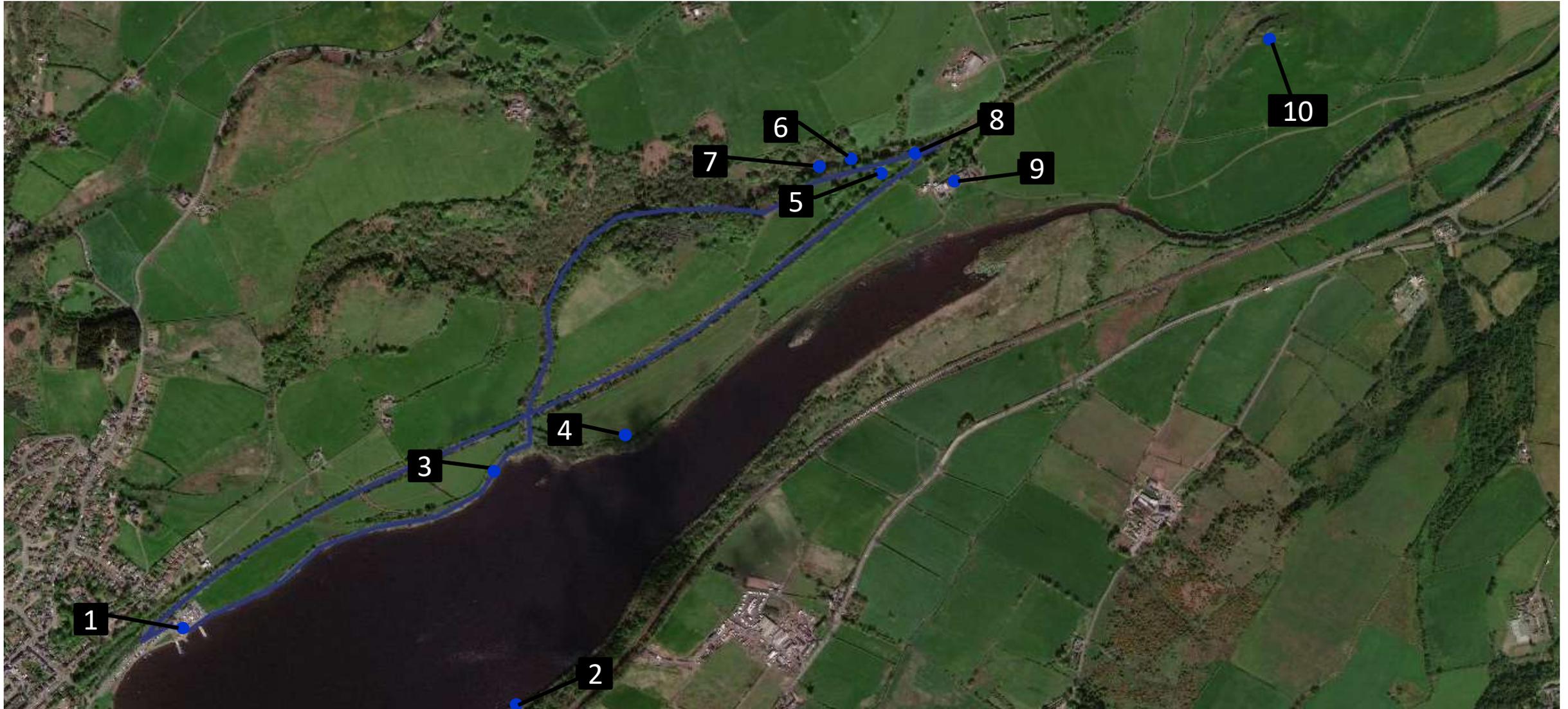


# Semple Stories, Lochwinnoch's Glories

Walk 4 – The 'C's of Castle Semple  
Collegiate Church, Cascades, Cave, Castle Semple

# Route Map



# Lochshore Path (1)

- The Loch was created over 9,000 years ago, during the last period of glaciation. It is called a ribbon loch – long, narrow and fairly shallow (3m).
- Much like the more well know Loch Ness, which is also a ribbon loch – Castle Semple Loch has a legendary creature associated with it, too!
- Beware of the white horse rearing out of the Loch for it comes to take your daughters away! If a girl climbs on its back, the Faerie Horse frae the Faur Countrie will take your daughters to the Kings and Queens o Elf-land. Never to be seen again.

# Peel Tower (2)

- Built in the 1550 by Robert, 3rd Lord Semple, as a defensive tower aided by the marshy land around. Not really big enough to be a dwelling house, its complete purpose is unclear. It fell under siege to 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Arran in 1560.
- It was probably three storeys high and measured 15m x 7m, 7m it is now an unstable ruin and not easily accessible. What remains is a vaulted cellar with thick walls and four gun ports.
- Several bronze cannons were recovered from the loch in the 18th and 19th centuries at the Peel. One is preserved in the Kelvingrove Museum, Glasgow.

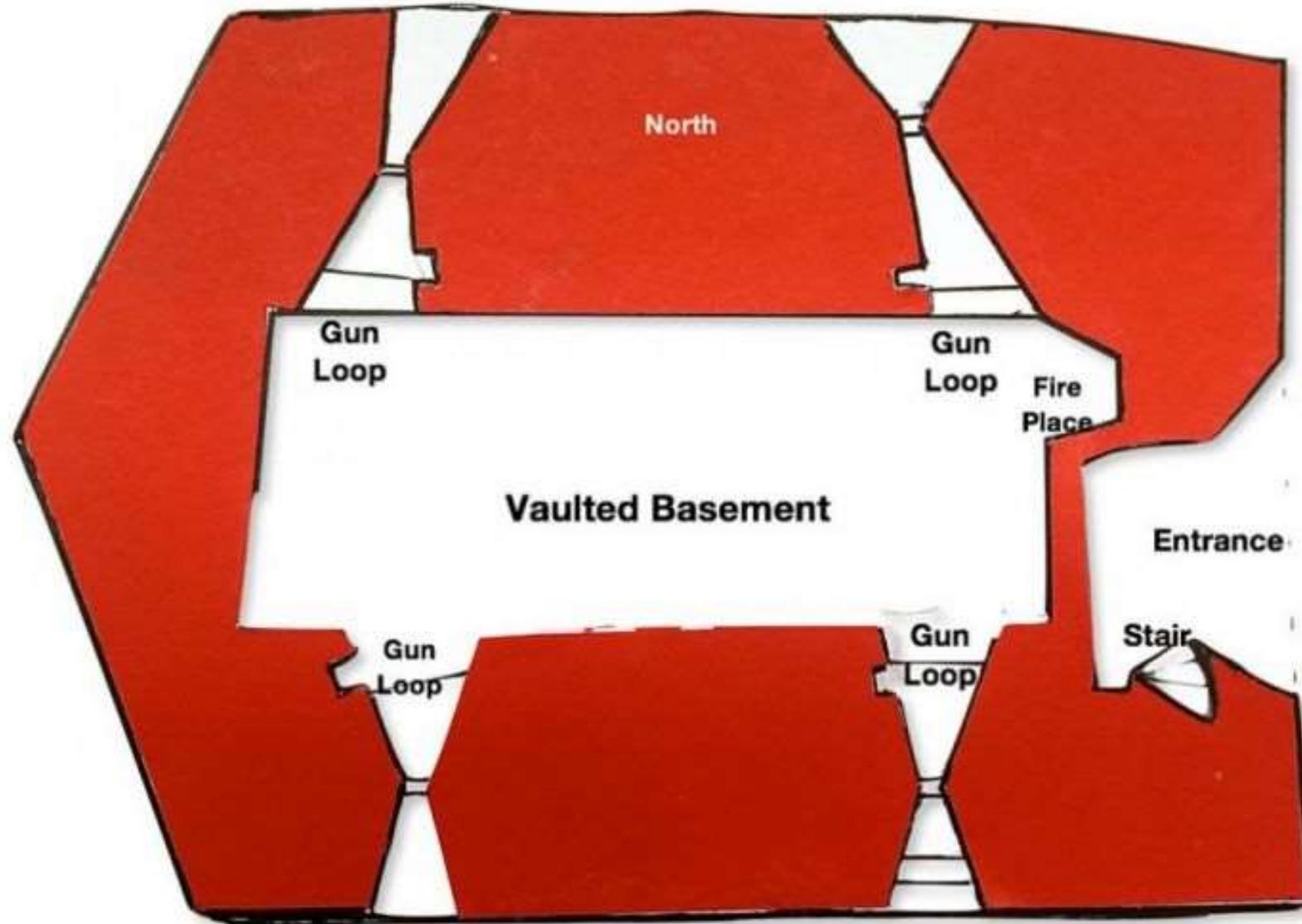
# Peel Tower Ruin



# South wall with gun loop damage



# Basement Plan



# Crannog and Canoes (2)

- Remains of a crannog have been discovered in Kilbirnie Loch and there are suggestions that there was one in Castle Semple Loch.
- Thick timbers have been unearthed which some people have speculated are the remains of a dwelling hut on the water.
- Several dug-out canoes, similar to those used by native Americans have been found in the loch, just below the surface. The canoes would definitely suggest habitation at the loch.

# The Scottish Crannog Centre, Loch Tay



# Islands (3)

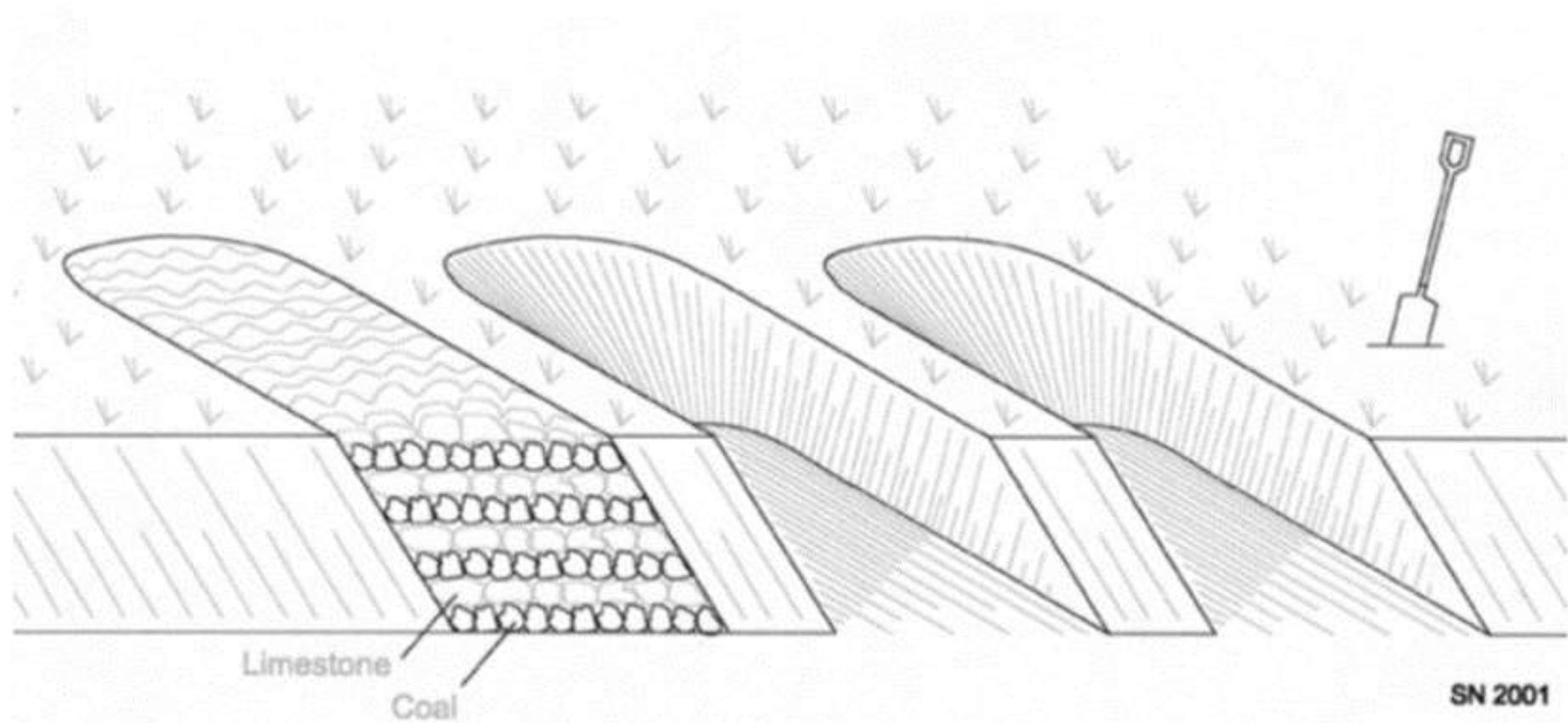
- William McDowall, the 3<sup>rd</sup>, deepened the east end of the loch and created three artificial island from the spoil. This was part of his landscape enhancements.
- An island in front of the house on the south shore has become attached to the loch shore to due vegetation encroachment. The middle island is being eroded by wave and wind action and the small island at Blackditch Bay will be gone shortly.

# Limekiln (4)

- Lime has been used since early times for mortar, harling (roughcasting) and plaster. From the mid-18th century advances in agriculture made a demand for lime as a fertiliser. Around Howwood and Corseford there are seams of coal and lime. Alternate layers of lime and coal were kept burning in the kilns for two weeks to produce powdered lime.
- The Houstons of Johnstone and McDowalls of Castle Semple established a large scale lime works at Corseford from 1775-1886.

# Limekiln cont.

- This small-scale, single kiln is only evident by some slag and spoil and was likely a clamp kiln – a simple u-shaped hollow dug into the hillside.
- Look out for a rubble dyke (wall) extending SE into loch towards the opposite bank.



**Clamp or Horseshoe Kilns**

# Colligate Church (5)

- Building completed around 1504, commissioned by John, 1<sup>st</sup> Lord Sempill. On the steps to the dais at the east end, mason's marks are still visible.
- The role of the clergy was to pray for the souls of Lord Semple and his family when living and dead.
- The apse was added after John died at the Battle of Flodden in 1513. It was built to house his tomb where his wife would also be laid to rest.
- There were buildings in the adjacent field for the priests, etc.

# Colligate Church cont.

- The building was quickly abandoned following the Reformation which began in 1560. This church fell out of use and was used as a cattle shed.
- Of national importance as the well preserved remains of a collegiate church, this is further reinforced by its status as a Property in Care of the Scottish Ministers. The church contains one of the finest examples of a medieval burial monument in Scotland.

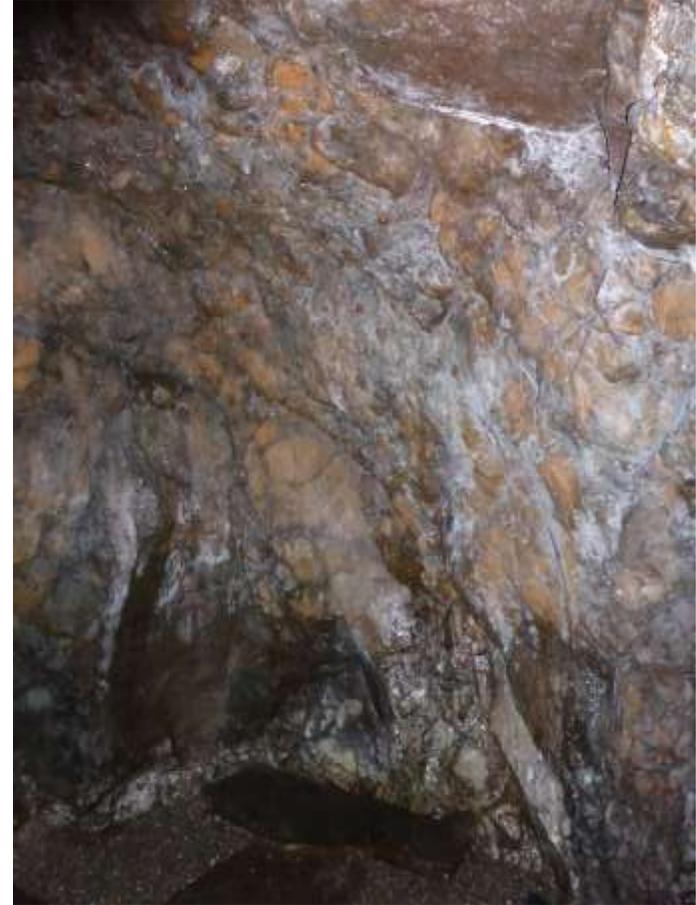
# Fishponds and Cascades (6)

- The fishponds are on a Sempill commissioned Estate map of 1730s. It is thought that they would have been stocked with fish for use by the priests and a possible source of ice. The cascades are not marked on the map – they may or may not have been there.
- The cascades are early 18th century. Series of 3 cascades running from W to E which may have been a landscape feature added by McDowall. The very top pond is thought to have included a fountain.

# Cave and Ice House (7)

- Cave is possibly 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hollowed out of the rock. Possible uses included – a priest's grotto or cell and an early attempt at an ice house which failed.
- Ice house, probably mid 19th century and built into the hillside. There is a deep brick-lined cavern to the right which would have been filled with ice to keep food cold. This was an early refrigerator.

# Inside the Cave



# Inside the Ice House



# Railway Bridge (8)

- Built in 1905, it was part of a second railway line into Glasgow (St. Enoch Station), the first station being Lochside Station, now known as Lochwinnoch Station and it was closed in the mid-1960s.
- The railway ran less than 100m from the house and shows the reduced fortunes of the Harvey family who owned the estate at the time. The bridge is now in use as part of Nation Cycle Network route 7 which runs from Inverness to Carlisle - 547.2 miles, 880.6 km.

# Castle Semple (9)

- Built around the same time as the Collegiate Church, it was at first a simple tower house, like Barr Castle, with a larger house coming later. The image of the house which we are familiar with was built by William McDowall, the First.
- The House was damaged by fire in 1924 and the central portion of it demolished in the 1960s. The remaining structures are now private houses.
- In 1727, the Semples sold the estate to a sugar plantation owner, William McDowell. McDowell began land improvements including landscaping, contracted Robert Hunter of Ayr to design and build a modern mansion house and the original tower-house was demolished to provide building materials. William MacDowell the 2<sup>nd</sup> continued improvements including building the Temple at the deer park in Kenmuir Hill. The Estate sold in 1814 to Major John Harvey who continued to improve the landscape. Family finances declined during the 19th century and the estate was sold in 1908. Afterwards, the house was converted to apartments and the land broken up into small holdings.

# Castle Semple cont.



# Kenmuir Hill Temple (10)

- The 2<sup>nd</sup> William McDowall built the 'Temple' at the deer park on Kenmuir Hill.
- There are many stories about its use – a temple for the wife of the 1<sup>st</sup> William McDowall to worship in; a nursery; a place for a sick child; a water tower; a look-out tower etc.
- Follies were popular landscape features in the 18<sup>th</sup> century as they were a sign of wealth. It is likely that the ladies took tea here while the men hunted in the deer park below.
- In 1830, a lightning strike and subsequent fire damaged the roof. The building is in remarkably good condition despite this, and is a testament to the quality of its construction.

# Newspaper image

