



Secrets of the only island in Loch Ness

Dìomhaireachd an aon eilein ann an Loch Nis

Pronounced: Deeaverrachd an oon ellyan ayr Loch Neesh

Cherry Island (ahead of you) is the only island in Loch Ness **Loch Nis**. The loch is a deep U-shaped trench scoured out by glaciers, which left behind no rocks big enough to form islands. The "island" is actually a man-made dwelling known as a crannog **crannag**, perhaps 2,500 years old.

In 1908 a Fort Augustus Abbey monk, Dom Odo Blundell, investigated the crannog. His dives revealed that it was originally around three times larger than it looks today. This is because the building of the Caledonian Canal (in the early 1800s) raised the water level by about 1.8 metres (6 feet), submerging most of the crannog.

Dom Blundell also found that the crannog was built of layers of oak, rubble and stones, which were kept in place by tree trunks set around the edges. A causeway, now under water, linked the crannog to the shore.

You can still see the remains of crannogs in many Scottish lochs and, at low tide, around the coast. Perhaps they were built for defence **dìon** - or to avoid building on precious farming **tuathanachas** land. Some crannogs continued to be used for centuries - for example, we know that Cherry Island was the site of a castle in the 1400s.



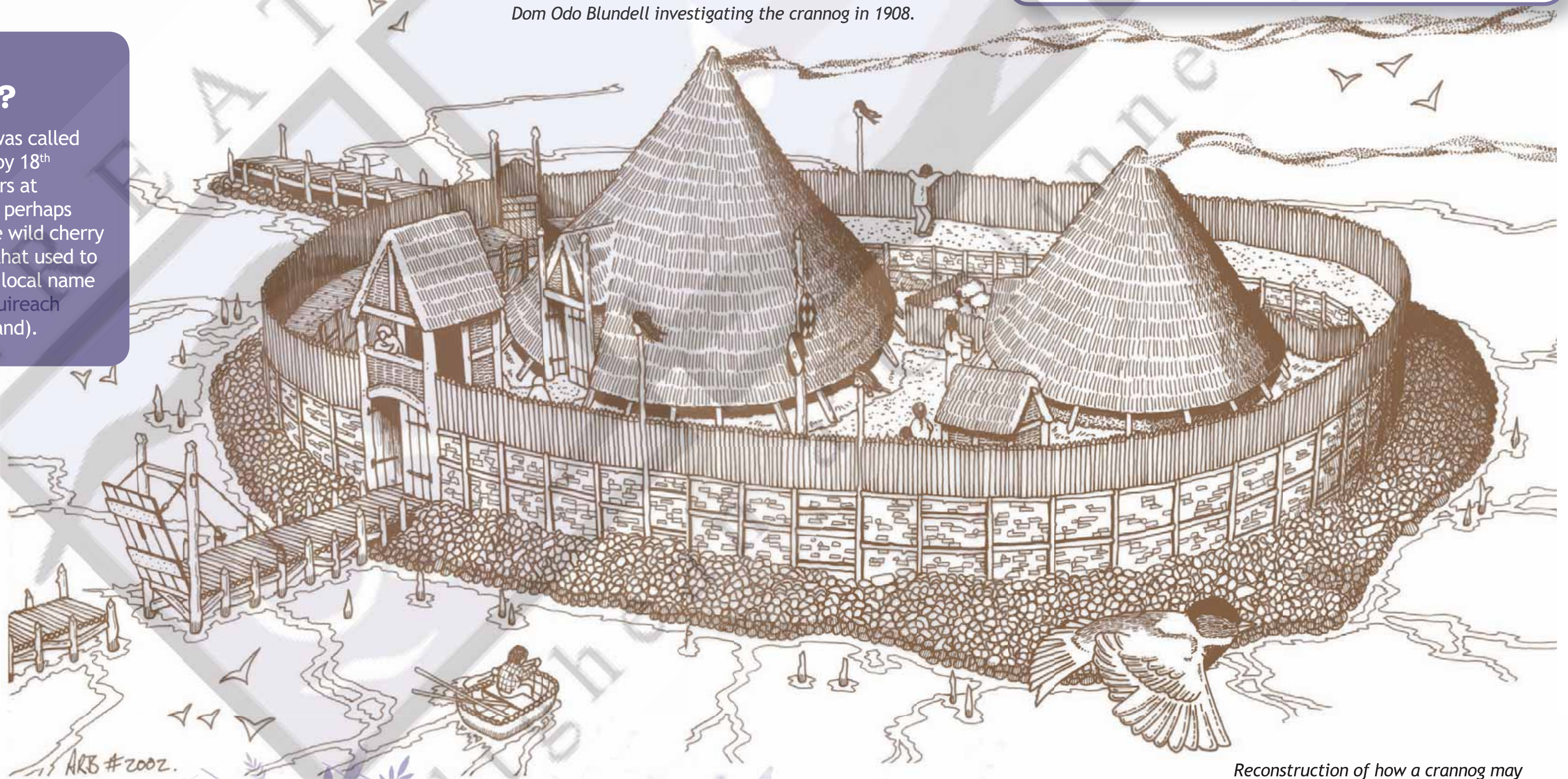
Dom Odo Blundell investigating the crannog in 1908.

Early Highland History Timeline

Around 10,000 years ago:	Ice sheets begin to melt.
Around 8,000 years ago:	Stone Age - people hunting and gathering food.
Around 6,000 years ago:	First farmers.
Around 4,400 years ago:	First metal working.
Around 2,600 years ago:	Iron working begins.
Around 1,400 years ago:	Coming of Christianity. Pictish kingdoms already established.
Around 1,200 years ago:	Viking raiders (later traders) arrive.
Around 800 years ago:	Rise of medieval burghs and cathedrals.
Around 700 years ago:	Kings of Scotland fight to establish kingdom. Highland clans still hold great power.

Did you know...?

This crannog was called Cherry Island by 18th Century soldiers at Fort Augustus, perhaps because of the wild cherry trees (geans) that used to grow on it. Its local name was Eilean Mhuireach (Murdoch's Island).



Reconstruction of how a crannog may have looked.