

## I.

## DESCRIPTIVE LIST OF ANTIQUITIES NEAR LOCH ETIVE.—No. 5. PLAN OF DUN-MAC UISNEACHAN. BY R. ANGUS SMITH, PH.D., F.R.S., &amp;c. (PLATE I.)

When I last read a short paper on the fort of the Sons of Uisneach, I made an apology for bringing the subject so frequently before the Society, and expected not to repeat the offence. It was clear, however, that more was required to be done to give even an apparent finish to my work, and I now bring forward a plan of the surface, and a drawing from a photograph of the isolated hill itself, larger than previously given.

The surface is so unequal that I cannot give a good idea of it without a number of contour lines and such care in survey, that I do not think I can give it that time or attention necessary, even if I were accustomed to that class of work. Probably enough will be given on the Ordnance Survey map, which is not yet published.

I had done sufficient to prove that the Dun was not a Roman camp, and had no right to any Roman name, such as Berigonium sounds, although quite aware that an original Gaelic or other name might remain in a word which by some accident had a Roman termination appended. However, it was clear that no Roman occupation had taken place; there is nothing Roman in the character of the walls, and there has not been found anything Roman amongst the few trifling articles made by hands, neither can we tell of any Roman settlement near it.

The vitrified walls take us far back, but not beyond the early centuries of the Christian era necessarily, one having been mentioned in Brittany as having been built after the Romans had shown their skill there. To the earliest possible date we have no clue further than this, that it would appear as if it were in the time of iron as well as of bronze. Of the latest date we have a probable negative indication. Such forts would cease to be built when the country was laid bare of wood, and that certainly would be after the Roman occupation of the east of Scotland and possibly in the west much later. It is probable that they would cease in the east before the west, because new ideas came first there to break up

the life of the earliest times to which we can refer. The forts themselves were a fashion derived from the east, as was shown, and the later influx from the west, or Ireland, was accompanied by no such mode of building, although previously the eastern progress had gone so far as to inoculate the western Highlands with the habit, and slightly to touch the east or opposite coast of Ireland.

The vitrified forts are the work of a rude people learning to emerge from the ruder state of building loose stone walls, if we judge from this of the Usnachs.<sup>1</sup> When I say the forts of a rude people, it means, of course, men without much external civilisation. I have continued to disconnect more and more, as in my first paper, the style of the dwelling and the character of the inmate, except in some particulars, and one of these is that there is often not energy enough to make a better even when there is knowledge. We see also frequently that there is energy enough to make an imposing house and not character enough to live up to it. However the builders of vitrified forts have not shewn themselves advanced far in architecture. They could build dry walls with flat stones; so that the vitrified method was by no means the only one known; vitrified parts are found over the built portion. We do not know how much of the fort under notice was covered with dwellings, but the eastern part had many loose stones; these were taken down and used for building the houses now standing below. The most important portion of the fort was that on the highest point, BB (See Plate I.). Nature had provided a hollow between rocks to the north and south of this spot and partly to the west, whilst a thick wall of loose stones was made to the east. A good deal of this wall remains, and has been cut through. This had fallen partly down, and was raised up by using the material around, some of it consisting of vitrified masses which had broken down. It shows a second occupation.

Near the middle of this were apartments built with walls about two feet thick. The drawing scarcely tells how broken down they are, and how difficult it is at times to follow them. Four, however, were made out fully without any doubt; they are not vitrified, but follow the rule in all these cases—a rule I mentioned before—not to vitrify internal walls. The stones chosen are flattish, and no mortar is used. South of these chambers

<sup>1</sup> I purposely spell the name a little differently here, so that it may be seen that there are various methods.

are broken down walls with vitrified pieces lying irregularly as if some walls had early fallen ; a less careful class of men had made their habitations there for a time, living roughly, and leaving abundant evidence of their food in the bones of sheep, pigs, and cattle.

There is a long passage from the western side of this enclosure shewn at *a*, and various confused evidences of other buildings. The passage is very narrow, and leads out to a fine open space at *A* looking out to the sea, well protected by precipitous sides and by vitrified walls in most parts, probably at all parts originally.

We may imagine the central rooms the apartments of the chief. Near the surface were found querns very rude, and on the north wall at *b* the bronze ornament mentioned in a previous paper. At the north-west was found part of an iron sword, at *c*.

A sloping road exists up the so-called Queen's entrance (Bealach-na-Ban-Righ). I suppose the whole to have been surrounded with a vitrified wall standing at the edge of the precipitous part. These walls have to a large extent fallen down the hill.

*G* is a large vitrified mass, not connected apparently with any building, and I have supposed it therefore to have been a tower. It is midway between the two elevations into which the summit is divided by a natural depression, although it does not itself stand in the most depressed part ; in reality it stands on a prominent part, by no means the highest, although the most central.

*C* is a varied green slope, on the edge of which near the precipice is a well, concerning which romantic stories have been told, which stories I was unfortunately compelled to prove to be without even a foundation. (See my second paper in Vol. IX.) *D* is varied, and gives a variety also of small knoll and dale with rock. At *E* there are indications of enclosures less formal than at *B*, *BB*. At one spot there seems to have been a stone circle. *F* is a steep green slope before the precipitous part begins.

In my unavoidable absence the principal measurements giving the outline were made by the Rev. John Sutherland, of Balcaldine, for which I thank him, and without doubt the Society will feel obliged. It will be seen that the digging was not continued all round, but in places sufficiently numerous, I believe.

I send a few photographs, taken from different points, in order to show the style of building. The view is put by the side of the plan to show the relations of the parts, but is not so exact as the photograph from the same point.

After all, the main general observations regarding these forts are found in the small volume by their discoverer, John Williams, Esq., Edinburgh, 1777; and in the appended letter by the celebrated chemist, Dr Joseph Black, then Professor in Edinburgh University. The difficulty of cementation by heat I have never seen, and I believe it need not be much considered. Where basalt is abundant, and where so many mixtures of silica with bases are so readily found and made, abundance of fuel will do the rest.

So far my task has been to illustrate one fort only. I believe this is the first time that a regular dwelling has been found in a vitrified fort, or vitrified walls over built ones. Of course we can always turn aside every kind of evidence and speak of previous occupation as being wonderfully far back, and no man can give a reply; but I certainly find no evidence of anything existing in this fort to prove that it belongs to very remote antiquity. Every trifle that has been found points to times that need not have preceded European history, so far as the skill is concerned, and it is unscientific to imagine an age that is not demanded by the evidence. It would be equally inconclusive to feel certain that the objects and the walls are of equal date, but, taking the whole evidence together, I conclude that an equality of date is the probable one; and when I read Mr Anderson's researches in the Picts' towers, and the introduction of strong thick walls of stone built without mortar, I naturally think of them as built by people accustomed to thick walls, and either by imported advice or skill beginning a new system, seeing that wood was failing, and the old reckless use of it was impossible. That, of course, is a conjecture, and as such it must be left for the present. It is a reason for the Pictish towers following close on the vitrified.

Since I examined these remains I have looked at those in Rome, and it has surprised me much to find how much that great city in imperial times was built of rubble. Great buildings that astonished us, baths of Caracalla, palaces of the emperors, great arches high and wide, made of rubble, and the half spans still hanging with the rubble hardened into

one stone, almost like natural conglomerate; remains of former houses broken up, with remains of statues, and pieces of bricks, stones, marble, or otherwise, are all smashed up, and the older Rome forms the material for the newer. The buildings, to the very centre of the walls, are a type of the empire itself, where nations were crushed, annihilated, or converted into Romans, to all external appearance, until the outer form broke down, and the real material showed itself; we may thus make these walls a good lesson for the ethnologist.

The vitrified walls, like the Roman walls spoken of, are a kind of rubble work, and this kind of work has a dignity which seems not to have been given to it sufficiently. Now, in modern times, it is coming again into use, and we seem to be learning, as the Romans learned, that it is extremely expensive to build with quarried stone, or even with burnt clay or bricks, and some of our largest engineering works are being done with rubble and cement, or concrete. Some may think the use of rubble to have arisen from the habit first used of making a mound of earth as a protection, a habit common among the Zingari of Hungary at the present day, and seen abundantly in the raths of Ireland, forming walls of enclosure, as common, probably, as the walls to our farmsteads and gardens, and, as a culminating point, pointing to the earthworks or walls of the latest fortifications. We can see here the natural growth of ideas, and it needs no communication among nations to cause ideas to grow when the materials and the wants, as well as the machinery, are the same in each to an obvious extent. To determine the extent to which it is obvious is not easy, but we cannot doubt that the use of earthworks would occur readily to many. The use of cement, however, does not readily occur; the early Romans did not use it; it was used at the time when the greatest amount of building was required; we have not used it until lately, and when the demands upon us for building material put us in a position similar to that into which the Romans were driven when building increased.

If people were accustomed to build with loose stones, it would be a very natural wish to make them keep together; and if ever a beacon fire raged unusually and burned a part of the wall into one mass by melting, the invention would be made. Still it requires invention, or at least good observation, to see the value of such an accident; and who can say

if some wise stranger did not first find it out and show the example,—some wise man coming from the East, and having lingered with his tribe in Bohemia, where also they made a vitrified fort. If, however, we desire to account for that Bohemian fort, we might imagine some Caledonian regiments sent by the Romans over the Rhine, and driven farther than was agreeable to them, making use of their old and ready habits at home. On this point, however, the possibility of a Celtic and even a Gaelic tongue being used in Germany to a very late period in some parts might throw some light, but I shall not at present look into the evidence that some think good. The fact of the Boii going to Bohemia does not explain it, as we know of none of their forts at home.

I throw together a number of ideas, but cannot give time for full examination. I am more inclined to believe in the influx from time to time of new ideas by the immigration of strangers, whether wanderers or \* conquerors, than by invention. Marauding has always been a favourite pursuit, and it comes before merchandising. Some one probably came and showed that the Caterthun system of building with loose stones was a bad one, and showed how to build firmly, as on the Tap-o-Noth, and the invention seems to have spread from near that part. Had these new men come as great conquerors, they would have brought many people, and we should probably have had some indication of them; but if they came as wanderers, either marauding or selling, these might be few. I am more disposed to think of few dropping in at a time when there would be little to steal; besides, at a later time, we have new ideas coming into the east of Scotland, and resulting in the peculiar Scottish sculptures. It is too much to suppose all to have originated on the spot. It was shown that it was most natural for people from Europe to come to the east first, because of the distance of the western coast; and from the Mediterranean even, it was more natural for navigators who kept near to the land to find Kent than Cornwall. It was probably not until a longer familiarity with the seas that the inhabitants of the Iberian peninsula found out that it was really shorter to go to Ireland than to the north of Britain, and probably, almost certainly, this would apply to Cornwall and Wales. Ireland, in the time of Tacitus, was apparently pretty well known, although that historian has not taken much trouble to describe it.

It is to be remarked that the peculiar advances in the north of Scot-

land came after the time of Pytheas, who leaves us an idea of great desolation and poverty; whereas in Tacitus we have iron chariots, which indicate many great strides in civilisation. In these very early times it is quite possible to believe the immigration to have taken place abundantly without our historical knowledge being affected, but it would in that case be of only two tribes, Celtic or Scandinavian, if language is to be our only guide. Small numbers would account for new ideas and habits without change of tongue.

I did at one time imagine that considerable numbers might have come and brought the face so peculiarly Scottish, seen in considerable perfection in the north-east, or at least from Aberdeenshire to Ayrshire, but now I am more inclined to look at the great extent to which that face is spread in Scotland, and especially to see it prominently in the Pictish districts. It may be an ancient Caledonian peculiarity; where obtained is another question.

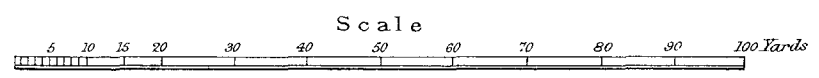
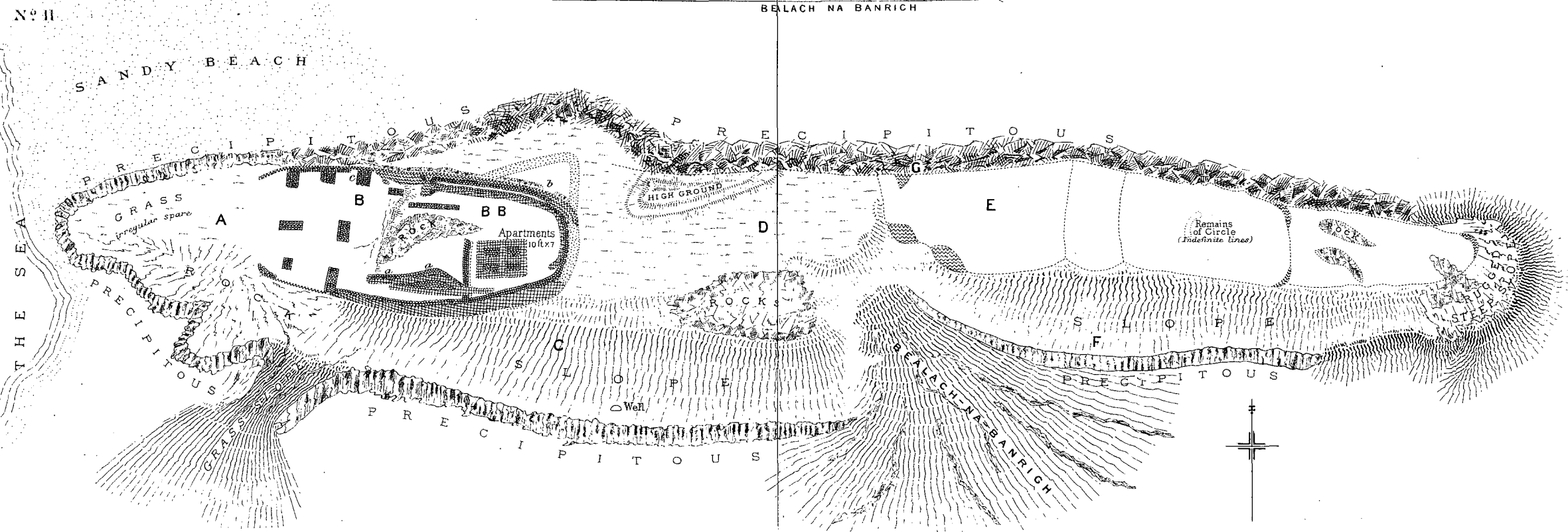
There is, of course, a certain amount of fancy in these discussions; but there are a few more reasons which I hope to be able to make clearer for some of the ideas. At any rate, it is well to turn them over in many ways. I see fit to keep to my former opinions so far as the entrance of new ideas and habits from the east of Scotland, and add the strong connection of this with the peculiar physiognomy which characterises so much of Scotland that it may be called the Scottish. But the physiognomy question must be left for a while; whether I shall ever be able to give a good foundation for my present surmisings, arising from long interest in, but not close attention to, the difficult subject, must be left to the future. If the features referred to are Caledonian, they separate that tribe from the Irish Scot and the Cymric very distinctly. I hope I may be excused for giving this in such hurried sentences; it is a subject that deserves much more minute treatment, but one must only feel the way.

Numerous photographs are very much wanted to illustrate Scottish ethnography. One may see many varieties in our country villages, but there is one which a photograph only can explain, more frequently found in Scotland than elsewhere, and perhaps nowhere so decidedly.

Nº I



Nº II



Reference.

Vitrified Parts	shewn thus	
Stone Walls	"	
Stone & Vitrified mixed	"	
Other Parts Excavated	"	
Rock	"	

Engr'd by W. & A. N. Johnston, Edinburgh.

DUN MAC UISNEACHAN

Nº I. ELEVATION Nº II. GROUND PLAN