

#### 4. THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF THE PROJECTS

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Kilmartin Museum led the excavations at the two dun sites of Barnluasgan and Balure specifically to increase our understanding of the Iron Age in Argyll, which prior to this had been described as a 'black hole' (Haselgrove et al 2001). This underpinned the research agenda at both sites, although different excavation methodologies were adopted in each case.

Beyond the possible structural superimposition of a 'dun' and an 'enclosure' at Barnluasgan there was little about these or the structure at Balure that stood out in terms of size or preservation. Their apparent 'normality' is what made them of interest, in that it is useful to understand what appears to be

unexceptional or typical before we can understand what makes a site exceptional or special.

The excavation of Barnluasgan, a scheduled monument (SM I0337), was conducted in a series of targeted trenches, while that at Balure, an unscheduled site, was conducted through a more open area approach. Both of these techniques, given time and budget limitations, have their advantages and drawbacks. At Barnluasgan excavation within selected trenches allowed deeper deposit sequences to be explored, but made it difficult to firmly equate deposits across or between trenches. Open area excavation across larger areas can counter this, but given similar funding and time limits can be at the expense of revealing the deeper/earlier stratigraphy across a site.