

6 CONCLUSIONS

The excavation and watching brief at Brunary Burn demonstrated that the house and its ancillary structures were of 19th-century origin and were occupied for a short period. Historical records indicate that the house was occupied by the McEachen family some time during the period 1831 to 1851, who appear in the 1841 census as a family of ten. The family no longer lived at Brunary Burn by the 1851 census, but some family members are listed as residing in a new dwelling, Kinloid Farm. The matriarch of the house was discovered to have died of unknown causes by this time, and at least two of the original family members (daughter Janet and sister Kate) are not listed in the census; one can only speculate about their fate – they may have emigrated, died or married and moved away.

The increase in settlement remains of mid 19th-century date recorded in the Arisaig area, of which the remains at Brunary Burn are an example, probably reflect a growing local population stimulated by economic improvements (kelp production), and landowners keen to populate their estates, particularly in marginal land, in order to create a workforce which could be used on the estate. However, the eventual downturn in the kelp industry meant there was less opportunity for estate tenants to earn the cash necessary to supplement their meagre subsistence on their crofts. The potato blight followed by famine reduced the local population, with further reductions caused by evictions and emigration, resulting in unoccupied houses falling to ruin.