

#### IV.

DESCRIPTION OF STOCKADED REMAINS RECENTLY DISCOVERED AT ARISAIG, INVERNESS-SHIRE, IN A LETTER TO MR STUART, SEC. S.A. SCOT. BY THE REV. R. J. MAPLETON, CORR. MEM. S.A. SCOT.

I received information from my friend W. Robertson, Esq., of Kinloch Moidart, that a crannog was discovered about twelve years ago, upon draining a fresh-water loch in Arisaig, in the parish of Ardnamurchan, Inverness-shire, on the property of F. D. P. Asley, Esq. I have lately visited the locality with Mr Robertson and his son, Captain Robertson.

The loch is situated near the "Mains" in Arisaig, about half a mile from the village. It is (or rather was) of an irregular oval form; as far as we could guess, about 1000 yards long by 800 yards wide—the direction of the loch running from S.W. to N.E. It lies in a comparatively level tract of land, with very low braes at a short distance from its shores. It communicates with the sea by a small burn. A portion of the loch still remains undrained; and this portion is affected by very high tides, which now and then run up through a canal or cutting that was made for the purpose of draining the loch.

On the shores of the loch are evident marks of an old beach; and in the burn that fed the loch (and is now carried by the side of the drained portion into the undrained part) is an old sea-bottom, 2 feet above the present level of the loch, with 4 feet of peat lying above it. It is almost one mass of oyster-shells, with periwinkles and whelks, in a shallow bed

of clay, above a layer of decayed land-plants, in which we saw several pieces of wood, apparently the branches of birch. The crannog is situated towards the lower end of the loch, about 350 yards from the end; the nearest land being on the south-east side, about 250 yards distant. It stands in a portion of the loch that is still imperfectly drained, there being a great depth of soft, wet peat (or mud) all round it. This is at least 12 feet deep; but I was informed by a man who had been at work there, that in some parts it was much deeper, as a very long pole could find no bottom. Owing to this mud, it was impossible to ascertain how the foundation of the crannog had been formed. I will try to explain to you what we saw, and fill up the account from the report of a very intelligent man, who assisted in the draining, and saw the crannog from the time that it first appeared. The shape of the crannog is rectangular, being 43 feet on the south-west and north-east sides, and 41 feet on the south-east and north-west sides. Outside of the building is a range of sharpened posts, fixed in the bottom of the loch, and inclining inwards towards the crannog, leaving a space of about 3 feet of water between them and the building. These posts are beautifully pointed, being quite round towards the ends, as though made by small sharp instruments. We counted eight still standing on one side. The crannog appears to have been formed altogether of very large round logs, or rather of trees with the bark left on, and the side branches neatly cut off. They are of various lengths; one that we were able to measure being 29 feet long, and 5 feet in circumference, at about 2 feet above the base. Another log was closely fitted to this, so as to extend through the whole breadth of the building. The ends did not overlap, but had been neatly cut or worn off, so as to be placed quite close to each other.

We tried to dig down into the structure, and found at least four layers of these large trunks placed very regularly across each other, the layers running alternately from S.E. to N.W.—the next from N.E. to S.W. We could not dig deeper, as the water began to ooze in; but by using a probe, we felt timbers at a depth of 8 feet below our digging. The wood is chiefly oak, but there are some logs of birch. We saw no signs of upright posts, but we saw one log that ran diagonally across one corner, that might have been placed there as a tie, or might have been

merely a branch from some other log. We could not ascertain this without cutting through the logs, and thus destroying the structure; but its position arrested our attention, especially as the logs seemed to have been very carefully cleared of their side branches. There were also a few smaller branches lying among the larger logs—perhaps used to fill up the spaces—perhaps to form a flooring; they were placed in no regular order. On the surface were several large flagstones, especially in three spots. These bore strong marks of fire, and the logs on which they rested were much charred. Beneath and around them we found charcoal, several small pieces of calcined bone, shells of hazel nuts, and one very small chip of flint, together with several rough angular pieces of white quartz. Several of the logs were lying in various parts of the half-drained loch, having been washed away by the return of water at high tides. At each of the four corners of the structure there were two sharpened stakes inclining towards each other and the building, leaving a small space between them; and at one end (*viz.*, the south-east) there was one large log of oak, 39 feet long, and 5 feet 6 inches in circumference at the base. Two great logs were nicely rounded off at the end, and a hollow was scooped out in the wood, about 2 or 3 inches deep, and 4 inches broad, similar to a piece of timber that was brought up by the divers from the crannog in Loch Kielzibar.

The appearance of the crannog when first discovered, as described to me by the intelligent man whom I have mentioned before, explains most fully the use of these posts, &c. Upon rowing up to the structure, when it first appeared above the surface of the falling water, the men first came to a kind of rampart, that ran on all the four sides, about 3 feet distant from the structure, and about 18 inches higher than the apparent level of the floor of the crannog. This was formed by large trees, that were kept in their place by the upright sharpened posts, whose sharp points projected about one foot above the trees. The ends of these trees were scooped out in the same manner as the two that still remain; and they were firmly fixed in their places between the two sharpened posts at each corner, which fitted into the hollow made by the scooping.

Upon stepping upon the crannog itself, it seemed to my informant “as though he were stepping upon a dwelling. In three or four places

there were rather large flagstones, much marked by fire, together with ashes and charcoal." He did not observe anything like a flooring, as the ooze and mud had sunk through the building. But I am somewhat inclined to think, that the smaller branches to which I have referred above might have been the flooring, as we observed them chiefly under the flagstones, where they were preserved from being washed away; especially as in the same places we observed a kind of gravel, with quartz, stones, and very small fragments of gneiss, which evidently had not been lodged there by the action of the water.

My informant states that portions of two tiers of timbers have been washed away, and are lying in various parts of the loch—some, indeed, are sunk in the mud. He observed no signs of a causeway; neither could we detect any symptom of one, though we carefully probed the mud all round.

Lord Abinger informed me, that when a loch on his property, Torlundie, Fort-William, was drained, there was a kind of structure with timbers in it, which were unfortunately scattered and destroyed, as Mr Stuart had not then made known the existence of crannogs in Scotland, and drawn attention to them.