



JULY 2022

HEATHERY HEIGHTS MONTHLY

Articles, walks and news



NEXT ISSUE
Ben Donich

KEILLS

The Tranquil Magic of Keills...

The delightful [Keills Chapel](#) and Cross and the stunning peninsula where they nestle are easily missed, yet for anyone visiting or living in this part of Argyll they are worthy of exploration. The Cross itself is thought to date back to the 8th Century whilst the Chapel (12th Century) may lie on older remains and is dedicated to Abban moccu Corbmaic (St Cormac) - a missionary and founder of two monasteries in Leinster, Ireland, who was thought to be active in the late 6th and early 7th Centuries. The Chapel was repaired and reroofed in 1978 and now houses a fine collection of some 40 early Christian and medieval carved stones as well as the Keills Cross, which was moved into the Chapel in 1979 to help protect it from the elements.



Looking north from the summit of Barr an Lochain



Stepping out towards Keills Port



Keills Cross

Safety in the Outdoors

Please exercise responsibly and use appropriate clothing and equipment for your chosen outdoor activity. Consider informing a contact about your route/whereabouts and don't forget your phone, snacks, drink, any medication/first aid supplies you may need and to check weather conditions. Please keep your dog under close control, especially around livestock and wildlife, and be aware some open areas of moorland may have snares in use. Please follow the Scottish Outdoor Access Code, bylaws and laws that protect areas including National Nature Reserves (NNRs) and Sites of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSIs).

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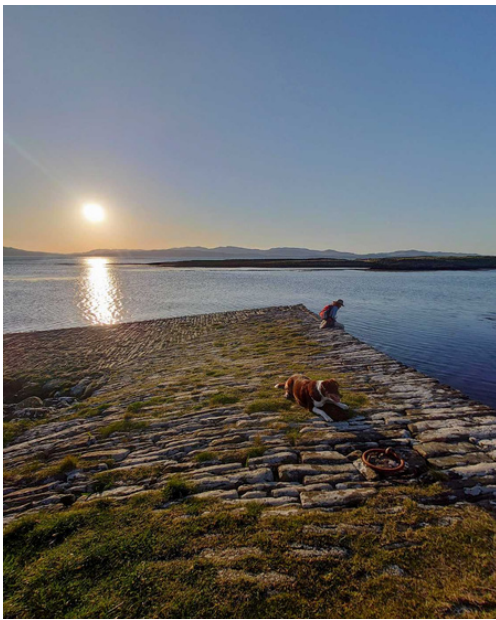
To the west, and at the end of the small single-track road, is the older north quay and slipway at Keills Port which were used to land cattle coming over from Islay, Jura and Colonsay during the 18th and 19th Centuries. The well-built quay has seen repairs over the centuries and in the mid 1990's the port was looked at with the potential for a new roll on/roll off ferry between Jura and the mainland. To the north of the quay and slipway there are excellent examples of 600-year-old pillow lavas, formed where lava met cold sea water and wet sediment as the giant plates of the earth's crust, with Scotland clinging at its edges, moved apart.

The views from Barr an Lochain (summit of the loch) and Rubha na Cille (headland of the church) are excellent, especially if the weather is fine as the vistas over the Sound of Jura and towards the Island of Danna and Castle Sween are superb. The headland also has fascinating geology where the rocks of the Loch na Cille boulder bed create magical silhouettes as the sun goes down.

The walk

1. Start at the carpark and head south through the gate and along the road for 50m. A grassy track to your right leads up to Keills Chapel and Cross. The carved stones and cross are within the building whereas a basic copy of the cross stands outside to show its original position.
2. Returning down to the road turn right and continue south and west, passing Keillmore farmhouse on your right, which used to be the Inn for those travelling through with their cattle. Just over 100m beyond the farm is a grassy track on your right, take this if you wish to ascend Barr an Lochain (if not you can just continue to the end of the road to the quay).

3. Follow the grassy track for 500m until just before it enters a field. Now head on to the open ground to your right. Using a mixture of sheep tracks you can walk north keeping parallel to the wall (now on your left). It is sometimes easier to ascend slightly to miss a couple of boggy sections, but a better path does return after 650m, once on this it is just 200m to a gap in a wall.
4. Go through the gap and bear right up a grassy path onto the ridge before veering north. From the gap to the trigpoint it is 750m, but you will have to drop down and reascend slightly to reach the final summit. Veering initially east is seemingly easier to avoid the steep rocks at the southwest end.



Keills slipway



Rubha na Cille boulder field

5. Return the way you came to the road. Turn right to visit the quay and pillow lavas which are just over 100m further on. On calm days it is easy to ponder here awhile.
6. To explore the headland of Rubh na Cille return along the road to Keillmore farmhouse. Follow the road for 130m first passing through a gate then a gap in the wall on your right.
7. Turn through the gap and follow a faint path that meanders along the spine of the headland through the boulder bed and a couple of walls (boggy where churned up by cattle but these areas can be sidestepped). The path takes you up on to the headland's high point at just 26m above sea level; it has surprisingly airy views. From there you can head out further if you have time although care should be taken if you descend to the rocks (best avoided in rough weather). It is 1.5km from the road to the headland overlooking the rocks. Allow 1-2 hours to explore the rock formations and enjoy the views.
8. Return to the road, turn right and it is 400m to the car park.

The described route and accompanying information are there to be used as a guide and do not replace the use of map and compass and the skills required to use them. Whilst every effort is made to ensure the route is accurate at the time of going to print please be aware that track and path closures can happen at any time. All walks are undertaken at your own risk.

Walk Information

Route: Keills Chapel and Cross, Barr an Lochain and Rubha na Cille

Distance: 9.5 km (6 miles)

Ascent: 220m

Time: 4-5 hours (allowing time to enjoy the history, views and geology)

Terrain: Mixture of road, grassy tracks and pathless terrain.

Map/s: OS Landranger 55/62 (1:50 000)

OS Explorer 358 (1:25 000)

Start/Finish/Parking: Small car park near Keills Chapel

Grid reference: NR 692 805

Public Transport: No, but the single-track road is an easy 5-mile cycle from Tayvallich

Toilets: No

[OS Map link](#)

