
Excursion 3: Kildonnan (Route map 3)

This can be followed as a separate short excursion starting from the pier, or conveniently from Glebe Barn in reverse order. It can also be combined with Excursion 2, as an alternative to visiting Grulin.

The coastline between the pier and Kildonnan is attractively varied, with sandy beaches alternating with low grassy headlands; and always with views of the mainland mountains, many sea-birds, and seals.

From the pier, head north and east around the bay to the old Clanranald pier where you can follow the orange path markers.

Just east of the old Clanranald pier, a road cut [NM 4833 8423] exposes a small pitchstone dyke passing through amygdaloidal basalt lavas, which can also be seen on the stony beach below. Look out for black, glistening glassy pitchstone, which weathers to form a tough grey crust. There is only a thin dyke of pitchstone here, but this is the same rock type as the Sgurr is made of! But it is chemically distinct and cannot be a feeder, according to the Geological Survey memoir. The track leads on to the informal campsite and Shell Bay, where cowrie and a range of other shells can be found.

On the headland Sgeir nam Bagh [NM 4854 8429], are examples of the so-called 'Kildonnan Sheets'. These are intrusions, one to a few metres thick, that cut the basalts at low and variable angles. They are composed of a basic igneous rock a little different in composition from the basalt lavas. They are not typical sills, because they are discordant to the lavas, nor typical dykes, because they are far from vertical. It is clear that they must be later than the lavas. It is an interesting exercise to explore the relationship of the sheets with dykes in the area — which came first?

A gate leads into a field above the next bay north (Poll nam Partan). From the cliff top here [NM 4854 8496] there is a very fine view towards Kildonnan and the basaltic trap topography of the hillside of Beinn Bhuidhe to the north. Nearer at hand are the columns of the lowest major lava flow, which is thick and columnar over much of the island and forms a prominent cliff on the west side of Poll nam Partan. Follow the marked path down past columns and through an attractive hazel grove that lies beneath the columns, crossing some impressively large fallen examples.

The path joins the road near the old Mill, and if time allows it is worth continuing along the road towards Kildonnan Farm, with fine views back towards the columnar basalt in the middle ground and the Sgurr beyond (pictured on the cover of the Geological Survey's 'British Regional Geology'). On the hillside above lies the Kildonnan graveyard and the mediaeval chapel ruins, sites of great importance in Eigg's history.

From Kildonnan, return by the same route or follow the road north towards the centre of the island. Stop half-way up the steep hill (around [NM 487 853]) to appreciate a small outcrop of a basalt dyke that shows good examples of spheroidal weathering. Glebe Barn lies on the hillside to the west of the road, which eventually leads to the island school and the road back to the pier.

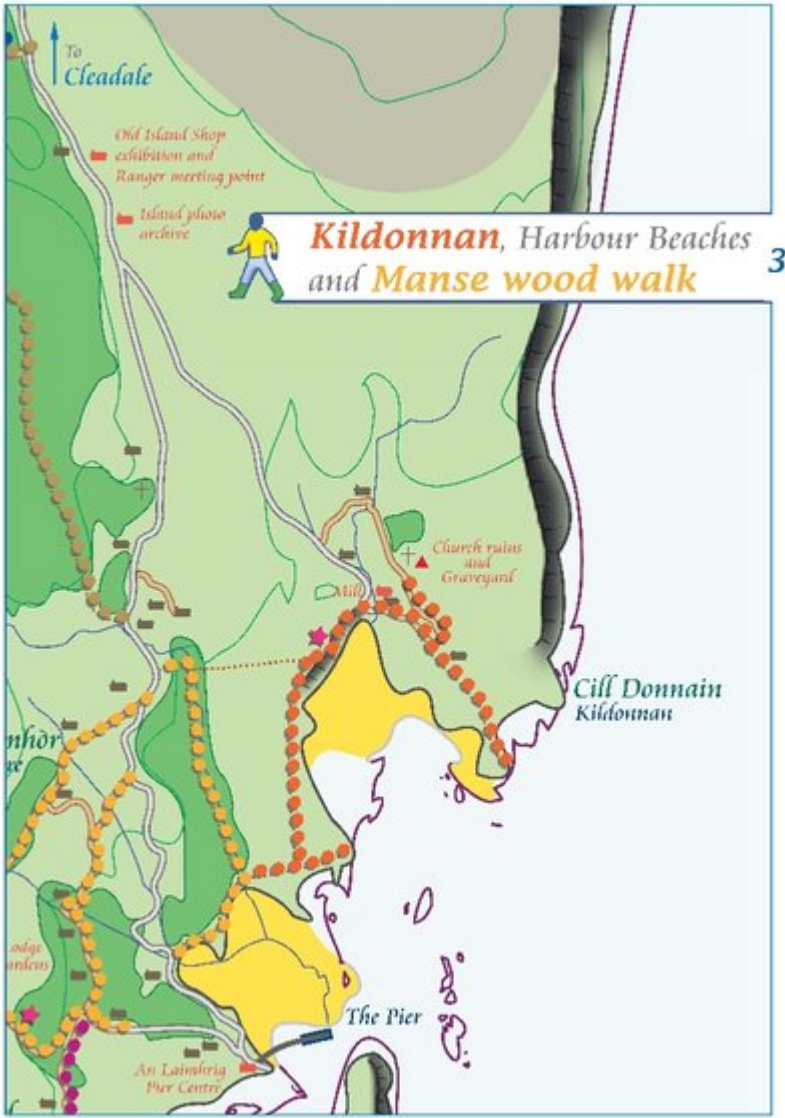
From Glebe Barn

The Kildonnan area can form part of an attractive introductory excursion. Descend the hillside behind the barn to a gate that leads on to the Kildonnan road. Follow the road downhill, passing the spheroidally weathered dyke. Continue towards Kildonnan House to admire the view of the basalt columns, then take the path through the hazel grove below the columns, following the excursion described above in reverse order, arriving at the pier.

Figures

(Figure 34) The view back to the pier and An Laimhrig, with Ardnamurchan beyond.

(Figure 35) Kildonnan sheet cutting dyke and basalts.



Kildonnan, Harbour beaches and Manse wood walk postcard walk 3



Figure 34 The view back to the pier and An Laimhrig, with Ardnamurchan beyond.

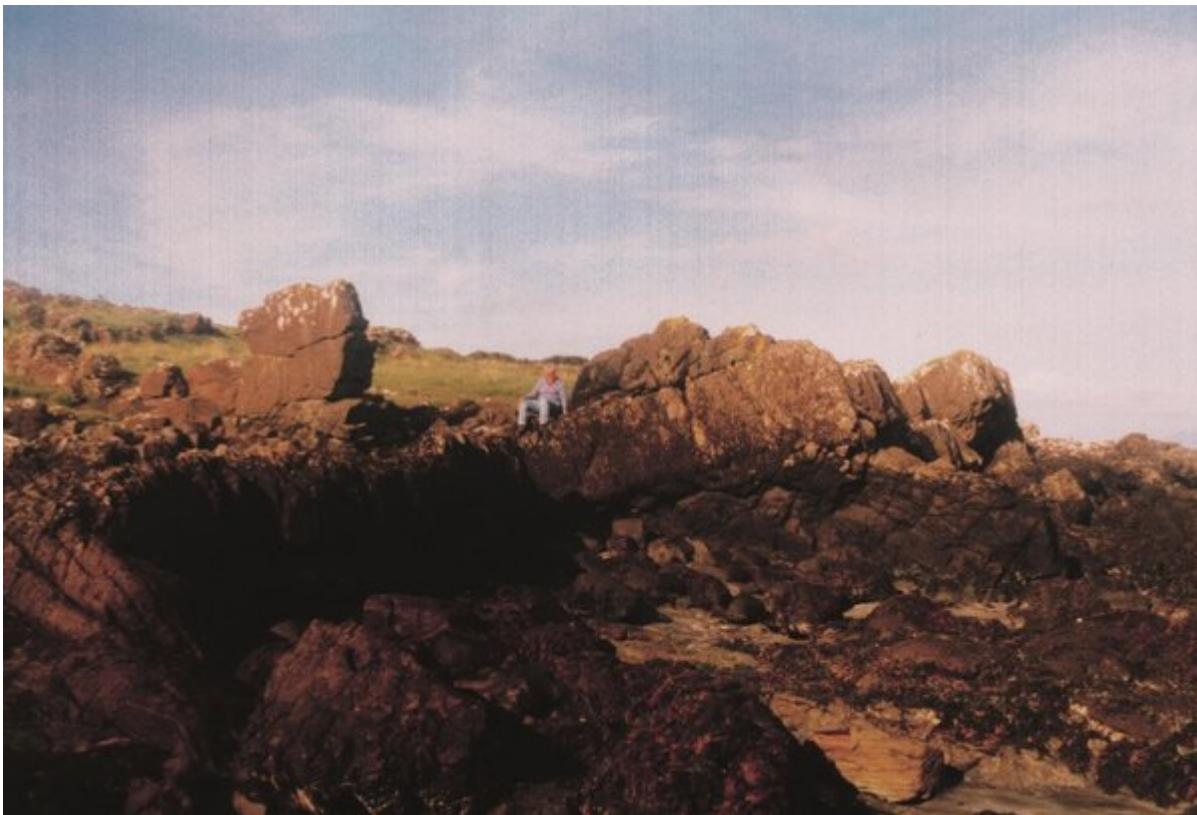


Figure 35 Kildonnan sheet cutting dyke and basalts.