

IV.

NOTES OF THE EXAMINATION OF A CRANNOG IN THE BLACK LOCH,
ANCIENTLY CALLED "LOCH INCH-CRYNDIL," WIGTOWNSHIRE.
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The Black and the White Lochs, in the parish of Inch, Wigtownshire, lie near together, and parallel to each other, the former being about one and a-half, the latter about one mile in length, and each about half-a-mile broad. Their general direction lengthways is from north-west to south-east. They are separated by a ridge three-quarters of a mile long and from one to two furlongs in width, on which is laid out the old and stately "pleasance" of Castle Kennedy. At the south end of this ridge they are connected by a straight and formal canal, with terraced banks, running through a depression in the ground, where, in former days, there probably was a natural channel. Their only feeder is a burn running down into the Black Loch from the range of rocky hills which borders it on the north-east side, and their outfall is by another burn flowing from the northern end of the same loch into the sea at Loch-Ryan. Both lochs are unusually free from peat moss, their shores and bottom being almost everywhere shingly, with blue clay underlying in many places.

The western and smaller lake, now known as "The White Loch," was formerly called "The Loch of the Inch," from the single "inch," or island,

lying close to its western shore, near the churchyard and ruined parish church of Inch. This island is too high and too extensive to be likely to be artificial, and a pretty close examination has failed to discover signs of its being other than natural, but its position and some of its features suggest that it has been cut off from the shore by the formation of an artificial channel, turning a peninsula into an island. A house of the Earls of Cassilis stood upon it up to the beginning of the seventeenth century, when they built, on the highest part of the ridge which divides the lochs, the tower known as Castle Kennedy (now superseded by Lord Stair's modern mansion, named Lochinch), but it is supposed that, at a still earlier period, the first parish church of Inch stood here, as a burying-ground could be traced on the island within the last fifty years.

A small canoe, dug out of a single oak tree, was lately found in this loch, close to the shore, and near the narrow channel which cuts off the island from the land.

The larger, or "Black Loch," in which the crannog is situated, anciently bore the name of "Loch Inch-Cryndil," as given in Pont's map of the district, which also shows the island, and it was from the fact that there is still extant a Celtic patronymic, "MacCryndle," that suggested to the writer that it might be from this island, the only one in the loch of any importance, that it derived its name; and that, if so, the island might have been connected with some individual, or tribe, in Celtic times. This led to an application to Lord Stair for permission to examine it, which was most readily accorded, and every assistance given.

The island is oval in shape, 180 feet long and 135 feet broad in the widest part. It has tolerably deep water round it, excepting towards the nearest shore, a distance of about 100 yards, where in dry seasons it does not exceed six or seven feet. It lies in the south-western part of the loch, near the entrance to the canal before mentioned.

The writer, accompanied by Mr Augustus Stephenson of the Treasury, whose quick eye for details proved of great value during two days of work, first carefully examined the shores of the island, seeking for traces of beams or piles, but without success, except at one spot on the north-west side, where the top of a single oak pile projected above the water, weathered and worn down to the appearance of an old tusk, or tooth, and surrounded by stones, of which a quantity had been brought, in the course of improve-

ments at Castle Kennedy, and thrown down on the beach, and in the water, to prevent, probably, the wash of the waves on this, the weather side, from wearing away the soil of the island.

In the middle of the island, which is thickly covered with trees of 30 or 40 years' growth, but with a few much older towards the south end, a circular mound appeared, resembling a low tumulus, forty-five feet in diameter, rising in the centre to about three and a-half feet in height, round the edges of which there were, in some parts, traces of a low wall of three or four courses of small stones, like a miniature dike. The island rises gradually from the water to the base of the mound, which at that season (the beginning of October) was about eighteen inches above it, so that the top of the mound, which was the highest part of the island, was then about five feet above the loch. The appearance of the mound and the oak pile giving an archaic character to the island, an examination by digging was commenced, Mr Fowler, superintendent of the pleasure-grounds at Loch Inch and Castle Kennedy, placing a force of from twelve to fifteen labourers at our disposal.

Spacious cuttings were made in the centre, afterwards extended to the edge of the mound in various directions, with the following results:—The island proved to have been a crannog, formed apparently upon a shoal in the lake, composed of shingle over blue clay, the object having obviously been to raise a platform which would be above the water even when the lake was at its fullest, as, even at the present time there is a considerable rise in the wet months, although pains are taken to keep clear the outfall from the loch. The mound was found to be of earth and stones, mixed, extending beneath which, at a depth of five feet in the centre but decreasing in depth towards the edge, was found a flooring of trunks of trees, oak and alder, in two layers, crossing each other at right angles in some places, in others lying rather confusedly. These were, mostly, not more than six or eight inches in diameter, but one solitary trunk of an oak, near the centre, lying at a higher level, and possibly the remains of a hut or other superstructure, was fully two feet in diameter, although much decayed. These layers of wood were traced as having covered a circular space, about fifty feet in diameter, thus agreeing nearly with the size as well as the shape of the mound.

At different levels, from that of a few inches above the timber flooring

to three feet higher, and over the whole mound, were found many fire-places, one or two covered over with two long stones, leaning against each other lengthways, like the roof of a house, but most of them formed by placing two long narrow stones (fragments of the rock of the district, which breaks off easily in that form) parallel with each other, leaving a space between, which was paved with small stones and formed a hearth. Large quantities of bones of animals, mostly more or less burnt, and, whether flat or round bones, frequently split, were found mixed with the ashes and charcoal which lay in and around these hearths, in some places extending over wide spaces, which were marked, also, by masses of burnt yellow clay.

At different levels, in different parts of the mound, were found the few objects exhibited. At one fire-place, near the centre, about three feet above the timbers, were the triangular piece of bronze and the fragment of iron, possibly the handle of a knife. At another, a little way off, two feet above the timbers, the fragment of a glass armet. Again, about half way between the centre and margin of the mound, only a few inches above the timber, with a great quantity of the burnt clay, and many bones, one of them a small jaw of a boar with the tusk still in it, was the fragment of a bone comb. About six feet south of the centre, and sixteen inches above the timbers, was found the small oblong object of bronze, perforated, and a few feet from it, one foot above the timbers, a portion of a small disk of stone with the edge bevelled off. In other places, about two feet below the surface, two copper coins of the seventeenth century.

From the difference of level of the various fire-places, and their position towards each other, it would appear that the surface of the crannog had become gradually raised in the lapse of ages, the earlier deposits becoming buried under new layers of soil, partly composed of accumulated refuse, as in the kitchen middens; but the fact of the timbers which had originally floored the crannog having, in many places, entirely disappeared through decay, the soil above would consequently sink, which might account in some cases for the lower level of some of the remains. Enough, however, was left evidently *in situ* to show that they must have been deposited at different dates. It is known, too, that the island has been planted two or three times, and that considerable quantities of soil and stones have been added to it. The two feet of soil which covered the uppermost

remains, and which so much raised the centre of the crannog, was probably added, in great part, about 1720, when Field-Marshal the Earl of Stair laid out the grounds of Castle Kennedy. Some of these operations may, to some extent, have disturbed the remains. They would, at all events, account for the modern coins found so far below the surface. The extent of the mound would appear to have been that of the crannog proper, but the existence of the solitary pile fifty feet from it, on the weather side of the island, makes it probable that either a breakwater had been placed there, as was also supposed to be the case in Dowalton Loch, or a "cheveaux-de-frise" of sharp-pointed stakes for defence.

If, as we cannot doubt, Dr Keller is right in saying that "the crannogs appear to be strongholds, castles, belonging to *individuals*," and that they "served as places of refuge for single chieftains, their families and property," we are justified in supposing that this crannog of Inch-Cryndil was constructed, or at least occupied, by some chief or leader in Celtic times, bearing that Celtic name.

The examination of the mound towards the outer edges was completed by Mr Fowler and Mr M'Ilwraith of Stranraer. The reports of those gentlemen are embodied in the foregoing notes. No further relics were found, but the extent and form of the crannog were satisfactorily verified.
