

COASTAL ZONE ASSESSMENT SURVEY FIRTH OF CLYDE

PROJECT 1309



A desk-based and walkover assessment
carried out on behalf of
Historic Scotland,
Firth of Clyde Forum
and
The SCAPE Trust

Contents

1.0	Executive Summary	7
2.0	Introduction	7
2.1	Background	7
2.2	Survey Area	7
2.3	Survey Conditions	7
3.0	Aims and Objectives	7
4.0	Methodology	8
4.1	Introduction	8
4.2	Coastal Zones	8
4.3	Desk Based Assessment	8
4.4	Field Survey: Archaeology and Built Heritage	9
4.5	Geology/Geomorphology and Erosion Class Survey	9
4.6	Public Outreach and Training of Shorewatch Groups	10
5.0	Report Format	10
5.1	Built Heritage and Archaeology	10
5.2	Erosion Class	12
6.0	Background to the Archaeology of the Survey Area	13
6.1	Cowal Peninsula	13
6.2	Great Cumbrae	13
6.3	Ayrshire	13
7.0	Physical Background to the Coastal Zone of the Firth of Clyde	14
7.1	Coastal Cells	14
7.2	The Quaternary Inheritance	14
7.3	Sea Level Changes	16
7.4	Sediment Provenance	17
7.5	Wave Climate – Firth of Clyde	18
7.6	Human Development and Interference	18
8.0	Summary of Results	19
8.1	Archaeology and Built Heritage	19
8.2	Erosion Class	23
8.3	Erosion and Archaeology/Built Heritage	24
8.4	Public Outreach and Training of Shorewatch Groups	24
9.0	Recommendations and Discussion	24
9.1	Recommendations	24
10.0	Conclusion	26
11.0	Maps and Gazetteers	27
12.0	Site Descriptions	187
12.1	Cowal Peninsula	187
12.2	Great Cumbrae Island	200
12.3	Ayrshire Coast	208

13.0	Acknowledgements	241
14.0	Bibliography	241
15.0	Appendices	244
15.1	Appendix 1: List of Map Sources	244
15.2	Appendix 2: List of AP's Consulted	245
15.3	Appendix 3: Archaeology and Built Heritage Plates	245
15.4	Appendix 4: Erosion and Geomorphology Plates	255
15.5	Appendix 5: Archaeological Site Record Sheet	261
15.6	Appendix 6: Shorewatch Recording Sheet	262

*Front cover:
Irvine Bay from the south.*

GUARD

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COASTAL ZONE
ASSESSMENT SURVEY
FIRTH OF CLYDE

PROJECT 1309

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GUARD

1.0 Executive Summary

A rapid coastal zone assessment survey was conducted by Glasgow University Archaeological Research Division (GUARD) along three areas of the Firth of Clyde coastline. The sections included areas of Ayrshire, the Cowal Peninsula and the whole of Great Cumbrae Island (Figure 1). The desk-based assessment and walkover survey produced a total of 104 new sites and 195 known archaeological sites, of which 21 were Listed Buildings and 11 were Scheduled Ancient Monuments. The field survey was carried out by a team of two archaeologists from GUARD and two geomorphologists from the Coastal Research Group (CRG), Department of Geography and Topographic Science, University of Glasgow. A Public Outreach and Training Officer also helped train and guide newly established Shorewatch groups in the survey areas. The work was commissioned by the SCAPE Trust (Scottish Coastal Archaeology & Palaeo-Environment) and the Firth of Clyde Forum and was funded by Historic Scotland. The work was carried out in accordance with Historic Scotland's Procedure Paper 4: Coastal Zone Assessment Survey (Historic Scotland, 1996).

A wide variety of sites are located within eroding areas of the coastline. Of these sites a total of 20 were recommended for further survey. These sites included two fort/dun sites, several Medieval castles on the Ayrshire coast, a probable pre-Improvement settlement, sites related to the industrial past of Ayrshire, a previously unrecorded jetty/harbour on Great Cumbrae Isle and three post-Medieval sites on the Cowal Peninsula (Table 11).

The survey concluded that the Ayrshire coast is the worst affected by coastal erosion, especially the area between Troon and Portencross, while the Isle of Great Cumbrae proves to be the most stable.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 *Background*

This report is one of a series that have been produced by various archaeological contractors, funded by Historic Scotland, to characterise the state of coastal erosion and the threat it poses to archaeology in Scotland. This report presents the results of a rapid coastal zone assessment carried out between October and December 2002 of three areas within the Firth of Clyde.

2.2 *Survey Area*

The survey area comprised three sections of coastline in the Firth of Clyde (Figure 1). These sections included the entire coast of the Island of Great Cumbrae (18.5 km), the southern and eastern coasts of the Cowal Peninsula from Ardyne point to Strone Point (28.2 km) and a stretch of the Ayrshire coast from Largs to Maidens (77.5 km). This was a total distance of 124.2 km (based on 1:10,000 base maps viewed within ArcView GIS software package). The area around Hunterston Power Station and Ore Terminal, to the south of Fairlie, was not included in the survey area.

2.3 *Survey Conditions*

Carrying out the survey in the winter months was useful in that plant growth over the coastal areas was at a minimum. This increases the chance of identifying archaeological remains that may otherwise have been obscured by vegetation during the summer months. The effects of erosion are also more visible in winter because of the increased wind and wave action. However, the often adverse weather conditions, including heavy rain and wind, compounded by very short daylight hours, significantly slowed the field survey. Despite this, no full days were lost to bad weather.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

The main aims of the survey were:

- to increase knowledge of coastal archaeological sites and to identify those sites that are at risk, either presently or potentially, from erosional processes on the coastline, and
- to establish and train Shorewatch groups within the local community, to record archaeological sites and to monitor the effects of erosion in the longer term.