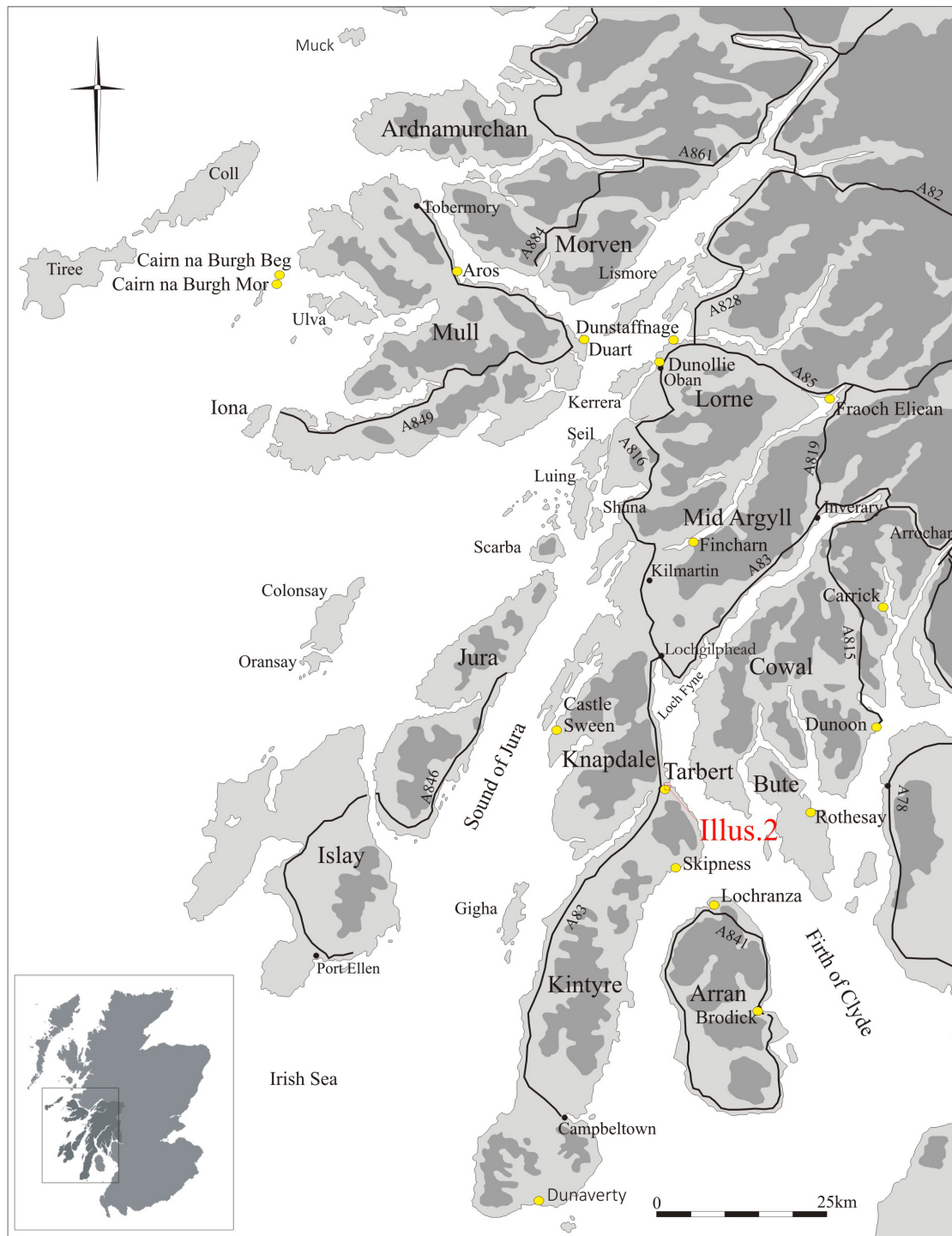


### 3. LOCATION AND TOPOGRAPHY

Tarbert Castle occupies a prominent ridge on the southeast side of East Loch Tarbert within the parish of Kilcalmonell (Illus 1–5, Centred NR 86770 68730, Tarbert Castle, Canmore ID 39316; Tarbert Medieval Burgh, Canmore ID [39321](#)). The castle

sits above a small well-sheltered harbour at East Loch Tarbert overlooking the present Tarbert village. The castle remains occupy an uneven ridge standing between 22m and 35m above the village and its outer walls are naturally defended on the north, east, and west sides by steep rocky scarps around the edge of the ridge, these are sheer in places, particularly

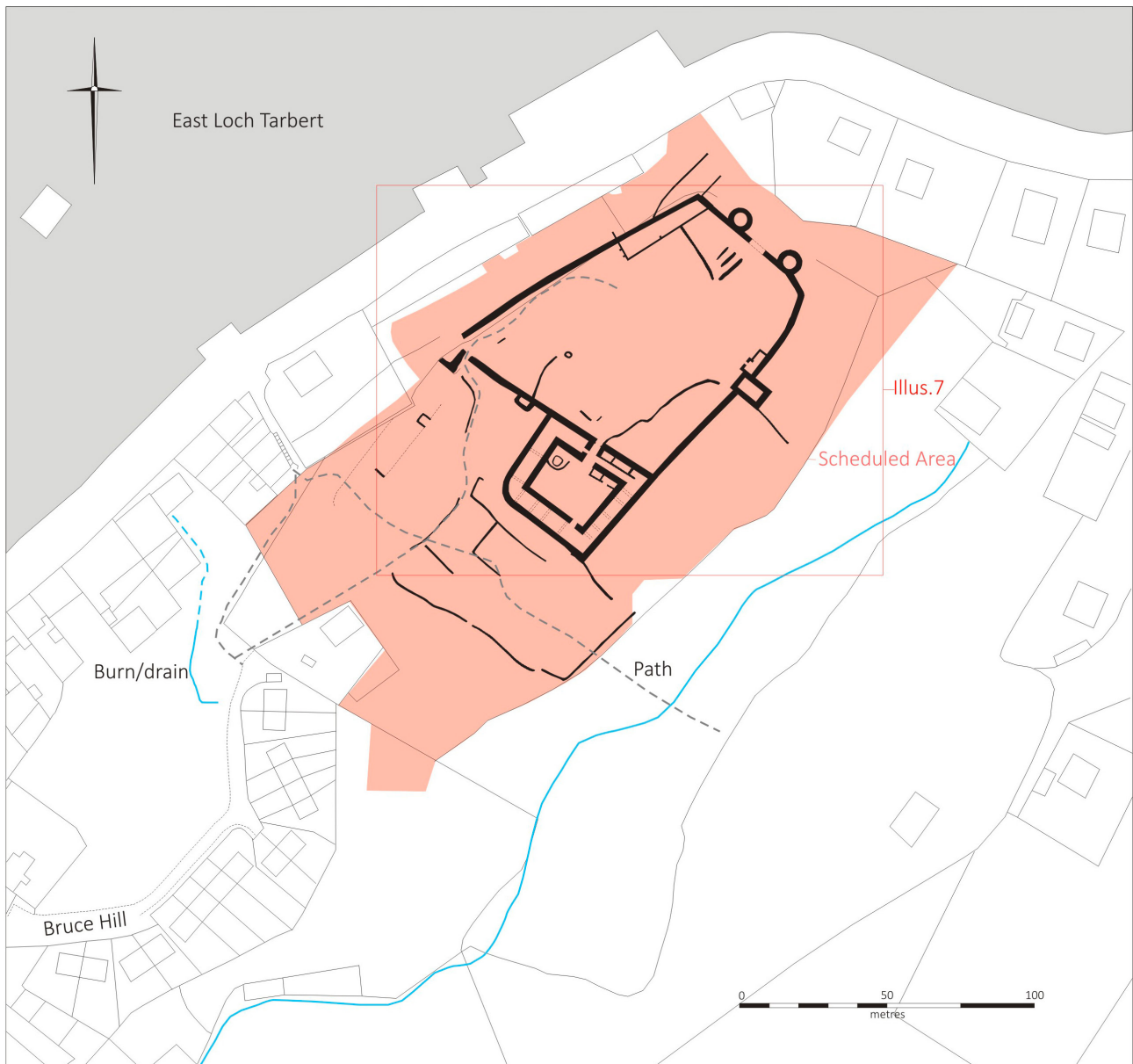


Illus 1 Argyll (© Roddy Regan)

on the west side. To the southwest the ground falls away from the castle in a series of ridges towards the present village of Tarbert. The village is situated on a small low-lying piece of land on the northeastern shore of the isthmus separating Loch Fyne and the Clyde Estuary from the Sound of Jura and the Atlantic Ocean effectively linking the Kintyre Peninsula to Knapdale and the rest of mainland Argyll. This position is reflected in the placename Tarbert (Gaelic: *Tairbeart*) which is a toponym meaning portage a name often given to places, usually isthmuses, where boats could be transported between two bodies of water. Lying some 1.5 km

away to the southwest is the north end of West Loch Tarbert, a narrow fjord-like loch some 14 km long that comprises the western side of the isthmus.

The orientation of West Loch Tarbert reflects the underlying geology of the wider Grampian region including Argyll which is dominated by southwest-northeast orientated Dalradian metamorphic strata including Ardrishaig Phyllites to various Schistose lithologies. Tarbert is situated across several parallel lithostratigraphic layers within this sequence, including a narrow stratum of Loch Tay Limestone which outcrops on the foreshore of Loch Fyne to the north of East Loch Tarbert.



**Illus 2** Tarbert Castle layout and Scheduled Monument area





**Illus 3** Tarbert Castle from southwest above (©flyingscotscan2024)

The main nucleus of the Castle is formed by a rectangular enclosure, the Inner Bailey which occupies the highest outcrop on the ridge; the lower ridges are enclosed by a curtain wall, the Outer Bailey including a Tower House at the west. Prior to

the excavation of the site and over several years the castle site had been steadily cleared of a substantial amount of scrub and vegetation cover by TCT. The castle grounds are now mainly covered in sheep-maintained grass cover, with a few gorse bushes.





Illus 4 Tarbert Castle from north above Tarbert Harbour (©Tarbert Castle Trust)



Illus 5 Tarbert Castle above West Loch Tarbert with East Loch Tarbert at top right from northwest (©flyingscotscan2024)