

XXIX.—*Notes regarding various Remains of Antiquity, both of the Earlier and Middle Ages, observed during a recent visit to the Hebrides.*

By DONALD GREGORY, Esq., Secretary S.A. Sc.

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IN making a tour last summer through part of the Hebrides and of the coast of Argyleshire, I made a point of visiting such remains of antiquity as I could hear of. The present communication has for its object, not to describe minutely all I saw, for which purpose drawings would be absolutely necessary, but merely to point out generally the locality and nature of those antiquities which fell under my notice, and thus induce others to do the same in the parts of the country which they have occasion to visit. From general communications of this kind (with drawings where practicable, or sketches, however slight) the Society would be able to select with ease those objects of antiquity whose importance would warrant more particular illustration.

I commenced my tour in that district of Argyleshire lying opposite the Island of Mull, and known by the name of Morvern.

Near Keil (a contraction of Kill Callum Kill, the church having been dedicated to Columba), a little to the northward of the church, and looking out to the Island and Sound of Mull, I was shown a small circle of low stones, hardly appearing above the grass, about 18 feet in diameter, and nearly touching each other. The place is called *Ibert*, meaning the place of sacrifice, an appellation which is commonly given to these circles in the West Highlands. In the neighbourhood of this circle, but more in the interior, and still looking out to the Sound of Mull, are the remains of a small circular hill-fort with apparently a double rampart; but I could not trace any marks of vitrification on the stones which were uncovered. This fort still retains the name of Dun nan Gall, or the Stranger's Fort, and had probably been occupied by some Scandinavian pirates. At the churchyard of Keil, one complete cross, and fragments of several others, said to have been brought from Iona, are preserved. The sculpture

on them is generally a sort of foliage or tracery; but on one of the fragments I observed the figure of a Bishop, elegantly sculptured, in the act of benediction. Among the tombstones at Keil, the most remarkable is one with the figure of a warrior in very high relief, but rudely done, said to cover the grave of one of the M'Foins of Ardnamurchan, chieftain of a sept of the Macdonalds, who was killed while carrying off a prey of cattle from this district.

In the neighbourhood of the castle of Kinlochaline, and on the north side of the loch, there is a field called Auchindruineach, translated the Druid's Field, in which is a circle of low stones similar to that above described. In a field called Dalnagairn, translated the Level Field of Cairns, about a mile inland from Kinlochaline, are still to be seen two complete circles of low stones, such as I have already described, but perhaps rather larger; and in the same field there were several more circles, which have now nearly disappeared. At Acharn, upwards of a mile farther inland than Dalnagairn, and in a level plain of considerable extent, there is an immense collection of cairns, none of them very high, evidently pointing out the site of some great battle. I saw the remains of a very large stone coffin, in which an urn with ashes was found. This coffin was discovered in taking away the stones from one of the cairns. Many more have been found in the same way, of which no traces are left; and there is no doubt that where the cairns have not been disturbed, there must be many still remaining. Near this remarkable spot is a pretty large circle of stones of no great height. Among those with whom I conversed, I could find no tradition relative to the collection of cairns at Acharn.

From Morvern I proceeded to the Isle of Skye, and landed at Kyleakin. Here, between the village and Dr Mackinnon's house, where the road takes a sharp turn, there was a large cairn, which was cut through in making the road; and in which several stone coffins with urns, &c., were found. About a mile from the Doctor's house to the westward is a double circle of stones, of the same low kind as those I saw in Morvern. That part of the farm is called Teynandruineach. The name, which means "the House of the Druids," induced the Doctor some years ago to look for a circle, and he found this, although with some difficulty, the stones being almost entirely concealed by the heather. He mentioned to me another circle on his farm, which, however, I did not see. These circles of low stones I

understand to be very common in Skye. Near Livras (now called Corry), on the north side of Broadford Bay, are several tumuli. In one of these an opening was accidentally made, which brought to light a chamber approaching to the circular form, rudely vaulted by the large stones which form the sides being made to overlap each other successively. In this chamber, which may be 10 or 12 feet high at the highest point, was discovered a stone coffin with a human skeleton. Some bones of animals were also found, together with the accompanying stone ornament, the use of which I do not pretend to conjecture, and which is presented to the Society by Mrs Mackinnon senior, Corry. On the shore in the neighbourhood was found another ornament of the same stone, but of a different shape, which is herewith presented to the Society by Alexander Mackinnon, Esq., Corry. The chamber above mentioned is at one side of the tumulus; and from the size of the latter, and the position of the former, it is not unlikely that the tumulus may contain one large chamber surrounded by several smaller ones, similar to that I have attempted to describe. There is a tradition that during the persecution of the M'Leods of Lewis, one John M'Torquill, of that race, was concealed in this place for some time, and died there; but whether he actually died there or not, there can be no question that it was an ancient tomb, at the time he came to it. Should I visit Skye again, I purpose, with the assistance of Mr Mackinnon, to have this tumulus thoroughly explored.

Close to the manse of Strath, near the banks of Lochslapen, is an obelisk of ten or twelve feet in height, round which there was formerly a circle, which has been removed. Near Kilmorie, in Strathaird, there are two or three stones of considerable height standing together; but these I only saw at a distance. At Claggan, near Dunvegan, I was shown part of a subterraneous passage supposed to have had some connexion with one of the Circular Duns so common in Skye, which existed at no great distance from it, but which has now almost entirely disappeared. Some miles from Dunvegan, on the road to Bracadale, are two very remarkable tumuli, which have never been opened.

In the church of Rowdill, in Harris, a foundation by the M'Leods of Harris, is a remarkably fine monument to the memory of Alexander M'Leod of Harris and Dunvegan, who died nearly 300 years ago. His effigy, as large as life and in complete armour, is placed in a recumbent posture, in a

richly ornamented niche; and from the beautiful execution of the whole, the monument is certainly worthy of a place in our Transactions. For this purpose I have requested a gentleman in Skye, who will have occasion to be in Harris next summer, to make an accurate drawing of the monument, which he has kindly promised to do. For the Society he has also promised to make a drawing of a curiously carved heraldic stone at Dunvegan Castle.

In the old church of Ey, some miles from Stornoway, in the Lewis, is an elegantly carved tombstone of the Iona stone. What remains legible of the inscription runs thus:—"Hic jacet Malcolmus filius Roderici M'Leod." The date is wanting, but as Malcolm M'Leod of the Lewis, son of Roderick, had a crown-charter of the lands of Lewis and others in 1511, and as John M'Leod of the Lewis is mentioned in 1531, it must be dated sometime between these years, and is consequently upwards of 300 years old. Many of the M'Leods of Lewis were buried here, but there are none of the tombstones so well preserved as that above described; and indeed no other of the older tombstones appear to have inscriptions. The most remarkable antiquities in the Lewis are the Standing Stones at Callernish, near Loch Roag. These are described by Martin, and also by Mr Colin Mackenzie, in the Transactions of the Society, vol. i., page 283, to which I may refer, merely observing that it would be very desirable to have an accurate delineation of this northern Stonehenge.

At Lochbuy House, in Mull, is a very fine circle of stones four or five feet high; and at a little distance from the circle is a single stone about seven feet high. I may also mention, that I saw in the possession of Mr Macdonald of Balranald, in North Uist, a very perfect bronze sword, exactly similar to a Roman gladius, and about two feet long, which was found in the moss of Lyndell, near Loch Grishernish, in Skye.