</sup>, was obviously of considerable importance, being one of only a dozen places mentioned in Carrick. By the 1654 publication of Blaeu's map it was given marked prominence, surrounded by treed policies. It is known that a wall existed round the castle policies enclosing the outbuildings and the dovecot. The latter has been dated to the late 15<sup>th</sup> or early 16<sup>th</sup> century and the pigeons would have provided winter meat.

In the mid to late 15<sup>th</sup> century the castle was further extended onto the raised beach and at a still later stage in the late 16<sup>th</sup> century a chapel almost certainly existed on the northeast side. (see Fig 23)

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<sup>xx</sup> See Appendix 2

During the late 16<sup>th</sup> century the castle enjoyed its heyday. The Kennedy family had risen to national prominence. Kennedys had fought with Wallace when he took Turnberry Castle from the English. There is a quote in Blind Harry's poem to this effect:

"Off Carrik men Kennady's slew thai also"<sup>xxi</sup>

They had fought with Bruce at Bannockburn and later married into the royal family in the reign of Robert III when Sir James Kennedy married the King's daughter, Mary. He was created a Lord in 1458. The third Lord was created an Earl before he was killed at Flodden in 1513.

The fourth Earl, Gilbert, fought for Mary Queen of Scots at Langside in 1568, but in previous happier times at the beginning of her reign he hosted the Queen and the retinue during her royal progress round southwest Scotland. She stayed longer at Dunure (three nights) than at any other place. The records show that having left Ayr, she resided for the 3<sup>rd</sup>, 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> August 1563.

They also show that she enjoyed her visit, commenting favourably on the weather. The record of her expenses kept by her French equerry still exist (see Appendix 5)

Sadly the later career of Gilbert was marred in 1570 by the deplorable episode in the Black Vault of Dunure, in which he attempted to obtain the right to the revenues from the Lands of Crossraguel Abbey<sup>xxii</sup> by inveigling Alan Stuart, the Lay Commendator, who held the benefice *in commendam* of the Abbey.

Alan Stuart (or Stewart) was held for many days in Dunure Castle during which he was tortured twice by roasting him above a slow fire, or "roasted in sop"<sup>xxiii</sup> until he agreed to sign over the documents. (One version indicates that he refused to sign before witnesses and a notary.) He was eventually rescued by Kennedy of Barganny who besieged the castle when serious damage was inflicted and the chapel was destroyed. Alan Stuart records that "my flesh was consumed, and burnt to the bones" and was later "unabill of his leggis" (unable of his legs). No reprisal was taken by the authorities, other than mild censure, to punish Earl Gilbert for this illegal deed.

Over the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century the castle was abandoned and plundered and this continued into the 17<sup>th</sup> century. By 1696 the Castle was in a very ruined condition but even in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, old prints show that the front towers were much more substantial than they are today. Lobbying by the local community in the 1970s to stabilise the castle bore no fruit, one councillor even stating that if he had his way the Castle, as a symbol of our feudal past, should be bulldozed into the sea. Happily that did not occur.

In the late 1990s, thanks to joint funding from South Ayrshire Council, the Heritage Lottery Fund, Historic Scotland and Enterprise Ayrshire, the weaker parts of the castle were strengthened, and the stonework was re-grouted with lime mortar. Much of the interior, apart from the seaward end at the base of the tower, was excavated and a number of interesting finds came to light substantiating the prestigious nature of the castle. It will be interesting to see what comes to light if the foundations of the earliest part of the castle are excavated in the future.

Unfortunately the dovecot was not stabilised but, thanks to the efforts of the community council who pointed out the unstable nature of the building and lack of a protective door, South Ayrshire Council produced funding to strengthen the small tower, re-grout the walls with lime mortar and insert a strong metal door (see Figs 25 and 26).

As a footnote, one resident of the castle still manifests herself. The White Lady walks inland from the castle across the park and the line of her walk takes her through the more northerly of the two houses rented by John Keppie (see page 40). One family, resident in the house, found that a certain room had a strange atmosphere and they refused to use it. It was kept empty: and that was before they had heard the story of the White Lady!

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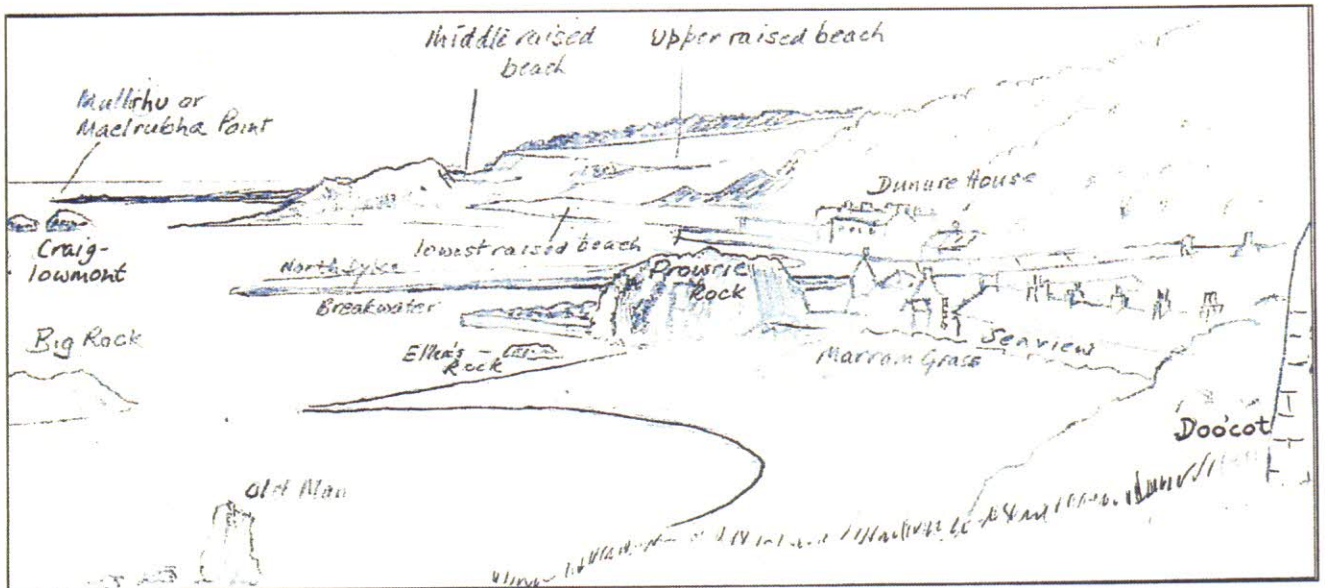
<sup>xxi</sup> Blind Harry, *The Life of the Noble Champion of Scotland, Sir William Wallace, Knight*, Finlayson, 1925

<sup>xxii</sup> See Appendix 2: Mercator's Map

<sup>xxiii</sup> See Bibliography - Tranter, Nigel



Fig 29: View of Port Rorie which gave its name to the Prowrie Rock (centre picture) and Seaview Cottages



## The Harbour

Though their interest in the castle had long since ceased, the Kennedy family still owned the lands and Barony of Dunure. At the close of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Thomas Kennedy was keen to develop the area on a commercial basis by establishing a harbour to export the coal from the Dailly coalfield, to import lime and timber and to set up small industries such as limekilns, a boatyard, a tannery, a saltworks and a glassworks.<sup>xxiv</sup>

The letter written by Thomas Kennedy's great-great-grandson in 1973 explains that the plan was over-ambitious and that Kennedy fell into financial difficulties. However the harbour was constructed with fine jetties. A northern protective extension, now called the North Dyke (on which the timber yard, building slips and even a dry dock had been envisaged) was built and a small lighthouse tower constructed. Houses were built alongside the harbour<sup>xxv</sup>, and limekilns built to the south west. Limestone and chalk were imported from Ireland and lime produced in the kilns to be used for liming the fields and as a source of lime mortar for building. The new farm houses and steadings would have required large amounts of mortar.

Local tradition records puffers exporting coal. The tidal nature and clay bottom of the new harbour would have been ideal for puffers to beach, and off and onload at low tide, and gave them access to part of the coast which because of its rocky nature they had not used previously. The point in the harbour wall where coal was delivered from the road can still be seen, though it was walled up long ago. There is a Coal-Pit Road on the hill behind Fisherton Primary School which also supports the tradition.

However the coal trade never developed. It was not even required when sail and oar power were replaced by more modern boats because they were not steam-driven but relied on diesel and paraffin.<sup>xxvi</sup>

Presumably the difficulty of transporting from the Dailly coalfield, together with competition from the Ayr coalfield whose production could easily be shipped from Ayr Harbour,<sup>xxvii</sup> prevented further development.

What Kennedy had not included in his proposals as local industry, namely fishing, did indeed become the prime function of the harbour.

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<sup>xxiv</sup> See the Plan and Letter in Appendix 4

<sup>xxv</sup> The builder of the harbour, one John Eaglesham, lived in one of these houses at the top of Harbour Road.

<sup>xxvi</sup> Information supplied by Donald Gibson

<sup>xxvii</sup> Export of coal to Ireland still exists today

The harbour was cut out of the bedrock which underlay the raised beach. This comprised basalt and conglomerate sandstone which had been heated and hardened by the lavas and turned a greenish colour.

The basalt base of the harbour can still be seen at low tide below the basalt blocks used to construct the jetties. These are capped by sandstone and in places by concrete. The lighthouse is built of local sandstone.

More houses were built along Seaview facing the Clyde on the curving foreshore protected by the Prowrie Rock (a corruption of the gaelic name "Port Rorie") (see Fig 29 facing). This name may have been applied to that foreshore or to the sheltered area where the harbour now stands. This, before the harbour and North Dyke were constructed, would have been the southern extension of the shingle beach which lies north of the harbour.

The harbour is tidal, with a range of about 2.5m, though higher at spring tides. The North Dyke can be covered at surge tides even when it is not stormy. While low tide allows boat hulls to be inspected (see Fig 30 below), it is not wholly advantageous, as exit and access times are determined by the tides. The proposed new step beyond the breakwater mentioned on page 44 would go some way to overcoming this problem.



Fig 30: Occasional vessels come into harbour for repairs when low tide allows inspection of the keels

Offshore winds in the days of sail could make it difficult to return to the harbour during daylight, even with oars (some of the early boats had only three pairs of oarsmen). So the lighthouse was constructed.<sup>xxviii</sup> This is now seriously eroded (see Fig 32 facing).

Entrance to the harbour is not on a NW/SE parallel to the North Dyke, but by a more westerly approach, to avoid submerged rocks.

Fishermen and pleasure boat users employ the method long used by the traditional fishing families. The lighthouse has an extending wall on the north side and this conceals the door to anyone attempting to enter from a north-westerly lie. But as one sails south, the doorway is exposed to view. This then marks the correct line to enter the harbour (see Fig 31). Only recently have leading marks been erected to facilitate this access.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, the fishing industry continued to use sailing vessels powered by oars when necessary; then later in that century by diesel. Illustrations of the boats used over the years and the methods of fishing employed can be seen on the interesting notice boards recently erected around the harbour.

As vessels became larger in the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century, the harbour became less suitable, and the proximity of Ayr Harbour, together with its new fish market and the nearby iceworks at Newton<sup>xxix</sup> encouraged the gradual movement of the boats from Dunure to Ayr.<sup>xxx</sup>

The Clyde herring fishing industry declined and the local boats now catch only scallops and prawns (scampi). The only fishing which is carried out from the harbour is for lobster and crab, though whelks are still gathered along the foreshore. One family, the last of two traditional families to live in a harbour-side house, have maintained that tradition for many years.

In recent years the fishing fleet, now much reduced from the 14 boats listed in Mrs Forsyth's book of 1966<sup>xxx</sup>, has now had to move to Troon for the Ayr Fishmarket has gone, replaced by riverside flats in the 1990s.

Apart from the lobster boats, about 30 other pleasure vessels still use the harbour, as well as water-skiers, jetskiers and skin divers (see page 43). On a summer's day it is a busy place, but far removed in atmosphere from the fishing harbour of the 1940s and 50s and far, far different from that envisaged by Thomas Kennedy in 1811.

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<sup>xxviii</sup> A separate submission has already been made detailing how the lighthouse could have been lit and how it was used to access the harbour.

<sup>xxix</sup> That list, along with the names of the owners, can be found in Appendix 8

<sup>xxx</sup> Dunure WRI, Ed. Forsyth, 1966



### The Electric Brae at Croy

This road is very unusual, if not unique, in that people driving along the road are under the impression that it is rising when it is in fact falling, and vice versa in the opposite direction. Looking for some force to explain the phenomenon, the term "Electric" was applied, but it is in fact the result of an optical illusion, which results from the configuration of the surrounding land. The road can be seen in the photograph and accompanying diagram below, as viewed from the sea. (Fig 33 below)

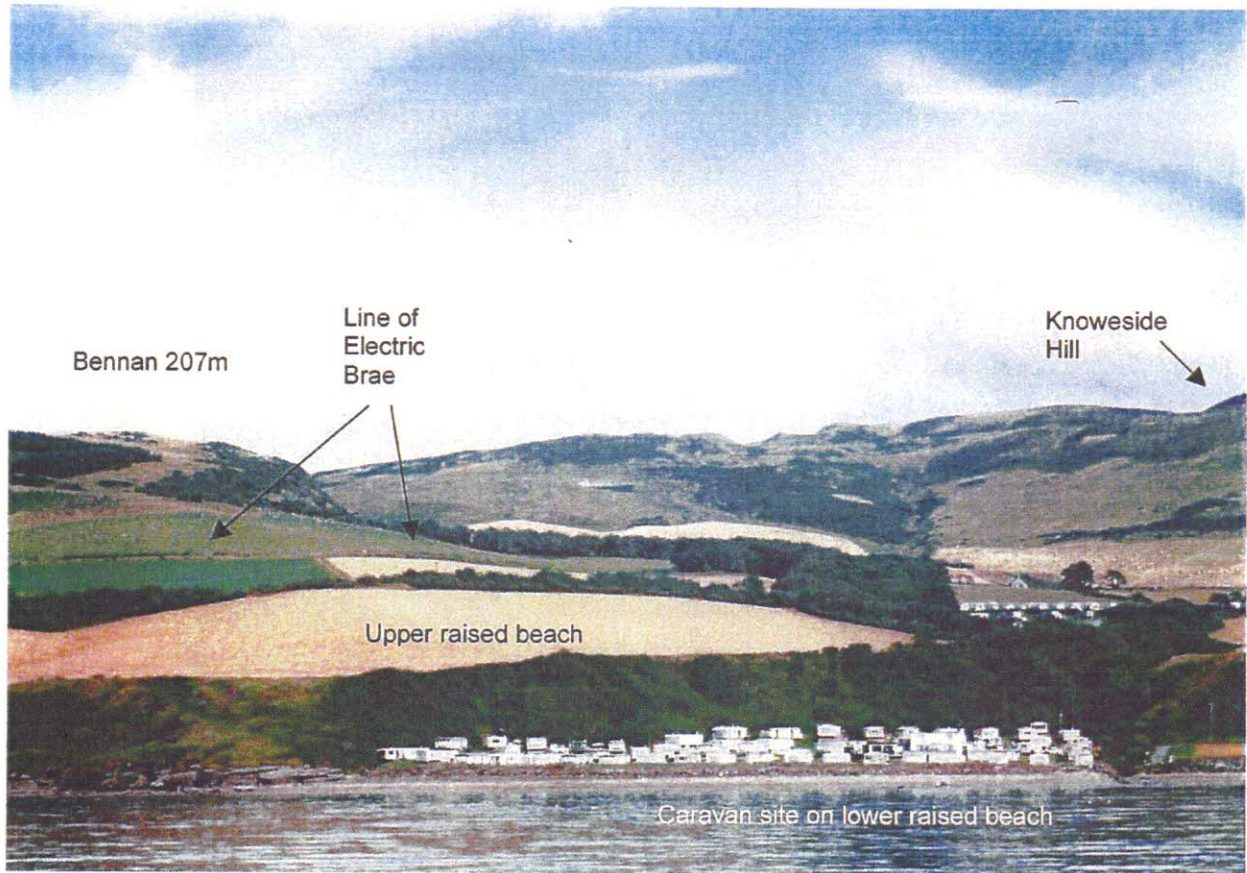


Fig 33: Croy Brae – the Electric Brae from the sea

## Literary and Artistic Connections

### Poets and Novelists

The earliest references to the district of Carrick occur in historical poems written about William Wallace and Robert the Bruce. Two of Scotland's most famous early poets, John Barbour (1316–1396) and Harry the Minstrel (or "Blind Harry") who lived in the following century and died close to its end, refer to this part of Ayrshire.

John Barbour's "The Bruce, Book V" is introduced by the Latin inscription *Hic Rex Robertus Applicat Navigio Ad Carrick*, which, loosely translated, means "In Which King Robert Makes His Way By Ship To Carrick".<sup>xxxiii</sup>

In Blind Harry's poem "The Wallace"<sup>xxxiv</sup>, there are two references to Carrick, one referring to Turnberry and the second:

"Off Carrick men Kennadys slew tha als"

Reference to "An Anthology of Carrick"<sup>xxxv</sup> shows three poems by Elizabeth Ramsay of Lagg Cottage, which is situated two miles north of the village. In 1914 she produced "A Garland of Verse with Prose Writings". Victorian values were much to the fore in her writing. This is illustrated in her poem "Life and Work":

"Life is work and work is life then let's be up and doing.....

Then let us work while work we can  
Ere youth and strength may leave us  
Let's grasp the sunshine of today,  
And do the duty nearest"

Lizzie Ramsay was born at Dunduff Farm at 1850 and she received a basic education at the old Fisherton School. (see Fig 37) The anthology records that in May 1912 she was presented with a silver tea service and a purse of sovereigns by members of Dunure Burns Club.

William Lennox, who was Superintendent of the Poor in Ayr, wrote a letter in verse in 1932 "To the Miller of Dunure", one James Dow, and a second poem "The Fairy Lady of Dunure", a ballad relating to the legend of the laird of Dunure Castle, Sir Ewart de Gaire. He fell in love with a lady, according to the legend, in the reign of Alexander III, long before the Kennedys owned the castle. He met the fairy lady in the cove immediately to the south of the castle. Later a baby was born to his fairy bride but when the abbot of Crossraguel came to baptise the baby

"the baptismal water fair o'er them he threw  
When away in a stream of blue vapour they flew,  
With a sound the most frightful and wild"<sup>xxxvi</sup>

James Dow, the tenant of Dunure Mill, was himself a poet and also president of Dunure Reading Society and Agricultural Club. One of his poems, written in the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, is entitled "Lines written in Kirkbride Churchyard" and another "The Ode on Newark Hill".<sup>xxxvii</sup>

William Murdoch of Fisherton, Dunure, wrote a poem "The Wreck of the Danish Barque 'Valkyrien' and the Steam Tug 'Iron Duke'". This double shipwreck, which occurred off Mulru Point, describes the bravery of several local men who, despite the stormy conditions on the exposed rocks, saved the lives of 9 Danish and 5 Scots sailors. The descendants of several of these heroes still live in the village and their names are recorded in the poem (see appendix 7).

Wordsworth and Keats both travelled up the coast and their works included reference to Ailsa Craig, as did work by Sir Walter Scott. Strangely, though Burns was born just across the River Doon, about which he wrote so movingly, he did not make romantic reference to the spectacular views of the Firth, or to the wild coastline. "Meg was deaf as Ailsa Craig"<sup>xxxviii</sup> is apparently his sole reference to the area.

<sup>xxxiii</sup> Finlayson, 1925, page 15pp

<sup>xxxiv</sup> ibid, page 20pp

<sup>xxxv</sup> ibid, page 286pp

<sup>xxxvi</sup> ibid, page 230pp

<sup>xxxvii</sup> ibid, page 212pp

<sup>xxxviii</sup> from Burns' poem and song "Duncan Gray"

William Shaw, on the other hand, writing in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, was more romantically-inclined with his poem "Sunset on Carrick Shore"<sup>xxxix</sup> where the first verse reads:

The sea was calm, the setting sun  
In splendour all untold  
Had thrown a bridge across the deep  
That shone like burnished gold.

(see Fig 38 facing)

The novelist S R Crockett (1860-1914), in his novel "The Grey Man" makes reference to Bargany, Culzean, Cassillis and Greenan. He refers to the "shoulder-bent shoremen who came over the edge of Brown Carrick" – almost certainly from the Dunure coast.<sup>xi</sup>

Robert Louis Stevenson has recorded his impression of the village itself, as he saw it on a winter's day in 1876 (see Fig 39 facing):

"He told me I was to turn down beside the school-house for Dunure. And so, when I found a lone house among the snow, and heard a babble of childish voices from within, I struck off into a steep road leading downwards to the sea. Dunure lies close under the steep hill: a haven among the rocks, a breakwater in consummate disrepair, much apparatus for drying nets, and a score or so of fishers' houses. Hard by, a few shards of ruined castle overhang the sea, a few vaults, and one tall gable honeycombed with windows. The snow lay on the beach to the tidemark. It was daubed on to the sills of the ruin: it roosted in the crannies of the rock like white sea-birds; even on outlying reefs there would be a little cock of snow, like a toy lighthouse. Everything was grey and white in a cold and dolorous sort of shepherd's plaid. In the profound silence, broken only by the noise of oars at sea, a horn was sounded twice; and I saw the postman, girt with two bags, pause a moment at the end of the clachan for letters.

It is, perhaps, characteristic of Dunure that none were brought him.

The people at the public-house did not seem well pleased to see me, and though I would fain have stayed by the kitchen fire, sent me 'ben the hoose' into the guest-room. This guest-room at Dunure was painted in quite aesthetic fashion. There are rooms in the same taste not a hundred miles from London, where persons of an extreme sensibility meet together without embarrassment. It was all in a fine dull bottle-green and black; a grave harmonious piece of colouring, with nothing, so far as coarser folk can judge, to hurt the better feelings of the most exquisite purist. A cherry-red half window-blind kept up an imaginary warmth in the cold room, and threw quite a glow on the floor. Twelve cockle-shells and a half-penny china figure were ranged solemnly along the mantel-shelf. Even the spittoon was an original note, and instead of sawdust contained sea-shells. And as for the hearthrug, it would merit an article to itself, and a coloured diagram to help the text. It was patchwork, but the patchwork of the poor; no glowing shreds of old brocade and Chinese silk, shaken together in the kaleidoscope of some tasteful housewife's fancy; but a work of art in its own way, and plainly a labour of love. The patches came exclusively from people's raiment. There was no colour more brilliant than a heather mixture; 'My Johnny's grey breeks,' well polished over the oar on the boat's thwart, entered largely into its composition. And the spoils of an old black cloth coat, that had been many a Sunday to church, added something (save the mark!) of preciousness to the material.

While I was at luncheon four carters came in — long-limbed, muscular Ayrshire Scots, with lean, intelligent faces. Four quarts of stout were ordered; they kept filling the tumbler with the other hand as they drank; and in less time than it takes me to write these words the four quarts were finished — another round was proposed, discussed, and negatived — and they were creaking out of the village with their carts.

The ruins drew you towards them. You never saw any place more desolate from a distance, nor one that less belied its promise near at hand. Some crows and gulls flew away croaking as I scrambled in. The snow had drifted into the vaults. The clachan dabbled with snow, the white hills, the black sky, the sea marked in the coves with faint circular wrinkles, the whole world, as it looked from a loop-hole in Dunure, was cold, wretched, and out-at-elbows. If you had been a wicked baron and compelled to stay there all the afternoon, you would have had a rare fit of remorse. How you would have heaped up the fire and gnawed your fingers! I think it would have come to homicide before the evening — if it were only for the pleasure of seeing something red! And the masters of Dunure, it is to be noticed, were remarkable of old for inhumanity. One of these vaults where the snow had drifted was that 'black route' where 'Mr. Alane Stewart, Commendatour of Crossraguel,' endured his fiery trials.<sup>xii</sup>

<sup>xxxix</sup> Finlayson, 1925, page 380pp

<sup>xi</sup> Crockett, S R, *The Grey Man*, Chapter 11

<sup>xii</sup> Stevenson, R L, 'A Winter's Walk in Carrick and Galloway', *Illustrated London News*, Summer 1896

### Artists

Many artists, certainly since Victorian times, have been attracted by the village and its setting. Today the number of such painters is probably greater than ever. The well-known Ayrshire artists James Orr and Frank Colclough have produced fine paintings of Dunure, the fishing boats and the surrounding countryside. Kennedy Smith, one-time principal teacher of Art at Ayr Academy, painted a fine watercolour of the harbour and its houses. It is interesting because it includes the picturesque arrangement of large posts on which the fishermen hung their nets to dry and for repair.

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, John Keppie, who was a junior partner in the firm which employed Charles Rennie Macintosh and Herbert MacNair, lived in Ayr and he rented two bungalows in Dunure where his sister and her artist friends stayed during the summer (see Fig 40). The bungalows were christened "The Roaring Camp". Well-known names were Frances and Margaret Macdonald, Agnes Raeburn, Catherine Cameron, a fine painter of flowers, and Janet Aitken (see Fig 41 facing). Margaret Macdonald would later marry Charles Rennie Macintosh. It is interesting to speculate what the residents of an 1890s fishing village thought of the artistic members of the "Roaring Camp".



Fig 40: Castle Road showing the two white single-storied houses which comprised "The Roaring Camp". The left hand bungalow (above the tennis court) is the one through which the White Lady referred to earlier on page 23 is reputed to walk



*Fig 41: The lady residents of "The Roaring Camp" (l-r): Frances MacDonald at rear, Margaret MacDonald (who would later marry CRM), Kathy Cameron, Janet Aitken, Agnes Raeburn and Jessie Keppie., along with Herbert McNair, Charles Rennie Mackintosh and John Keppie. One is tempted to think that Kathy Cameron may have found inspiration for some of her flower paintings in the local fields and hedgerows*

## Dedication and Acknowledgements

This booklet is dedicated to my wife **Irene** with whom I have shared over forty wonderful years at Dunure, to my son, **Graeme**, to my daughter, **Lynda**, (who gave me the germ of this idea while she was doing her Higher Geography practical exercise on Dunure Settlement); and to the late **Grieve Gemmell**, a near neighbour with a fund of fascinating village lore and experiences, who died in 2004.



*My daughter, Lynda, with Grieve Gemmell*

I am indebted to **Jim McCrindle**, the current Dunure Harbour Master, for his significant contribution and for the photographs of Dunure from the air, and the lighthouse from the sea: and in particular to **Susan Paterson** and my son-in-law, **Scott McCroskie** for their invaluable help in producing the finished booklet; which involved formatting, printing and integrating the photographs into the text as well as sourcing valuable material from the internet.

**Roy Storie**  
**Dunure, 2005**



*September Sunset from Dunure Castle, 2004*

## Appendix 1 : The Place Names

The earliest names are probably pre-celtic:

Ayr seems to be derived from the river on which it stands and the name occurs widely elsewhere in Britain and Europe – for example the Aire in Yorkshire and the Aare in Switzerland.

The River Doon has similar echoes with the Don in England and in the Ukraine.

The Clyde is derived from the name “Cluda” another celtic river name.

The celtic language in the form of P-celtic, also known as Welsh or Brythonic Gaelic, has left its legacy in the south-west of Scotland; to be followed later by Q-celtic, coming from Ireland and introduced into Dalriada (modern Argyll) by the Irish invaders who later gave their name Scotii to Scotland.

Many gaelic place names survive locally:

Carrick Carrraig, gaelic for hilly

Mulrhu comprising Meall, meaning a lump, and Rudha, meaning a point of land in the sea or promontory

Dunure from dun, meaning a fort and lubhar, (pronounced Yoo-hur) meaning yew trees. Odhar an alternative meaning a grey fort, satisfies the appearance of the harling which covered the castle in earlier times like the dovecot roughcast; some of which can still be seen

Many of the farm names also have gaelic derivations:

Drumbain and Drumshang from Druim (a ridge); Largs from Lairg, meaning a sloping hill face; and Port Shuchan and Port Rorie, where port indicates a haven or landing place.

Old Norse names, from the period between 830 and 1263 AD when the Vikings exerted a strong influence in southwest Scotland, can also be found:

Goatfell and Brodick in the island of Arran, derived respectively from Geita and Fjell meaning “goat mountain” and Breda or Brod and Vik (a bay). On the Carrick coast, the prefix “Turn” (as in Turnberry) may be old Norse for a town.

Old English then imposes itself – Fisherton, Kyleston, Burton and Perryston include the suffix derived from “toun” for a homestead or farm. Elsberry (later the Heads of Ayr) and Turnberry include the suffix derived from “burha” meaning fort. Turnberry may mean the “tower fort”. Other English names are Newark (from neowe and weorc) and Bracken Bay which is self-evident.



## Appendix 2 : Dunure on the Map

### **Mercator 1595** (*see facing page*)

The district of Carrick is shown bounded by the River Doon – identified by L. Doon complete with its island castle – in the north; and the River Stinchar shown on the map as “Ardstin Flu” (“Flumen” means river). In the middle of the district lies the River Girvan (unnamed on map).

The total number of places mentioned, in addition to those above, is eleven, of which one is Dunure Castle (shown as “Dunuger ca”). To the south of the River Girvan lies Bargany, Blairquhan (“Blaquhen ca”), Ardstincher (“Ardstin sel”), Carleton Port and Castle (“Cailtoun”), and, at the mouth of the River Girvan, Gudeen ca.

North of the Girvan lie Crossraguel Abbey (shown as “Crosregal”), Cassillis (“Cassillis ca”), and Dalrymple Wood (“Darumpel wod”), which is still extant, and Arduntoun (unidentified on the modern map). Off the coast lie Ailsa Craig (“Ailsa”) and Arran (“Arren”) and the Firth of Clyde (here named as “Dunbritan fyrrh”).

In the late 16<sup>th</sup> century Dunure Castle was therefore regarded as being very significant. It is interesting that Maybole is not even mentioned.

# Plan of Dunure Castle

Scale  
5 metres

KEY  
Phase 16<sup>th</sup>C

5 late 15<sup>th</sup>C

4 mid. late 15<sup>th</sup>C

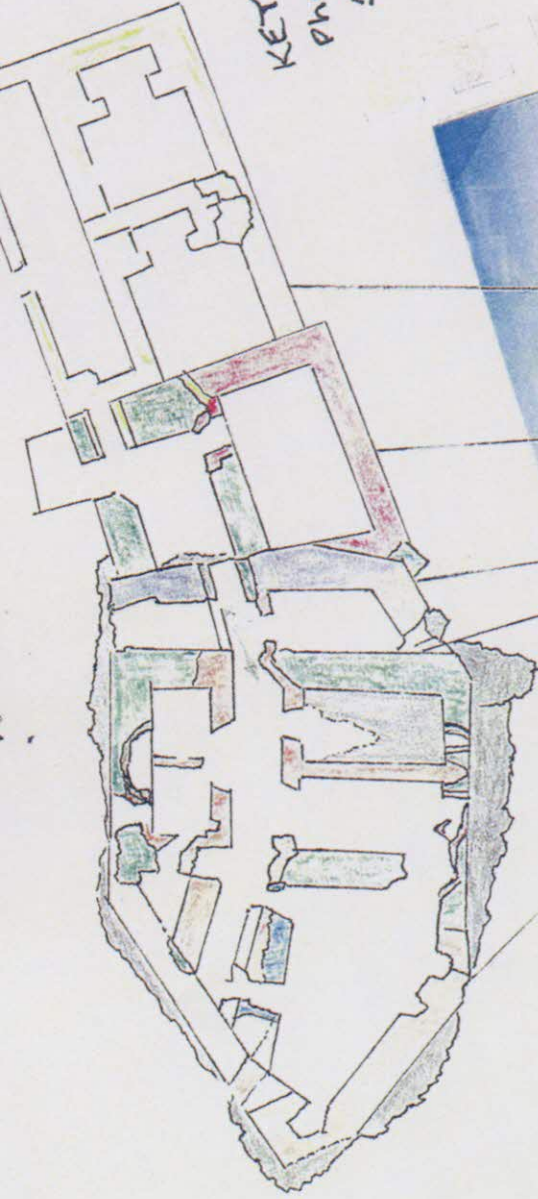
3 late 14<sup>th</sup> & early 15<sup>th</sup>C (hallhouse)

2b early 14<sup>th</sup>C (wing)

2a early 14<sup>th</sup>C

1 late 13<sup>th</sup>C

Basalt bedrock



Castle from the South



# Appendix 4 : The Plan for the 1811 Harbour and 1973 Letter

1811



## Appendix 8 : List of Fishing Boats, and the Registration Numbers and Owners

Name of Boat	Number	Owner
<b>1966</b>		
Fair Morn	BA 54	Munro Bros
New Dawn	BA 19	Munro Bros
Fair Wind	BA 177	J. Gibson
Britannia	BA 267	T&A Gibson
Girl Margaret	BA 30	J. Kane
Valhalla	BA 165	M&W Munro
Hercules	BA 33	J. Edgar
Taeping	BA 237	W. Anderson
Jasmine	BA 55	W. Anderson
Marie	BA 211	T. Anderson
Stormdrift	BA 187	G. Gemmell
Numora	BA 132	Munro Bros
Marigold	BA 16	J. Gibson
Spes Bona	BA 17	Gibson Bros
<b>2005*</b>		
Fair Morn	BA 19	Clive Munro
Weston Bay	OB 129	Niel Munro
Spes Bona	BA 107	Robin & Donald Gibson
Blue Arc	OB 593	Drew Gibson
Tai Lee	BA 821	Lorimer Gibson
Dawn Watch	BA 120	Simson, Billy & Neill McCreath
Lady Isle	TT 263	Ian McCrindle
Silver Quest	AR 190	Graham Hay
Ocean Gem	BA 265	Alan McCreath
Bonnie Lass	CN 126	John Fulton
Aeolus	BA 808	

\*Boats owned, or crewed, by Dunure fishermen.