

The Lochindorb Heritage Project
(Phase I)

**Proposals for a
Preliminary Investigation
of the Loch Bed surrounding
Lochindorb Castle**

November 1992

Prepared by
Ken McComiskie
Swire EPD
Souterhead Road, Altens, AB1 4LF

Matthew Kaye
Halliburton Geo Consultants
Howe Moss Place, Dyce, AB2 0GS

Prepared for
Lord Cawdor
(Cawdor Estate Office, Nairn, 1V12 SRE)

Mr A. Laing
(Logie House, Forres, Nairn, 1V36 OQN)

Mr Bob Gourlay
(Highland Regional Council, Inverness)

Contents

I. INTRODUCTION	1
II. PROPOSALS AND OBJECTIVES	2
III. STRATEGY	3

The contents of this document have been prepared in connection with a meeting at the Ben Mhor Hotel, Grantown-on-Spey on Friday 20th November, 1992 between the following parties:

Lord Cawdor	owner of Lochindorb Castle
Mr A. Laing	owner of Lochindorb Estate
Mr Bob Gourlay	Highland Regional Council
Dr Nicholas Dixon	Department of Archaeology (University of Edinburgh)
Miss Barrie Andrian	The STUA (University of Edinburgh)
Ken McComiskie and Gwen Morrison	Project Organisers
Matthew Kaye and Julie Downie	Project Organisers

Mary Young has kindly offered to minute the meeting.

I. Introduction

The history of Lochindorb Castle, which has recently been reviewed in detail by Bob Gourlay (archaeologist, Highland Regional Council) offers a colourful picture of the many occupants of the castle. From recent evidence it is believed that the accumulated sediments surrounding the island may contain significant archaeological remains capable of enhancing the existing knowledge regarding the castle and its neighbouring moorlands.

Legend and conjecture also abound, of course. One of the well known legends tells of a Danish king who occupied the island and who held prisoner there a young Scottish noble. The king's daughter fell in love with him and together they escaped but they were pursued and while trying to cross the River Findhorn in spate, near Dulsie, they were both drowned and their bodies washed on to the river bank near the present Glenferness House. A sad tale, but fact or fiction?

It is believed that the island may itself be a crannog, representing a much earlier dwelling place. A crannog is a man-made island irrespective of whether it is constructed of timber or stone. However, it is conceivable that surviving timbers remain around the existing island, having been preserved within the oxygen-deficient sediments. At present, no evidence has been found to support this conjecture.

Detailed archaeological studies presently being conducted in and around the crannogs of Loch Tay by Dr Nicholas Dixon have incorporated a complex suite of scientific analyses enabling a detailed and intricate history of these dwelling places to be constructed. Preservation of organic remains is far superior (under certain conditions) beneath the sediment - water interface, frequently making this method of archaeological investigation a significantly more powerful tool than land-based studies.

II. Proposals and Objectives

We have a keen interest in studying the sediments at Lochindorb with regard to the following aspects:

- The sedimentary history and evolution of the loch since glacial times.
- The history of the changing vegetation of the moorlands surrounding the loch, and man's impact upon these changes - through pollen analysis.
- Integrating such changes with recorded historical events such as tree felling, grazing of animals, life style, activities and events surrounding the history of the castle
- Possible earlier dwelling places at the loch.

Fulfilling such interests will require a wide range of technical skills, patience, team work and administration. We have a broad range of skills applicable to this type of study and numerous facilities at our disposal with which to conduct such work. An essential component of our strategy incorporates the comprehensive guidance from Bob Gourlay and Nicholas Dixon who are both well placed to oversee and advise at all stages in this proposed study.

By way of preliminary investigation at the loch, we would therefore like to propose conducting an initial survey of the loch bed, as listed within the strategy (Stage 1) after which a concise report will be made available and presented.

The ultimate (long term) goal will be to undertake an excavation of the loch bed sediments surrounding the island. However, this objective will be influenced partly by the results of a preliminary survey. We would like to envisage the opportunity of displaying our findings and reconstructed-history at a purpose-built centre, enabling the public to learn from, and share in, the fascinating history of this area.

III. Strategy

The following items will facilitate an initial survey of the loch:

1. Water depth survey and construction of a bathymetric contour map of the loch – comparison with older reports (1904, Sir John Murray and Lawrence Pullar).
2. Collection of a core sample from the deepest part of the loch (approximately 50 feet) from which the following analyses will be made at Halliburton's laboratory facilities in Dyce.
 - core log and sediment description
 - pollen analysis throughout the core
 - study of the diatoms present
3. A more detailed water depth survey within the vicinity of the island.
4. Location of the causeway linking the island with the eastern shore of the loch.
5. Initial visual inspection of the loch bed surrounding the island and the recording of objects visible at the sediment surface. A broad grid system and pre-determined datum points will be used.
6. Integration of data and report compilation.

This stage is expected to require a period of 12 months. The long term strategy will be reviewed at various stages as dictated by the results and findings of each phase.