What’s in a name?

Today, the isthmus connects the villages of Arrochar and Tarbet. An early map drawn by Timothy Pont around 1560 depicts a castle at Terbart and an area called Errawharr. In a later map from 1777, Charles Ross refers to Arrochar as ‘New Tarbat’. Over the years, the spellings have changed: Tarbet comes from the Gaelic tarbeart meaning ‘portage’: a place where boats were carried between two bodies of water. Arrochar is derived from the Gaelic arach ar meaning ‘ploughgate’: the amount of land a team of eight oxen could plough in a season.

A study of the names of places around Arrochar and Tarbet has revealed glimpses into their past: Creag an t’ Searraich, meaning ‘rock of the colt’; Stuckiedhu meaning ‘black jutting hill’ or Ben Reoch meaning ‘brindled or grizzled ben’.

The Hidden Heritage Project is hosted by Arrochar and Tarbet Community Development Trust (ATCDT). It aimed to involve the community in investigating and interpreting the area’s heritage, and to raise the awareness of locals and visitors alike to heritage features in the landscape.

This leaflet was part-financed by the Heritage Lottery Fund and also by the Scottish Government and the European Community Argyll and the Islands LEADER 2007-2013 Programme.

Disclaimer

In developing and promoting the Hidden Heritage Trail, ATCDT wishes to point out that the physical activity and remote locations which may be experienced while traversing the route can involve an element of risk, in respect of which, ATCDT accepts no responsibility or liability whatsoever.

Furthermore, whilst ATCDT has produced this leaflet in good faith and worked hard to make sure that the information it contains is up to date and accurate, it accepts no responsibility or liability arising from any error or omission contained therein.

Explore the landscape and discover the past . . .
Tarbet, thy shore I climbed at last,
And through thy shady region passed,
Upon another shore I stood
And looked upon another flood:
Old Ocean's self!

The isthmus of land between Arrochar and Tarbet forms a corridor linking the sea and communities on the west coast with Loch Lomond and Central Scotland. For centuries, the landscape has been used as a thorough-route, but also as a place to live, farm and bury the dead. Discover its secrets as you walk.

The Hidden Heritage Trail begins and ends at the Three Villages Hall in Arrochar (grid reference NN 2964 0111), but can be accessed at several other points. It is about 3.5 miles long, and follows the long-distance footpath, the Three Lochs Way (www.threelochsway.co.uk). Please follow the Three Lochs Way signs and the Hidden Heritage waymarkers.

For more information about the local heritage, visit www.arrocharheritage.com and www.hiddenheritage.org.uk

People have lived on the isthmus for thousands of years. Evidence of their presence comes in the form of shaped flint tools found in the school field in Tarbet. The lochs and hills would have been rich hunting grounds for these early inhabitants.

Just before the famous Battle of Largs in 1263, King Hakon of Norway sent sixty ships up Loch Long commanded by Magnus, King of Man. The Vikings pulled their ships out of the water and dragged them across the land to Loch Lomond, from where they sailed south to raid the inland settlements. This event is evocatively recounted in The Saga of Haakon Haakonarson by Sturla bórðarson c. 1265.

From the 13th century the lands around Arrochar belonged to the Clan McFarlane, until they were sold in 1784. They are now the property of Luss Estates. The McFarlanes had a notorious reputation as cattle rustlers, and the moon became known as 'McFarlane's lantern', thanks to its role in aiding night-time raids.

The McFarlane chiefs had traditionally lived on the islands of Loch Lomond but in the 1500s they supposedly moved to Cladach Mor – now Tarbet playing field. In the late 1600s, the McFarlanes moved again and built Inveroch House at Arrochar, or 'New Tarbat', which they surrounded with avenues and plantations of trees. Despite being close to Loch Long, Inveroch House faced east across the isthmus towards Ben Lomond, rather than west to the Cobbler.
The Hidden Heritage Trail

1. The Vikings
   Notice the views down Loch Long and imagine a fleet of Viking longboats heading for the isthmus. On the opposite promontory are the ruins of a torpedoes testing range (1912-1918). Now in 2013 the site is the proposed site of a multi-million pound hotel complex.

2. Arrochar Parish Church
   The first church in Arrochar was built in 1734 – its ruins are in the churchyard. Until that time, parishioners had to walk to Loch Lomond. The existing church dates to 1847.

3. Beoch Trees
   Notice the beech line, look for some ancient beech trees. These are the remnants of a planted landscape planted by the owners of Inverloch House in the 1700s, and depicted on General Roy’s Military Survey in 1755.

4. Sheep Tank
   This complex of tanks is the remains of an old sheep fold, in use in the 1800s. Notice other signs of farming across the isthmus in the form of old ditches, walls and drainage channels.

5. Tighvechtian
   A pastoral survey of 1745 marks Tighvechtian, meaning House of the Watch, a reference to its use by the McClellans to watch for approaching enemies or cattle to steal. It stands at the junction of the old military road built in the mid-1700s.

6. Tarbet
   Notice the rectangular footprint of the Victorian curling pond. Together with a golf course, these reflect the booming tourist trade fueled by the arrival of the steamers. Visitors sailed from Glasgow to Arrochar and were transported to Tarbet to explore Loch Lomond by paddle steamer.

7. Toll House
   Inverloch Toll House was built to collect tolls from road users after the road was improved in the mid-1800s. The current A83 follows the line of a well-used cattle-riding route and Major Cailean’s military road, built in the mid-1700s.