

## II.

### NOTICE OF TWO "CRANNOGES," OR PALLISADED ISLANDS, IN BUTE, WITH PLANS. BY JOHN MACKINLAY, Esq., F.S.A. Scot.

The fortification which I am first to describe is of the kind called by the Irish antiquaries "Crannoges," of which class Mr Robertson described several, in different parts of Scotland, in a very interesting paper, read by him at our Meeting on 14th December last, and to which this may be regarded as an appendix.

In Gaelic, the word *Crann* signifies a *tree*, a *stake*, or a *post*, and *Og* or *Oig* is young; so *Crann-oig* signifies a stockade formed of *young trees*; consequently it is scarcely a correct use of the term to extend it to insular forts formed of any other material. This is one instance among many of words acquiring a wider meaning than their etymology would strictly warrant; it is, however, convenient to have a general term by which insular forts in lakes may be classified.

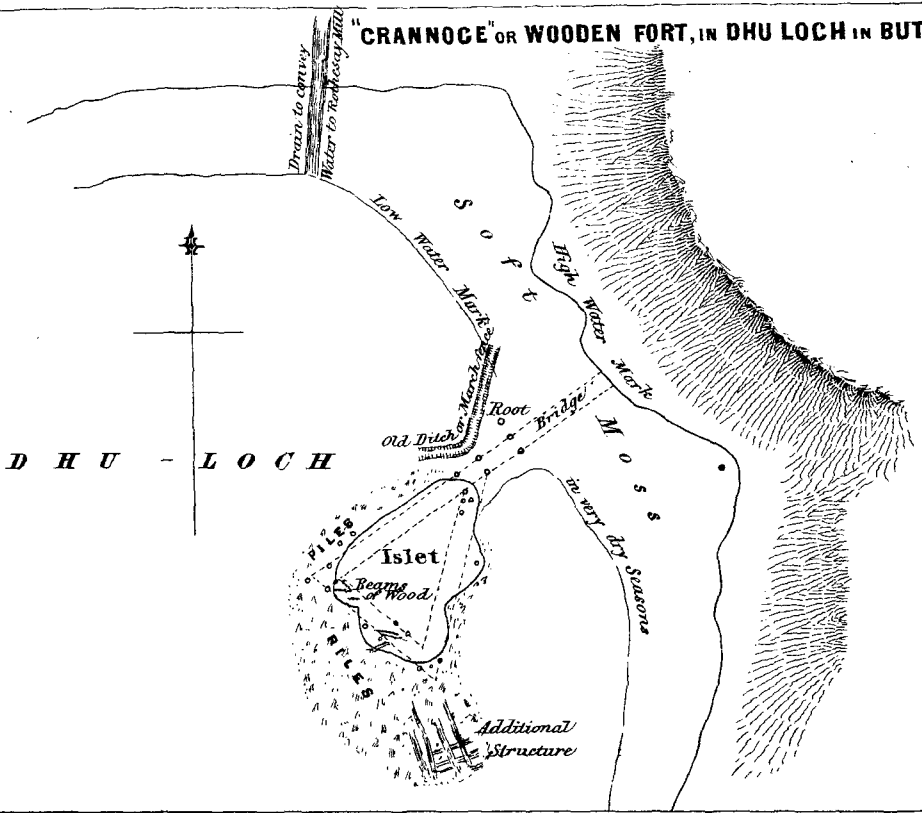
The "Crannoge" of which I am now to give an account was discovered by me in the summer of 1812, and is thus described in a letter, dated 13th February 1813, which I wrote to the late James Knox, Esq. of Glasgow, who immediately sent it to his friend George Chalmers, Esq., author of "Caledonia;" and this letter led to my having a long correspond-

ence with him relative to the antiquities of Buteshire. The following is an extract:—

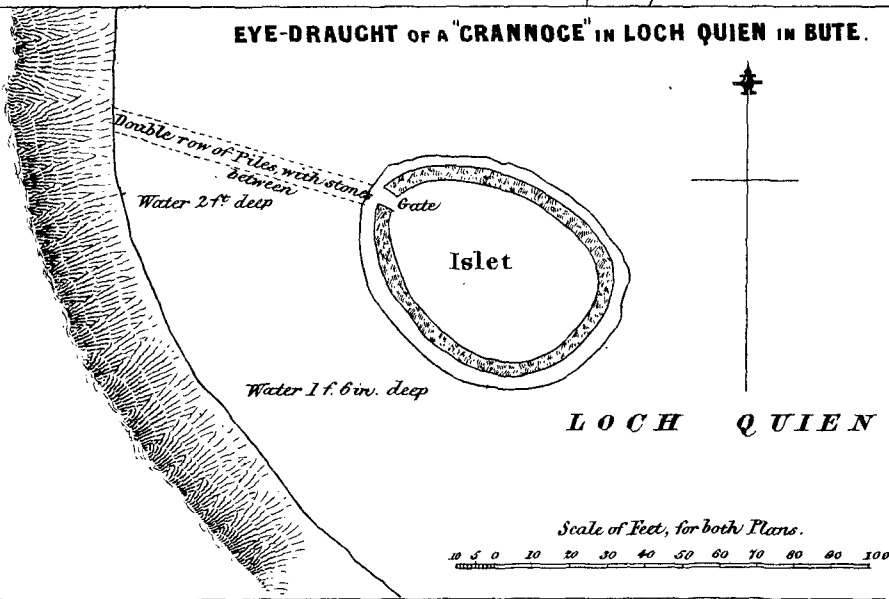
“There is a small mossy lake, called *Dhu-Loch*, situated in a narrow valley in the middle of that strong tract of hill-ground extending from the Dun-hill of Barone to Ardscaipsie Point, to which valley, it is said, the inhabitants of Bute were wont to drive their cattle in times of danger. I remember, when a schoolboy, to have heard that there were the remains of some ancient building in that lake, which were visible when the water was low; and happening to be in that part of the island last summer [1812], I went to search for it. I found a low green islet about 20 yards long, which was connected with the shore, owing to the lowness of the water, after a continuance of dry weather. Not seeing any vestiges of stone foundations, I was turning away, when I observed ranges of oak piles, and on examination it appeared that the edifice had been thus constructed. (See Plan, Plate V. fig. 1.)

“The walls were formed by double rows of piles  $4\frac{1}{2}$  feet asunder, and the intermediate space appears to have been filled with beams of wood, some of which yet remain. The bottom had been filled up to the surface of the water with moss or turf, and covered over with shingle, or quarry rubbish, to form a floor. The ground-plan was a triangle, with one point towards the shore, to which it had been connected by a bridge or stage, some of the piles of which are still to be traced. There is reason to believe that the space between this building and the shore of the lake was much deeper; or else was so soft as not to bear a person's weight, which it can scarcely do yet. The foundation was secured by a bank about 6 or 8 feet broad, formed with small piles, filled up with moss; and when the superstructure had decayed to the high-water level, the gravel of the floor burst out and covered part of this bank, which gave the islet its present shape. The water of the lake is of a dark colour (as its name imports) owing to the bottom being wholly moss, and this circumstance has prevented the decay of the piles as high as the water reached—as they still continue in the state of *moss oak*, many trees of which are to be seen in the bottom of the lake when the water is clear. This uncommon building was perhaps the *prætorium* of this extensive natural for-

"CRANNOCE" OR WOODEN FORT, IN DHU LOCH IN BUTE



EYE-DRAUGHT OF A "CRANNOCE" IN LOCH QUIEN IN BUTE.



tress formed by a double range of hills, which seem anciently to have been covered with wood."<sup>1</sup>

At the south end of the lake there are several large roots of oak trees, still fixed in the ground where they grew; the stems had decayed down to the roots, where they were about 3 feet in diameter, and the roots were preserved by a coating of moss-earth.

I revisited this islet in the summer of 1826, which was uncommonly dry, and the water in that lake was consequently much diminished. On that occasion I observed an extension of the fort at the south-east corner, formed by small piles and a frame-work of timbers laid across each other, in the manner of a raft. It seems to have formed the foundation of some wooden erection which was destroyed by fire, as the tops of the piles were charred; those piles (as well as the frame-work) were only about 4 inches in diameter. I took out one of the larger piles of the original edifice, which was 5 inches in diameter, and the point seems to have been cut by a celt, or stone axe, as the cuts were hollow, or as it were conchoidal.

There is another insular fort in Loch Quein; which loch is situated near the south end of the valley between Rothesay and Scalpsie Bays. And it, also, may be described as a Crannoge, in the wider sense of the term. I visited it in the summer of 1814; but owing to the water being pretty deep, and there being no boat on the lake, I could not get upon the islet to measure and examine it more closely; but when viewed from an adjacent height, it appeared to be an oval of 60 or 70 feet in its longest diameter. The islet (which is in the south-west side of the lake) seems to be natural, as the wall of stone, or stones and turf, follows its shape. The wall appeared to be 2 or 3 feet thick, and about a foot in height remained. There are two rows of piles extending obliquely to the shore of the lake, which either supported a bridge or a hand-rail; between the piles the ground is covered with flat stones, not raised like a causeway, but rather seeming to have been used as stepping-

<sup>1</sup> Mr Chalmers, in his letter to Mr Knox of 26th April 1813, relative to my communication respecting the Islet Fort in Dhu-Loch, says, "It goes directly to illustrate some of the obscurest antiquities of Scotland—I mean, the wooden castles—which belong to the Scottish period when stone and lime were not much used in building. I will make proper use of this discovery of Mr Mackinlay."

stones. The depth of the water here appeared to be about 2 feet; at another place it seemed not to be above 18 inches; but the bottom is soft and mossy. (See Plan, Plate V. fig. 2.)

In the north end of this lake there is a conical pile of stones, like a cairn, 9 or 10 feet in diameter, at the level of the water, which is there about 5 feet deep. The use of this pile of stones I cannot conjecture.