

I.

NOTES ON THE ANTIQUITIES OF THE ISLANDS OF COLONSAY AND ORANSAY. BY WILLIAM STEVENSON. COMMUNICATED BY DR ARTHUR MITCHELL, *Secretary S.A. Scot.*

Churches and Ecclesiastical Structures.—On the islands of Colonsay and Oransay are the remains of nine old churches or ecclesiastical structures, and the sites of other three are remembered by the older natives. Ten of these are in the island of Colonsay and two in Oransay.¹

Of these buildings the most important must have been the Monastery of Kiloran. No remains of it now exist, but upon its site and partly with its material has been built the present Colonsay House. In 1700 the “principal church” stood in the village of Kiloran.² The earliest notice of Colonsay as a parish appears to be in 1549, by Archdeacon Munro, who says “It hath ane parish kirke.”³

The next in importance is the Monastery of Oransay,⁴ the site of which covers a considerable area. But except one small portion called the Friars House, and now incorporated with the farm offices erected alongside, the whole of the buildings are unroofed and in ruins. The appearance of the mason work shows that different parts of the structure had been erected at different dates. The oldest portion seems to be that called the cloisters, being part of a wall in the inside 27 feet long and 27 inches thick, and having five semi-circular arched openings through it. This part of the buildings is figured by Pennant, but the portion containing the straight

¹ In Blaeu’s Map published in 1654, fourteen such structures are delineated, eleven in Colonsay and three in Oransay. In 1667 a grant of the patronage of the churches and Chaplainries is made by Charles II. to the Earl of Argyll—*Origines Parochiales*, vol. ii. p. 280. The remains of several Romish Chapels are to be seen in Colonsay, “Old Stat. Acct.,” vol. xii. p. 330. In his ride from Oransay to Kiloran, Pennant mentions having seen four ruined chapels, vol. ii. p. 274. See also Martin, p. 246, and “Sculptured Stones of Scotland,” vol. ii. p. 25.

² Martin, p. 249.

³ *Origines Parochiales*, vol. ii. p. 280.

⁴ Martin, p. 246 ; Pennant, vol. ii. p. 270.

pointed arches like the roof of a house are now gone. The portion of the structure which appears most recently erected is what may be called the church or chapel. This apartment is the largest, and measures 60 feet long, 18 feet wide, and the side walls are about 20 feet high. In the east end there is a finely formed Gothic pointed arch window with mullions dividing it into three lancet-shaped openings. The height from the sole to the point of the arch is 12 feet, and the width 5 feet. All the cheeks of doors and windows, and mullions of this apartment are of dressed freestone of a kind not found on the islands.

Two and a half feet from the wall and in front of this window is the altar table covered by one large slab $6\frac{1}{2}$ feet by 3 feet.

Set up against the wall round the altar, and in a small side apartment, and covering graves outside, or lying on the ground, are twenty-four sculptured stones, seemingly the tops or covers of table tombs. The supports or pedestals, and the plinths of these have been freely appropriated for head and foot stones in the burying ground outside. On two of the stones set against the wall there are sculptured in high relief full length figures, and on a third a figure 3 feet long, with swords girt to the waists with belts. On the heads are helmets and on the shoulders and necks is chain mail. One of the two large figures has small figures on the pillow on each side of the head. The other figure has also a small figure on each side of the feet. Nine stones have cross-handled swords down the centre. One stone has a nearly full length figure in clerical habit, with a canopy over head and in the left hand a pastoral staff or crosier. Several other stones have also figures; some have hunting scenes with deer, dogs, horses, &c. Some of the stones are completely covered with ornament, but all of them have more or less, and it is of the same character or type as on the Oronsay cross. On several of them (one in particular which lies broken outside the building) it is of a superior class of design and workmanship to the others and to the cross itself. Several of the stones have inscriptions which might be read if some trouble were first taken in cleaning away the growth and dirt which covers them.

The five arches before referred to, and several others in the building, seem to be of the same character of construction as those of Kirkpoll Tiree.¹ The pointed arches figured by Pennant,² but now gone, and some still remaining in other parts of the buildings, have been constructed by first setting up two pieces of pavement and then building over them.³ Arches in different parts of the buildings are of the Gothic pointed type, and several openings are covered with long stones.

In the south-east corner of the chapel, and near the altar, is a recess, the opening of which is 18 inches square and goes back 6 feet through the wall into a buttress or construction on the outside. This hole opens out wider after it goes through the wall, the cavity inside the buttress measures 3 feet each way. It has been partly filled with bones from time out of memory, and is called the hole for the bones (Toll nam Cnamb).⁴ Bones which have been turned up to the surface have always been collected into this hole, but I was unable to ascertain the reason, or why they were not buried. Some bones also lie in recesses in the M'Neill enclosure and in a side chapel. The rats from the adjoining farm buildings have got a lodgment in the old buildings, and frequently bring bones to the surface from their burrows. The M'Neill burying-place consists of two enclosures on the east side of the buildings, partly outside and partly inside of them.

An attempt of not a very æsthetic kind has been made to preserve part of the old walls from coming down, but if some thing more was done in the way of pointing with good Portland cement it would preserve from ruin for a very long time one of the most interesting old ecclesiastical structures.

On the south of and close beside the building, and raised about 4 feet

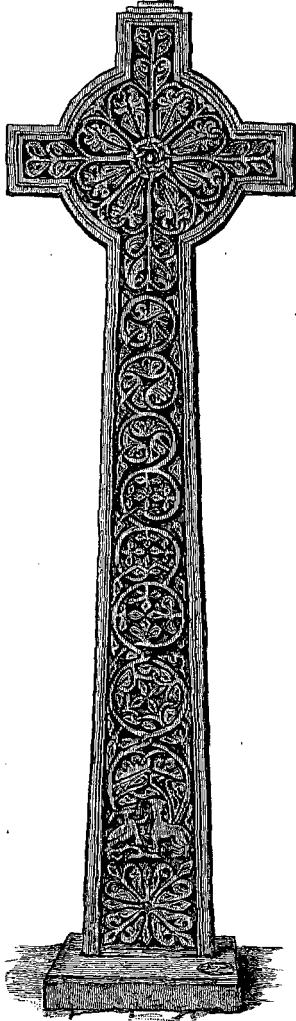
¹ "Scotland in Early Christian Times," p. 66.

² Pennant, vol. ii. p. 270.

³ The pieces of pavement which formed the pointed arches are found set up as head-stones to graves.

⁴ Macculloch records a quantity of unburied bones in a graveyard in Barra, vol. iii. p. 4. See also "Burt's Letters," vol. ii. p. 109.

above the ground by a mass of mason work, stands the Oransay cross.¹



The Oransay Cross.

The mason work on which the cross stands is covered by a slab 3 feet by 3 feet and 3 inches thick, and through a hole cut in this slab or sole plate, the end of the cross is let down into and fixed in the mason work. The shaft of the cross from the sole plate to the extreme point measures 12 feet 1 inch; the arms of the cross from point to point 3 feet 5½ inches; the thickness of the cross is 4¾ inches; the diameter of the circle is 27 inches. The breadth of the shaft at the base is 20 inches, the top and arms are 11 inches broad. The cross faces due east and west. On the west side of the shaft of the cross is an inscription in Latin,² and on the same side of the base or sole plate is another, in two lines which run from side to side. On the north-west corner of the sole or base plate is carved a sundial, the pointer or triangle of which is now removed, but had been set with lead.

What I presume is the Macduffie

¹ It is found in Pennant (vol. ii. p. 270), and by Stuart in the "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," vol. ii. p. 25, plates xxxviii. and xxxix.

² A reading of this inscription will be found in "Sculptured Stones of Scotland," none of the inscriptions are now legible.

Cross, or rather a portion of the shaft of it, stands in a mass of mason work on a small knoll on the east side of the buildings, and faces north and south. This remaining portion of the shaft from the junction of the sole plate up measures 3 feet high, 13 inches broad, and 3 inches thick. The shaft of the cross must have been let through a sole plate and set into the mason work in the same manner as the Oransay Cross, but the sole plate of this one has been removed.¹ It has been in the same state during living memory. Laid up against the shaft on the mason work is the head of a cross with the circle, arms, and top complete and part of a figure carved on it. The ornament of the Macduffie Cross is of the same character as the Oransay one. A small cross is also placed on the point of a gable facing east and west, and another on one facing north and south.

About 100 yards from and on the right hand side of the road leading down the glen to the strand where at low water people cross the sands on foot from Colonsay to Oransay, and about half a mile from the strand on the Colonsay side, stand the ruins of the Temple of the Glen (*Teampull a Ghlinne*).² The building is nearly due east and west, and measures 31 feet by 19 feet outside, and walls 27 inches thick. The walls are of stone and lime and much broken down, only the back and front wall now remain the full height of about 8 feet. The walls have been plastered inside. At the east end part of the remains of a structure, which may have been an altar, are seen. In the north-west corner, and a little above the floor level, is a small recess, 20 inches long, 13 inches high, and 18 inches into the wall. It is constructed partly into the gable, so that the opening is only 13 inches by 11 inches wide. The construction of this recess is somewhat similar to the one in which the bones are in Oransay. There is no appearance of there having been a fireplace. The west gable fell a few years ago. The door has been on the south side, and is

¹ The sole plate of this or of another cross was found set for a head-stone to a grave.

² This is likely to have been one of the ruined chapels seen by Pennant, and would be the first on the ride.

splayed inside.¹ There is one small window on each side, 24 inches by 6 inches, and splayed. There is no appearance of other openings through the walls. It is stated that funerals waited in this building till such time as the tide was suitable for crossing the strand to Oransay.

In the district of Kilchattan² on the west side of the island of Colonsay, and in the middle of a burying-ground, stand the ruins of the old church of Kilchattan.³ It stands east and west, and measures 31 feet by 21 feet, and the walls are nearly 3 feet thick, and built of stone and lime. The stones are mostly large undressed boulders, the spaces between being filled with small flat pieces or shivers, such as may easily be got at the rocks near. The door is said to have been in the west end, and there appear to be the remains of a window in the east gable and a very small one in the south wall. Both gables are now nearly level with the ground. In what remains of the east gable are two small recesses or boles, 14 inches by 13 inches.

The four churches above noticed are the only ones on the islands which have been built of stone and lime. And up till the time in the last century when Colonsay House was built out of the ruins of Kiloran Monastery it is probable that no other dwellings built of stone and lime existed on the islands, if we except the round towers of the fort on Loch-na-Sgoltire. Traces of other buildings of stone and lime were not found.

About one mile to the east of the burying-ground and church of Kilchattan, and on the left hand side of the road going east, beside, and nearly in front of the new Baptist Chapel, are the ruins of another church, Kilmory (*Kil-a-Mhorich, Kilmorie, Kil-a-Mhoorie*).⁴ It stands east and

¹ The doors of the old houses on Colonsay are not splayed but built square through the wall.

² In 1632 a grant of the Parsonage and Vicarage of the Parish of Kilchattan and the whole lands of Colonsay is made by the Bishop of the Isles, *Origines Parochiales*, vol. ii. p. 280.

³ This is likely to have been one of the ruined chapels seen by Pennant and would be the third on the road.

⁴ This is likely to have been one of the ruined chapels seen by Pennant and would be the fourth on the ride. See also Proceedings, vol. iii. p. 258.

west, measures about 28 feet by 20 feet, walls 3 feet thick and of stone and soil. The walls are now about levelled with the ground, and all loose stones have been removed.

On the farm of Machrins on the west coast, almost due south from Kilchattan, half a mile east from the farm house, and in the middle of a park in which oats grew this year, is what looks like a rubbish heap, overgrown with weeds, and which is this winter to be cleared away. This rubbish heap is the remains of Kilbride (*Kil-a-Bhrìde*).¹ It was unknown to the farmer, but known and described by many of the old natives. The form of the building and foundations are easily made out amongst the weeds. It stands east and west, and measures about 27 feet by 18 feet.

In front of Machrins farm-house, and about half a mile west from Kilbride, the site of another old church is pointed out, but the whole structure has been removed. An old man, Mr Gilbert M'Neil, farmer, Lower Kilchattan, while working as a farm servant on Machrins during the time a former proprietor had it in his own occupation, assisted to remove the foundations. This old building went under the name of the Preaching House (*Tìgh Searmonachaidh*) or House of Sermons, and was also called House of Seats (*Tìgh na Suidheachan*), from its being seated with turf benches. It is said to have been long and narrow, and to have served as the parish church till the present one was built, and the minister is said to have lived at Ardskinish. Near the site of this church there is a standing stone about 3 feet above ground which had branks or joughs attached for the punishment of church offenders, it was higher then than it is now. The joughs were last used upwards of sixty years ago, and the person undergoing the punishment is said to have had a sack over him. Shortly after this the upper part of the stone with the joughs was broken off and thrown into an adjoining moss, which is pointed out.² There are

¹ This is likely to have been one of the ruined chapels seen by Pennant and would be the second on the ride.

In the Hebrides many churches are dedicated to St Bridget.—Pennant, vol. iii. p. 183. Macculloch says, he did not find any chapel dedicated to St Bride in the Hebrides, vol. iii. p. 141.

² Referring to the rapid growth of peat noticed by Sir Robert Christison in a paper

some faint traces of carving on the remaining part of the stone, and in the part which was broken off were holes by which horses were at times tied. This stone may have been a cross connected with the church near by.

On the extreme north-east of the island of Colonsay and farm of Balna-hard, about three-quarters of a mile north-east from and almost within sight of the farm-house are the remains of the church of Kilcatrine (*Kil-a-Cathrina*), now almost removed, many of the stones having within the last few years been used for other building purposes. It stands east and west, measures 32 feet by 20 feet, walls about 3 to 4 feet thick, and of stone and soil. The part of a broken cross, now in the museum, was found lying on the grass beside the ruin. There is a standing stone about 3 feet high which seems to have been a cross. It does not appear to have been tool-dressed except for the purpose of forming the arms, but is now so much broken as scarcely to retain the appearance of a cross. The cattle use it for a rubbing stone. Inside the building and at the east end are some pieces of pavement which may have formed the altar.

A rough boulder measuring 24 inches by 18 inches by 10 inches, and with a hole 15 inches by 11 inches and 6 inches deep, made in one side of it, and similar to the barley knocking stones, also lies beside the ruins.¹ It is said to have been the priest's well or baptismal font, and is usually covered with several irregularly shaped bits of pavement from about 6 inches to 18 inches broad, each bit having a round hole through it. The holes vary in diameter from about 1 inch to 3 inches, no two being the same diameter. In the smallest bit of pavement there is one hole through and another nearly so. Beside this trough and bits of pavement is a large pebble or water-worn stone about $7\frac{1}{2}$ inches long and 4 inches diameter, and which goes under the name of the woman's pap or breast (*Cioch nam Ban*). It is pear-shaped, but thicker or rather dumper at

read by him at a subsequent meeting of the Society it may be mentioned here that three crops or growths of peat are known to have been cut from this moss in the memory of some older inhabitants. On many other parts of the island the peat has been cut more than once within memory.

¹ See stone found in the ruins of Chapel Mealista, Uist, Lewis.—Proceedings, 1878-79, p. 32.

the small end than a pear. The small end of this stone fits into the hole of the larger bit of pavement. A practice is said to have existed of turning or twisting this stone round sun wise in the hole of the largest bit of pavement. Round the stone, in consequence of this turning, there has been worn or rubbed a considerable ring or deep mark, and which forms a sort of neck.¹ I could not ascertain what was the object of the turning of this stone, or the superstition connected with it.

About a mile north from the harbour of Scalasaig, and on the east coast, are some remains of another church called the Chapel of Riskbuie (or *Chapel of Reasagbuie*). Beside and around it are sufficient evidences of burial. The site of the building is pointed out, and is about 18 feet by 12 feet inside. No person now living, so far as I could ascertain, has seen much more than now exists. The curious stone cross here figured,

¹ On the island of Rona, north east from Lewis. Martin says, that on the altar of the old chapel of St Rona there lay a plank of wood 10 feet long, with



Cross from Riskbuie.

now in the garden of Colonsay House, formerly stood at the east end of the chapel. It was taken down and placed as a cover over the well near the church, and was ultimately removed by Commander Stewart to Colonsay House. The figure here given is from a photograph taken by Rev. J. B. Mackenzie, formerly of Colonsay. The shaft of the cross has since been broken, and the present length is 3 feet 7 inches, but it measures 4 feet 5 inches if the splintered part is included. The breadth of the shaft is $10\frac{1}{2}$ inches, the stretch of the arms is $14\frac{1}{2}$ inches, and from the centre of the cross to the top is 16 inches. The cross has been made out of a natural slab of the softish whinstone of the district. It is dressed only in front, undressed on the back, and its greatest thickness is 5 inches, but is irregular. Other carved stones are said to have been built into houses near. A round hole or basin cut in the rock in the middle of the burial-ground and a small knocking stone lying beside the houses will be noticed under knocking stones.

On the farm of Balleraomin Mòr, at the south-east end of the island, and close to the farm-house, are about 2 acres of level ground of superior quality to that around, and called the plain of the church. Inside this are the remains of an enclosure 20 by 25 paces, and inside this again are the remains of a structure of stone and soil, measuring about 30 feet by 20 feet, and lying east and west. This is the church of the plain (*Leanne na h'eagalais*). A few yards east of the church is a standing stone measuring 6 feet above ground by 18 inches broad and 3 inches thick. It bears traces of carving, and there is a tradition that it had a figure on a cross, but which was broken off in a fit of religious zeal by some one. This stone may have been a cross connected with the church near by.

On the south-west corner of the island of Colonsay and farm of Ards-kinnish, and up a glen a short distance from the shore, there is said to have been another church called Kilkenneth (*Kil-a-Chonnich*). The glen

a hole in every foot and in every hole a stone to which the natives ascribed several virtues (p. 21). This plank of wood had disappeared at the time of Macculloch's visit, vol. iii. p. 313. See the stone in Churchyard of Burghhead, figured in "Past and Present," by Dr Arthur Mitchell.

still bears this name, but the buildings do not now exist, and its exact site is not known. However, on the side of the small burn of the glen a number of elderberry bushes grow, and about 20 yards up on a sandy braeside there is a square clump of the same. Beside these bushes the farmer pointed out where some bones had been thrown up by rabbits. On excavating at the place two full skeletons were bared. They were laid full length, without enclosure, and were complete. In one case the right arm was bent across the breast and the face turned round to the right. The skull of the other bore traces of having been cut with a sharp instrument probably during life.

On the island of Oransay, and about a quarter of a mile north from Oransay House, there exist the foundations of another church called Kilmory,¹ measuring 20 by 15 feet. It is about 100 yards into the middle of a park to the left of the road where it takes the turn to the south, and shortly before Oransay House comes in sight.

All the church structures on the islands seem to have been square cornered and oblong, without chancel or other additions.

Grave-yards and Burial Customs.—The ground around the Monastery of Oransay has from a remote period till within a year or two ago been used as a burial ground, and is enclosed. Burials have, however, been found beyond the present enclosure. About four years ago, when some alterations were being made inside the present byre of the farm, a stone cist was uncovered. It was again closed up but the place is pointed out.

The ground around Kiloran was also used from a remote period as a graveyard. This was discontinued when Colonsay House was built about a century ago. A stone cist was found in the garden here some years ago.² It is just possible that many sculptured stones may have been built into the older part of Colonsay House.

After the discontinuance of burials at Kiloran the ground around the church of Kilchattan became the graveyard of the island.

¹ (Kil-a-Mhoorie, Kilmorie, Kil-a-Mhorich). See paper by W. Reeves, D.D., &c. —Proceedings, vol. iii. p. 258.

² Martin mentions two having been found before his visit, p. 249.

Till within recent years the custom prevailed of burying unbaptized children elsewhere than in the usual graveyard. When it is remembered that after the Reformation the islands of Colonsay and Oransay formed part of the parish of Jura,¹ and that there was no settled ordained clergyman till recently when the two islands were constituted a parish *quoad sacra*, it will be easily understood that many such deaths of children might occur, when Kiloran was the burial-place of the island of Colonsay,² Kilchattan is said to have been used for unbaptized children.³ But after it came to be used for other burials Kilmory became the graveyard for unbaptized children. The burial of one unbaptized child is remembered to have taken place at the Church of the Plain, and three at another burying place (*Bruthach-a-Bheanan*) about three-quarters of a mile up from the harbour.⁴

Till a few years ago, when a wall was built round the graveyard of Kilchattan, the custom prevailed of building a cairn⁵ in and over the grave after burial, and to place an upright stone at head and foot of the grave. The object is said to have been the preventing of swine, which are allowed to run loose, from digging into the grave. Since the wall was built a few years ago the practice of cairn building is ceasing. The stones were collected around by those who accompanied the funeral, several tons being sometimes so gathered. The practice accounts in a great measure for the disappearance of the old church buildings. The grave cairns around tell this tale.

Cairns similar to those seen in the graveyards of Kilchattan and Oransay are also found beside Kilmory, Kilcatrine, the Church of the Plain, and the Temple of the Glen, Bruthach a Bheanan, Riskbuie, Kilmory in Oran-

¹ Old and New Statistical Accounts, &c.

² In Iona a piece of ground was set apart formerly for the burial of murderers and unbaptized children.—Martin, p. 258.

³ The old church yard of Hilton, Cromarty, was up till 1841 used for the burial of unbaptized children.—Wilson's "Voyage," vol. ii. p. 445.

⁴ The number of unbaptized persons in Skye is said to be greater now than ever it was.

⁵ I will add a stone to your cairn is a Scottish proverb.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 209.

say, and some other places. At Riskbuie the burial-place is partly on a rock on which is a covering of stones and soil, and by turning over a few stones many bones are seen. It has much the same appearance as Cnoc Eadareiginn and Dun-Crom. Traces of resting-place cairns were not found, except one on the Oransay side of the strand. The practice here was for every person attending the funeral to add a stone to the cairn,¹ the coffin being meantime rested, and the mourners refreshed with whisky mixed with water from a holy well near by. The well was not found and the cairn is nearly all removed. A new road and cutting was made passing through it some years ago. The late Lord Colonsay was very angry at the removal, it having been effected without his knowledge by the contractor who made the road.

No sexton or other person has charge of the graveyards, and the graves are dug by those attending the funerals, the tools being brought in the cart along with the coffin, the coffin being meantime rested on a convenient grave stone while the grave is being dug.² The depth of the grave and the size of the cairn are gauged by the willingness or ability of the attending mourners.

A cist was laid bare some years ago in the schoolmaster's garden with a small urn, which was left in it. He is now unable to point out the exact spot.

On the farm of Duncan *ban* M'Neill, and near by his house, I opened a stone cist. It measured 36 inches by 24 inches, and was 2 feet deep. The two ends and sides were formed of a rough stone slab each. The top was covered first with some smaller pieces of slab, having over them, and covering all in, one large rough slab 5 feet 3 inches by 3 feet 6 inches. The large slab is said to have been raised and laid down again when first discovered, but the under covering pieces did not seem to have been disturbed. It was entirely empty but for a net-work of the roots of the

¹ To make sure of having a stone handy some old persons are known to have carried one in their pocket from the Colonsay side of the strand.

² In Iona there was a heap of stones on which the coffin was rested while the grave was being dug.—Martin, p. 262.

weeds around ; no trace of bone or other article was found. I suspect that this cist must have been covered with a cairn, and that the stones have been used for building purposes, part of the cairn still remains up to the very edge of the cist. The houses and dykes are mostly built of the same kind of stones as the cairn. Between my first and a subsequent visit to the island the cairn had been removed and three other similar cists were laid bare and their covering slabs removed. In one was a small urn, which got broken. The bits were put back and the hole filled up. If the farmer had been able to point out the exact spot the bits might have been recovered. This, although he tried carefully, he could not do, the land having been ploughed after the removal of the stones. The soil on this farm is a mixture of earth and water-worn stones about the size of one's fist. Several cairns or heaps of stones of the same kind of water-worn stones are around, all of which could have been gathered near and are still being added to. It is said that the covering slabs of many such stone cists are laid bare when ploughing on this farm. On a low hill in Uragaig, on the north-west corner of the island of Colonsay, another stone cist was opened. It was filled with sand or soil, but nothing was found in it. There appear to be numerous cists on this hill. Several small urns are said to have been found some years ago by the person on whose croft it is, but I failed to trace them.

On the farm of Machrins and below an overhanging rock near the shore some bones were brought out on the surface by the rabbits. A digging was made along with the farmer, when bones of several skeletons were found. They had all been disturbed, broken, and mixed up together. Nothing was found beside them but the broken portion of a quern now in the museum.

Other burying-places are spoken of, and on going through the island small cairns with an upright stone at both ends are often seen singly and in groups and hidden amongst the ferns and long grass. These cairns are similar to those of the graveyards attached to the churches.

All the ground around, in, amongst, and between the graves at Kilmory, Kilcatrine, and Church of the Plain, has been cultivated, but the graves

were left undisturbed. The natives consider a grave sacred ground, and have a fear of disturbing the bones in it.

Duns or Hill Forts.—On the islands of Colonsay and Oransay there are the remains of many buildings on hill tops, called duns. They are green and covered with grass.

The most impressive of these is Dun Aving or Abhing, or Amon or Edmond, or Edwin,¹ about one mile west of Scalasaig harbour, and on a commanding hill top. It is circular, and measures about 90 feet diameter. But the outer face of the structure is gone. From it an almost unbroken view of the sea can be had all round the island. Many hundred tons of debris lie at the bottom of the rock on which the fort stands. The site, though not one of the highest hills, is well chosen for defence, and would be almost inaccessible except on one side where the entrance to the fort seems to have been.

South from Dun Aving, about half a mile, and on the right hand of the road going towards Oransay, is Cnoc-an-Ardrighi, so-called from a cattle enclosure which long stood near. It is situated on a low hill, very inaccessible, and would be easy of defence, and measures about 55 to 60 feet diameter, and is circular. It presents the same appearance as Dun Aving. Many of the stones were removed a few years ago for dyke building. When the stones were being taken down an enclosed chamber was discovered. A large quantity of debris lies at the bottom of the rock.

About a mile still further south, and on the same side of the road half a mile from Temple of the Glen, on a low isolated rock, is Dun Conn (*Dunan nan Conn*). It measures about 50 feet diameter and is circular. The outer face of the ruins has been removed, but the appearance is the same as the two previous ones.

Due south from Dun Conn about half a mile, and on the left of the

¹ Mentioned by Martin, p. 249. The following is a translation of a Latin inscription on a sculptured stone on the Island of Iona:—"Here lies John Macceain, Laird of Ardnamurchan, and Mariota Macceain his sister, wife of Malcolm Macduffie, Laird of Dunevin, in Colonse, erected this stone to her brother."

In Cannay there is one of these forts called Dune-eudain.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 316.

road after passing Temple of the Glen, is Dun Coll (*Dun Cholla*).¹ It is situated on a hill and measures about 60 by 25 yards. Little of the structure now remains, but sufficient to show the general form. This fort would not be so easy of defence as some others.

West by south and about a mile from Dun Coll, on a low green hill, is Cnoc Eadareiginn. It does not present any appearance of the fortification of the duns, but the collection on the hill is of the same material and is green, and in addition it has a standing stone in the centre. It has somewhat the same appearance as part of Riskbuie burying-place.

On the hill furthest to the south-east of Colonsay is Dun Mara or Dun Mara House. It has been circular but now only half of it remains. The rock is soft, and a large fall took place one winter lately, which accounts for the disappearance of part of the fort. The entrance to the fort is better seen here than in any remaining one, and goes through a wall about 10 feet thick.² On a favourable day there can be seen from this hill Ireland, Islay, Jura, Scarba, Mull, Iona, Tiree, Coll, Dhu Heartach, and on the islands Dun Aving, Dun Coll, Dun Gallon, Dun Donald, Cairn nan Eoin, &c.

Between Dun Mara and Ardsinnish Point along the shore are three small duns, Dunan-na-Figan, Garvard's Dun, and Dunan nan Nighean.

About two and a half miles from the harbour, and on the west coast of the island of Colonsay, and due west from Machrins farm-house, and on a rock jutting out into the Atlantic, is Dun Gallon.³ The form of the building is much obliterated, but it seems to have been circular, and may have measured about 100 feet diameter. It is surrounded on nearly three sides at high water, and even on the calmest days the waves break

¹ Martin, p. 249.

² Pennant says, that in Islay three forts were always found in sight of each other (vol. ii. p. 250).

³ In Islay there is a dun on a somewhat similar rock, called Dun Vallon.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 256. Macculloch says, that in Gaelic W V and G are interchangeable letters. If so Gallon and Vallon are the same name.—Macculloch, vol. iv. p. 262.

there with great force. It would thus be easy of defence. On examining a small bed of shells two broken pins were found, one of ivory and one of bone.¹ The shells were periwinkles and limpets, and amongst them were bits of broken bones of various animals.

About three-quarters of a mile north-east from Dun Gallon, and in a very pretty little bay called the Cold Well Shore, on a low rock, is Dunanga-Gaoth, or the small Dun of the Wind. It measures about 40 feet diameter, and appears to have been circular.

On the sands of this small bay, and between high and low water marks, tradition says a battle was once fought. It was called the battle of the spears or sheaves, from the weapons used. Bones are still at times dug up by fishermen when digging bait. On the links here games between the inhabitants used to be held, and on the road side lies the Colonsay lifting stone² (*Clach Thogalach*), which every young male of Colonsay is expected to be able to lift before he is called a man. It is an uneven boulder, and the difficulty is the catching hold of it as much as the weight.

About a mile and a half further north-west, and a quarter of a mile east from Kilchattan graveyard, and back in amongst the hills, is Dun Meadhonach or Middle Dun. It is on an isolated rock, very inaccessible, and measures 20 by 10 paces.

On the hill, Ben-a-Tuadh, above the present mill near Kiloran is Dunan-a-Chullich or Boars Dun. It was not visited.

On the north-west corner of the island of Colonsay, and on an almost isolated rock jutting out towards the sea, is Dun Challiach. The buildings here seem to have been rectangular and formed of several divisions or chambers, or of a cluster of houses.

Dun Tealtaig,³ half a mile north east from Dun Challiach, is also on

¹ In 1716 Martin observed that the females of Jura fastened their shawls with bone pins.

² Or Stone of Strength, Clach-heart.—Pennant, vol. i. p. 214.

³ Forts of similar construction and situation to Dun Challiach and Dun Tealtaig exist in Sunderland, Islay.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 254.

an isolated rock, and seems composed of a cluster of circular houses or enclosures of from 12 to 22 feet each diameter. On the neck of land leading to the rock there are the remains of extensive buildings or fortifications.

On the north-east end of the island of Colonsay and farm of Bal-na-hard, and due north from the farm-house, on a most inaccessible rock, is Dun Meadhonach.¹ It measures about 50 by 25 paces. Little of the structure remains. Several years ago the rabbits brought to the surface three dishes, said to have been like a cup and saucer and plate, 1 knife and a fork with 3 prongs, all of bronze. They rusted away soon after. Hugh Bowie, Crofter, Uragaig, who was shepherd on the farm at the time, saw them and now tells the story.

On the next hill to the west is Dun Crom or the Hunchback. This has no appearance of having been a fort. It has more the look of Riskbuie burying-place or a rubbish heap. Its greenness, and being composed of the same materials, is its only resemblance to the other duns.

Near the old church of Kilcatrine, on a low hill side, is Cnoc Mhic-ille-Mhiniche (or the knoll of the son of Mhiuiche's servant). Here in former times after the cows were milked an offering of a small quantity of the new milk was poured out by every crofter in Bal-na-hard for the use of the people who lived under ground.² If such an offering was neglected it was believed that the best cow in that crofter's byre who had neglected the offering was sure to be dead before morning. There is little to be seen, only a very small low heap of stones and soil.

On the farm of Bonaveh, on the west coast is Dunan-nan-Neghean. What remains of this structure shows it to be of irregular form. It has not the usual green appearance, but is overgrown with heather. The outside face of the entrance is still complete and lintelled. The stones, which are large and undressed, are of a sort of freestone found on the

¹ Another Dun Meadhonach has been noted near Kilchattan.

² The custom of pouring out milk on little hills or a big stone in others of the western islands is mentioned by Martin, pp. 67, 110, and 391.

island, and may have been quarried. The entrance measures 4 feet high, 3 feet wide, and goes back about 6 feet till blocked by stones. It is partly built dry and partly with soil.

Dun Donald¹ on the island of Oransay is the largest of all, measures about 75 by 25 paces, and is of irregular form to suit the hill top. The hill on which Dun Donald stands is the middle one of three. The hill to the west, and which is the highest, is called Carnan Chul-re-Erinn, and is the one St Columba is said to have ascended shortly after landing on the island, and from which he saw Ireland, as told in his "Life" by Adamnan. Ireland can be seen from this hill in certain states of the weather. Little of the structure now remains, but much debris lies at the bottom of the hill. Its stones would be convenient for other building purposes, and may have been so used. As much as possible of two days were spent working at a large shell and bone midden on the top. The shells were limpets and periwinkles, and the bones appear to be mostly ox and sheep. The marrow bones were all split. Owing to the limited time the state of the tide allows for crossing the strand little was done, and nothing of importance was found. In the middle of the fort is a round basin cut in the rock, similar to that mentioned by Captain Thomas as being on Dun Add.² It is afterwards referred to under knocking stones.

Caistal nan Ghillean, or Servants' Castle, is a round conical sandhill on the east shore of Oransay. It measures about 50 paces diameter and about 40 feet high. It lies in a straight line between Oransay House and the light on Islay at the entrance to Jura Sound, and about half a mile from Oransay House.

Several other green hills, Bein nan Grudairean,³ where it is said heather

¹ Is mentioned by Pennant, was said to have been a native fort. Much more of the remains seem to have existed then than now.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 271.

² Transactions, 1878-79, p. 31.

³ The brewing of heather ale is mentioned by Martin, p. 196 and by Pennant, vol. ii. p. 262. Pennant says, two-thirds of the young tops of heather and one-third of malt, with the addition sometimes of hops, were used in the brewing.

ale was brewed, Ben-Beag and Cnoc-na-Faire in Balnahard, Dun Dubh, Dun Ghailleann, &c.), were noted and visited, but they do not call for special remark.

The green duns are all constructed of stone and soil, or appeared to be so, and are thus similar to all the older dwellings on the island, many of which are still inhabited. The outer faces of the walls of the duns are, however, in nearly every case entirely obliterated or demolished. Much of this may be due to the elements;¹ but much is also due to the removal of material for other building purposes. It seems to be a Colonsay practice to construct a new building as much as possible out of old ones. The process of building a new house with the stones of old dykes was seen in operation. Thus correct measurements of disused habitations or other structures are scarcely possible.

It would perhaps be more correct of the older houses and structures of Colonsay to say that they are built of stone and clay instead of stone and soil. The mortar used really seems to be a kind of reddish clay easily got in many parts of the island about 9 to 12 inches under the upper surface of soil. It is frequently seen at the road sides where cuttings have been made. Insides of walls of houses are also plastered with this clay and afterwards whitewashed with lime.

All those duns, which really appear to look like forts, are built on hill tops; not the highest hills to be found in the districts, but hills which could be easily defended or made defensible. It does not appear as if any of them, except one in Uragaig, had wells inside, but they might have had storing places for water.²

Knocking Stones or Stones for making Pot Barley.—About 100 yards south-west of the harbour of Scalasaig, at the bottom of a low hill, Cnoc-

¹ The first monument erected to the late Lord Colonsay on the hill overlooking the harbour was shortly after its erection entirely demolished by lightning.

² The viking chiefs were frequently buried on hill tops.—Proceedings for 1880, p. 84, see also Pennant, vol. ii. p. 213. In such a case it is possible that some of the green hills before mentioned as Cnoc Egdareiginn, Cnoc Mhic-ille-Mhiniche, &c., which have now no appearance of forts, may be burial-places. For an estimate of the date of the hill forts, see Macculloch, vol. ii. p. 197.

na-Faire, or watchhill, and just at the side of the old road which formerly led inland from the harbour, there stands a large earthfast boulder stone several tons weight. In the middle of the stone is an artificial round hole or basin about 12 inches deep and the same wide. Alexander M'Neill, a native of the island, and one of the crew of the mail-packet, pointed out the stone. He said that in his young days pot barley was made in the hole in the stone by beating it with a wooden hammer having a long handle, some water being put into the hole along with the rough barley. Pot barley was last made in this stone about forty years ago. The stone stood in the open air and was common to all the neighbourhood, each person waiting their turn, the work being mostly done by women.

Mrs Archibald M'Neill, wife of the farmer on Garvard Farm, and a native of the island, also explained the process, having seen her mother making it. She said there was also a custom or practice on some day about a week before the new year for the women to meet at the stones and make some pot barley specially for the new year dinner. Every household endeavoured to have some so made. If they had no croft or had grown no corn barley, as she called it, some relative or friend or neighbour would supply them with some for the purpose. Archibald M'Neill, fisherman, Riskbuie, remembers his mother and other persons having used the one in Riskbuie burying-ground.

The knocking stone seemed to be unknown as private property or as a domestic utensil kept inside the house; on the island, no one had knowledge of such a thing. On making more inquiry it was found that knocking stones were all outside the dwellings, and were round holes or basins in some convenient earthfast boulder stone or rock; sometimes they were natural holes or partly so, but oftenest artificially made. Mr James Munn, the old weaver in Kilchatian, pointed out three, one of which he had made himself. Mr Donald M'Neill, Lower Kilchattan, pointed out another. Mr Malcom *ban* M'Neill, farmer, Balleraomina Mòr, pointed out another on his farm; there is one on the top and middle of Dun Donald in Oransay before referred to. One in the middle of the

burying-ground of Riskbuie¹ also referred to, several said to be on the farm of Ardskeinnish, one on Garvard, two on Machrins, one on Bal-na-hard, one at Kiloran, one in the middle of the old mill dam, Kiloran, and I would expect to find one or more in Uragaig.

The only instances in which stones were found resembling one of the knocking stones in the Museum is the one lying beside the remains of the old church of Kilcatrine on Bal-na-hard, and formerly mentioned. Another found beside the old church of Kilchattan, and now used in an adjoining gate as a hole in which the post turns, and one at Riskbuie. This last was occasionally used when small quantities were wanted. The one at Kilchattan is only 6 inches in diameter by 3 deep in the hole, and is cut in a small hard yellow granite boulder, and may have been for some other purpose, it is so small. No one knew of the Kilchattan and Kilcatrine ones having been used for such a purpose. Tradition says of the Kilcatrine one that it was the priest's well or baptismal font of the church. It is a roundish uneven boulder stone, about 24 inches by 18 inches by 10 inches, with a hole artificially made in one side, about 15 inches by 11 inches broad and 6 inches deep. There is no tradition regarding the Kilchattan stone. It was found in digging the foundation of the wall which now encloses the graveyard.

Captain Thomas in his paper on Dunadd, read before the Society,² refers to a smooth-polished and circular rock basin cut in the living rock, and 11 inches diameter and 8 inches deep. The hole cut in the rock on the top of Dun Donald, Oransay, is such another hole as that referred to

¹ See footnote to Captain Thomas' paper as to rock basins in other burying-grounds and cemeteries.—Proceedings, 1878-79, pp. 30-32. Rock basins in Lismore churchyard.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 415.

² Pennant says that in Durris north end of Loch Ness is a "Druid Temple" of three concentric circles, and near the centre is a hollowed stone, which was either a laver to wash or a basin to receive the blood of the sacrifice (vol. i. p. 293).

In one of the caves at Hawthornden there is a rock-cut basin about 18 inches by 12, and 6 inches deep at one end and 9 at the other, and absurdly called Bruce's Wash-Basin. The hole does not appear to have been finished or to have been much used for any purpose. Although it is of a different shape from the Colonsay ones, I believe it could be used for the same purpose.

by Captain Thomas. The Oransay one will be 2 or 3 inches larger, and is not polished, the rock being too friable or scaly to take on a polish. It was standing more than half full of water during the warmest days in August. In a footnote to Captain Thomas' paper the Rev. R. J. Mapleton remarks, "Such basins are or were common about here; sometimes on a rock, sometimes in a large boulder. On one of the islands near Loch Craignish there are three or four of these rock basins. Again, on the banks of Loch Kilziebar, North Knapdale, there is one, and I have seen several on loose blocks in several parts. The people here say that they were made and used as mortars to separate the husk from the barley."

Whatever may have been the first use of these circular holes cut in the rock or in large boulder stones, the last use they were put to in the island of Colonsay was that of making pot barley. All the older inhabitants are familiar with the process, and there is one person now living who pointed out a hole made by himself for the purpose. Moreover, it does not appear that any of these holes were private property. Every one who chose seems to have had the use of them. No trace was found of any which could be removed inside a dwelling if we except the three before-mentioned.

Querns and small Water Mills and Drying Kilns.—Querns¹ were used till about thirty years ago for making barley flour, but oatmeal was made at the mill. They were also used after the potato failure in 1845 or 1846. A quantity of Indian corn was sent to the relief of the starving islanders. There had been little rain for a long time on the island, and hence there was a lack of water to drive the only grinding mill. Hand-mills had long been nearly discarded, but a few which had escaped destruction were hunted up, and by borrowing and lending a sufficient supply of home-ground Indian corn meal was made till the showers brought a supply of water to drive the wheel of the meal mill.

¹ Querns were in use in Iona, Cannay, and Rum in 1772.—Pennant, vol. ii, pp. 292, 314, and 322. Pennant says that at the time of his visit to Skye (1772) the Miller was empowered by the Laird to search out and break all querns.

The meal mill above referred to stood near Colonsay House, and was built by a predecessor of the late Lord Colonsay. Before this mill was built the grinding was said to have been done by small mills having a horizontal wheel driven by water. The mills were built over one of the small streams, and were such as are described by Dr Mitchell and by many other writers on the Shetland Isles as being in use in parts of Shetland to the present day. In Colonsay they are called Muileann Dubh or Black Mills.

One of them was pointed out on the farm of Balleraomin Mòr by the farmer. It stands a short distance up the valley of a small stream which flows into the strand near the crossing place to the south of Dun Coll, and is in ruins. The sides of the stream had been built with dry stone walling for 8 or 10 feet, and to a height of about 4 feet, and with a circular recess back off the stream in which the wheel could turn. The stream was bridged by four or five long undressed stones. In one of these a portion or about one-half of the hole remained, through which probably the spindle had come from the horizontal wheel underneath. On the shore near by there has been during living memory a half-finished millstone. The size would be suitable, and it may have been intended for this mill. Further up the stream is what may have been the dam for collecting the water.

The ruins of another of these mills is on the farm of Machrins, another on Balnahard, another at Uragaig, another at Ardskishish, and I think another must have been near the harbour, as the upper stone of one of these mills was found beside the stream here, and is now made use of for covering and as a fixture for the pump over St Oran's Well at Colonsay house. No information could be got as to these little water-mills having been used for grinding meal during living memory, but it is stated that they were used for crushing malt for making smuggled whisky; and there is a distinct recollection by one old man of the water-wheel, who said it was the size of a cart wheel, and lay on its side in the water.

Till the present new mill was built by the late Lord Colonsay every crofter kiln-dried his own grain. The drying kilns, which were numerous

in the island, were circular, and about 6 or 8 feet diameter. The floor was excavated 2 or 3 feet into the earth, on which was the peat fire. The walls were stone, dry built, and the roof thatch. Three or four feet over the fire were cross bearers of timber or branches; over these the crofter spread some straw, on which was laid the grain to dry. Sometimes two doors were made, one at one side low down for getting to the fire, and the other at the other side on a higher level for attending the grain. In the smaller kilns one door was made to serve both purposes. No chimney was made, the peat reek being allowed to escape as it could. Frequently the kilns were destroyed by fire, but were easily reconstructed. A kiln of the larger description was said to have stood beside one of the large standing stones¹ of Kilchattan, the stone serving for the cheek of one of the doors. The old weaver of Kilchattan, James Munn, remembers it perfectly, and described it. In the present drying kiln, which is connected with the new mill, those requiring oats ground have to do the drying themselves.

The Mode of Preparing Lint as practised till recently.—After the lint was ripe it was hand pulled and tied up into small sheaves with prepared rushes. These small bundles were steeped in pools of water for the purpose of softening or rotting the hard husk which enveloped the fibre. After steeping for the necessary time the lint was again dried, for the purpose of hardening and making the removal of the husk more easy by the after process. In Colonsay this was usually done in the kilns used for drying the grain. This practice of kiln drying is different from what is within my own recollection in North Ayrshire, where it was done in the open air. After the drying or hardening, the lint was beat with a wooden mell on a flat stone, a small quantity being taken in the one hand and constantly turned, while the beating was done with the mell in the other, care being taken to have the husk evenly crushed throughout. The next process was the skutching. The implements required were a skutch, a sword-like tool (one of these is represented in Fig. 3), and a block, which was a piece of

¹ Pennant mentions the two stones but says nothing of a kiln, which may have been a later construction.—Pennant, vol. ii. p. 274.

timber 27 inches or so high by about 9 inches broad and 3 thick. The operator being seated, took this block between the knees, it being upright, and one end on the ground. In the right hand he held the *skutch*, and in the left a handful of the lint. The lint was laid across the block, and the operator commenced hacking at it with the *skutch* so as to break off the husk which enveloped the fibre. After the *skutching*, the fibre was drawn through between the prongs or legs of an implement not unlike a large pair of curling tongs, called a *stripper*. An implement of this kind is in the Museum, but is somewhat different in make from that said to have been used in Colonsay, one of which however could not be obtained. A portion of an old gun barrel was said to be the best article



Fig. 3. Lint skutch of wood. (28 inches long.)

which could be got for making one. The process of preparation was completed by heckling in the usual way.

The lint skutch here figured and now presented to the Museum by Mr James Munn, handloom weaver, Kilchattan, Colonsay, is stated by him to have been used by his grandmother and mother, and thus must have been in the family for nearly a century. That it is a hand skutch is undoubted. When shown to many of the older natives they at once knew its use and the manner of using it.

Marriage Customs.—The marriage customs of Colonsay appear to be peculiar to the island. On the morning of the day of marriage the bride and bridegroom each entertain their party to breakfast at their respective residences. At an hour mutually arranged, the bride, supported on one side by a best maid, and on the other by a best man, starts for the parish church, followed by her father and other friends. Supported also in like manner by a best maid and a best man, the bridegroom starts from his home on his way to meet the bride, and followed by his friends.

Each party may be headed by a piper. The meeting usually takes place about half-way between the bride's home and the church. No conveyances are used, indeed they would be useless in many cases. When the two parties meet and the usual salutations and drams have been exchanged, the whole start for the church, the lead being taken by the bride and her supporters and friends, headed of course by the piper; the bridegroom and his supporters and friends following behind. On arrival at the church each party enters by a separate door. The ceremony is conducted by the minister in the usual form and in Gaelic.¹ After it is over, and on leaving the church, the order of procession is reversed, the husband and his party take the lead, with the piper in front, the wife and her party following behind. It is usual after the ceremony to adjourn to the inn, where dancing to the sound of the pipes and other merriment is enjoyed till well on in the evening. All living on the island are made welcome to the festivities, and young people in particular. After the festivities at the inn are over, it is usual to adjourn to the future home of the young folks if that is on the island, or the residence of the bride, where dancing, &c., is again renewed.

During our visit a marriage such as described took place, none having been celebrated for two years before. It was celebrated in the parish church, about three in the afternoon on a Monday. The party broke up from the inn about nine in the evening, and adjourned to the house of the bride's father. On the Tuesday the young couple left the island with the steamer for their future home on the mainland. While the young people seemed to be enjoying themselves, and were merry and full of life and fun, excess of any kind did not appear to be indulged in.

At a distant period, but almost within living memory, betrothal took

¹ It was the practice at a former time, and in some instances still, for a small silver coin to be placed under the heel in the shoe of persons being married so as to prevent the evil one marring the happiness of the marriage. The belief that a small bit of silver was capable of circumventing the evil intentions of the devil was not confined to the Highlanders. The Covenanters had also a firm belief in it. See "Scots Worthies," by John Howie of Lochgoin. See also Burns' "Address to the Deil."

place on some hill-top convenient for the purpose. The young folks were accompanied by their parents, and when leaving their houses for the place of meeting they had old shoes and burning peats thrown after them for luck. It was also considered unlucky for either of them to look behind. At the betrothal, the father of the bride had to promise to furnish her with a spinning wheel and chest, and bed clothes for one bed, as her dowry. The ceremony of betrothal was finished up by a merry making. Before the settlement of an ordained minister in Colonsay, and when the parish minister had to come from Jura, marriages were mostly always celebrated in the open air, and frequently on hill tops. Nine marriages are spoken of as having been celebrated on the same day and at the same place.

Caves.—On the north end of Colonsay are several caves, six of which were visited. One of these, called the New Cave¹ by the natives, is on the west side of Kiloran Bay. It is the largest and most commodious on the island, and was carefully described by Mr Grieve in a paper read before the Society last year.² He has since then been again visiting and examining it.

The caves which I visited all bore traces of habitation, if bones, which are to be found in them all, are evidence of habitation. It is said that in former times, when the island was much more thickly populated than now, fevers were prevalent.³ When these broke out in a household it was the practice for all the healthy members who could get away to betake themselves to one or other of the caves till those who were affected recovered, and till the house got a cleaning out.⁴ It was also the practice when a dwelling came to need more extensive repairs than ordinary for the whole family to betake themselves for the time being to some cave, if

¹ Mr Grieve gives a new name to this cave, *i.e.*, Crystal Spring Cavern.

² Proceedings, 1879-1880, p. 318.

³ Martin mentions that fevers were epidemic in several of the western islands, and records one case of fever in Colonsay at the time of his visit, p. 248.

⁴ It may be mentioned in connection with this cleaning practice that during the late Lord Colonsay's time orders were given to have always a stock of dry lime on hand ready for white-washing purposes. This rule still continues in force.

one was near enough to be convenient. An old mason is still living in Scalasaig who inhabited one of these caves for a summer while occupied at the building of a new wing to Colonsay House, and there is an old man living in Greenock who was born in another cave. It is the regular custom every summer for the Colonsay lobster fishermen to live for a time in the Jura caves while pursuing their calling on that side of the sea.¹

All the Colonsay caves, except perhaps the one called the Bonnie Cave, in which the birth above-mentioned took place, are more or less wet from the percolation of water; hence their occupation or habitation for any length of time except in cases of extreme necessity or during dangerous and troublesome times could scarcely be expected. Tradition says that several have been during such times occupied as places of refuge or defence. The Bonnie Cave seems to have been the one which has had the most continuous occupation. This wet or dampness, and the floors being composed in great part of stones and shingle, which is open to the admission of air, makes it scarcely to be expected that articles of wood or iron (or perhaps of bone and pottery) of great age will be preserved unless where they may be protected by stalagmite. Articles of iron rust with extreme rapidity on the island of Colonsay. Even keys and other articles carried in the pocket get black and discoloured in a very short time. This is attributed to the sea air.²

In two of the caves were found bone and shell middens which do not appear hitherto to have been observed. I do not find that they have been noticed anywhere. Another cave is occupied by a colony of pigeons or other wild fowl, and a colony of either rabbits or rats. Another is extremely well ventilated from the back by a passage having a connection with the outer air. Another is frequently used during summer as a place for pic-nics. The Bonnie Cave was found used as a byre for calves and a store for lobster creels.³

¹ The practice of persons living in Jura caves is mentioned by Martin, p. 235.

² This tendency of iron to rust quickly in several western islands is mentioned by Martin, p. 74.

³ Travellers in search of wonders are shown a cave near Oban where tradition says

Other Antiquities.—About three quarters of a mile from the harbour, and 300 yards north-east from the farm-house of Scalasaig, is a standing stone¹ 8 feet above ground, undressed, of irregular form, and 5½ feet in girth. It forms part of a small circular structure about 12 feet external diameter. None of the other stones are above ordinary building stone size, except one which is about 4 feet above ground, 2 feet broad and 1 foot thick, and lies sloping at an angle of about 45°. This stone bears every trace of having been quarried, is squarish cut, and has pick marks all round. It looks like the blueish granite got in the neighbourhood, and of which the harbour is mostly built. Beside the large stone there appears to have been a step as if of an entrance. The structure is a little above the level of the surrounding surface of the ground.

On the opposite side of the road and a little up the hill is another standing stone deeply sunk into the earth.

In Kilchattan, and a quarter of a mile east from the burial-ground, are two standing stones about 15 yards apart, and north and south of each other.² They are respectively about 8 and 10 feet high, 18 inches square, and of irregular shape. The northmost of these stones is the one which is said to have been the door cheek of the drying kiln. It has now a cairn round it. Within 20 yards of the north one is a very large heap or cairn of stones about 6 feet high, and flat on the top. It is about 21 yards across, and is still being added to by the stones collected from the land around. James Munn said that in his young days the crofters

the inhabitants of the town shut up a ship's crew of Irish who had come to destroy the town. The story goes back to a time when the town had neither house nor inhabitants.—Macculloch, vol. ii. p. 135.

The occupation of the cave of Umb-Fhearnaig or Umb-Mhor in Islay in 1772 by fourteen or fifteen families as their shiellings or summer residences, and by three families all the year, is mentioned by Pennant, vol. ii. p. 268; Macculloch, vol. iv. p. 421.

¹ Standing stones have been erected to celebrate events unconnected with the district in which they are, and their erection may have been of a very recent date, as the large undressed stone put up by the labourers of Bunawe near Taynult, in memory of and shortly after the death of Nelson.—Macculloch, vol. i. p. 266.

² Mentioned by Pennant, vol. ii. p. 274.

had their barns built round this cairn, on which was the stackyard. Each barn had an opening looking into the stackyard or cairn, and through which the sheaves were handed into the barn. There are several other cairns about, some of which may have been made by the collecting of the stones off the land, which all around is extremely full of them. It was near here, however, where the stone cist was opened, and where others have since been found.

On the farm of Balleraomin Mòr, joining on to the present farm stackyard, is the remains of a circular construction about 16 paces diameter. This was formerly the stackyard of the farm. The wall or dyke was set round with large stones or boulders, and the spaces between filled in with smaller stones, just in such a way as is still to be seen at the road-side opposite the schoolhouse going from the harbour inland, and elsewhere on the island. The whole of the stones were removed by the present farmer to build a dyke round a new stackyard. If the farmer had removed only the smaller stones, leaving the larger boulders, there would have been seen a very complete stone circle. May not this circle have been constructed originally for another purpose than a stackyard?

On the farm of Balnahard, and on the low ground to the south below Dun Crom, is a large boulder stone,¹ but not water-worn, having an irregular cavity on the top capable of holding about a quart. On this stone an offering of milk is said to have been poured out as well as at the other place near the old church, Kilcatrine, on the same farm.² About 300 yards and due east from Port-Mòr, and in at the bottom of the hills, is a piece of isolated rock about 8 feet high and 4 feet diameter. At one side is a raised bench reaching to about 4 feet from the top. On the top of this rock is a small round hole of about 4 inches diameter and depth. This rock is the altar of the Man Mitchell (*Altair fear Mitchell*).

¹ Libations of milk to the Gruagach were poured out on stones which bore his name in Skye. He is said to have been a handsome young man with fair hair. -- Pennant, vol. ii. p. 359, vol. iii. pp. 436-437.

² The practice of pouring out cows' milk on a little hill or big stone in some of the western islands is mentioned by Martin, pp. 67, 110 and 391; Macculloch, vol. iii. p. 350 and 352.

About half a mile south by east, and seen from the old church, is another standing stone on a hill top. Near Tobar-an-Daimh or the Stotts Well, beside and north of Ben Beg, is another standing stone. Half a mile south of the farm-house and on Scalasaig farm, and beside the old road leading to Oransay, are two standing stones.

In the middle of the strand, at the place where the crossing is usually made from Colonsay to Oransay, is a cross formed by several stones laid horizontally on the sand. This cross is said to have marked the limits of sanctuary of the Oransay monastery,¹ and at one time to have had a small upright cross also.

On the sands between the farms of Ardskishish and Garvard are three circular mounds of sand² called Sheean Mòr, Sheean Meadhonach, and Sheean Beg. Near here upwards of fifty years ago some armour and weapons were found under some stones by persons building a dyke, of whom an old man, Angus M'Millan, Kilchattan, was one, and who broke the sword.

On the island of Oransay, and in the middle of the park in front of Oransay House, is a large flat topped circular mound of sand or soil. It measures 36 by 28 paces on the top, and will average 4 feet high. This mound is mentioned by Pennant, and by him ascribed to the Danes and the buildings on Dun Donald as of native construction.³ Within the grounds of Colonsay House is pointed out St Oran's Well. It is now covered with an old mill stone with a modern pump through and fixed into it.

On the farm of Balnahard and to the left and near the road-side about the brow of the brae going to the farm is the Holy Well of St Columba. Every one taking a drink here ought to leave some offering.⁴ This practice

¹ Privileges of girth or sanctuary, Act, Robt. II. c. 9.—Pennant, vol. i. p. 288.

² Pennant saw several sheans in Glenurchie, vol. iii. p. 12.

³ Pennant, vol. ii. p. 271.

⁴ The custom of leaving offerings on the stones covering holy wells of others of the western islands is mentioned by Martin and specially Lonbir in Knabar, Isla, or "the well which sallied from Colonsay."—Martin, pp. 140, 240, and 242. A list of Holy Wells will be found in "Scotland in Early Christian Times," p. 183.

seems to be scrupulously carried out even to the present day by many. Bits of tobacco, nails, rags, visiting cards, &c., are seen lying on the slab covering the well, and kept in their places by stones. The shepherd on the farm, who is a son of Mr Weir the farmer, mentions that he began recently to carefully collect all the copper money left, and had got the length of 9d. or 10d. when some other person found out his hiding place and stole the hoard.

A rock which juts out from the face of a perpendicular precipice overlooking the strand on the south end of Colonsay is called the hanging stone, or hanging point (*Bannan Crom* or *Beanan Crochedh*). There is a hole in this portion of rock through which one end of the rope is said to have been drawn up after the other was tied round the neck of the criminal or person to be hanged. A tradition exists of several persons having been so executed.

On *Loch-na-Sgoltire* is an island now occupied by an harbour or summer-house and furnished for picnic parties. Access to the island is got by a boat kept on the loch. A fort existed on the island, to which in olden times the proprietor retired in times of danger.¹ The remains are still in tolerable preservation, and consist of an outer and inner work with round towers at the corners. The towers have been built with shell lime of the same kind as the old churches, but the walls are built with clay, and 8 to 10 feet thick at the base. The outer works enclose an area of 23 by 31 paces, and the inner works an area of 14 by 12 paces. The summer house is inside of the inner one.

About 200 yards south from *Port-Mòr*, and 50 yards off the road on the left hand going south, is a small cavity in a rock about 12 by 6 inches, partly natural and partly artificially made. This cavity is called the heel or shoe of *Chattan* (*Cruidhe Chattan*). Formerly, persons desirous of leaving the island, and wishing to have a favourable wind, consulted one of the oldest *Macvourichs* (*Currie*), who, after cleaning out this hole, and making use of the necessary ceremonies, pronounced a favourable wind to

¹ Old Statistical Account.

those desiring it. Only persons named Macvourich could procure the favourable wind. The old church of Kilchattan is in sight a quarter of a mile south of this place.

The dyeing of wool with some kinds of moss collected on the rocks on the shore is still practised by some of the old natives in Colonsay.

Flint chips can be collected in various parts, but they do not bear traces of manufacture.

During the four weeks spent on the island, time was almost wholly taken up exploring, and moreover it was impossible unassisted, and lodging inconvenient to the places of interest, to overtake any but trifling excavations. But by careful and systematic examination of several of the places mentioned it is probable that much which would illustrate the antiquities of the islands might be found. In case this should be thought desirable, it may not be out of place to offer the following suggestions.

On the islands lodgings suitable and convenient to most of the places which are likely to give useful results by examination are not to be got. Therefore the person having charge would require to live either in a tent or wooden hut. This is also the opinion of Mr Malcolm M'Neill. The accommodation of a wooden hut except during the very coldest winter months, would not be inconvenient or unenjoyable, the climate of Colonsay being comparatively mild. During summer a tent would be suitable and enjoyable. By those engaged in the ordnance survey on the western islands a tent is preferred to lodgings during the summer. If only one person had superintendence, barrows and tools for two to four labourers would be required. Labourers, except during harvest, can be got at 2s. or 2s. 6d. per day.

Of the places I visited during my residence on the island I took notes of several where it seemed to me that further examination might lead to useful results. Amongst others the most prominent of these perhaps is Dun Aving near the harbour. It is the finest and most entire of all the duns. Two months or more might be required. The stuff could be easily got rid of over the face of the rock. The most extensive excavation would be that of one of the caves. In such an examination, if done in a

way to have the most scientific value, the stuff excavated from the floor of the cave will have to be taken to the daylight outside for careful examination. Inside the cave, where it is dark, artificial light will have to be provided. The New Cave (which is the largest on the island), as described by Mr Grieve, has its entrance down 20 to 30 feet over an immense heap of fallen rock and debris. Before anything of a satisfactory nature could be done with this cave, a cutting would require to be made down through the heap of fallen rocks to the level of the floor inside the cave, for the purpose of getting egress to carry the stuff excavated out to the daylight and getting rid of it afterwards. Such a cutting implies the blasting and removal of perhaps one hundred tons or more of the masses of fallen rock. The rocks do not appear of a very hard or tough nature, and when blasted could be easily got out of the way by putting them over the face to the sands below.

The floor of the first chamber of the cave does not show such appearance of stalagmite as would require blasting, except perhaps near the well. In the second chamber stalagmite only partially covers the floor. The *original* floor of the cave appears to be composed of shingle and water-worn stones. Boulders of large size were not seen. Taking Mr Grieve's measurement of the floor of the outer chamber as $95\frac{1}{2}$ feet, and the average breadth of say 40 feet, with an average depth of say 3 feet, and presuming the second and third chambers together to have the same floor area as the first; thus the examination of this cave would imply the excavation and removal of upwards of one thousand cart loads. If three cart loads could be excavated and examined daily on an average, the work would take upwards of a year. Some of the other caves are smaller in size, have entrances level with the beach outside, and also contain bone and shell middens. Little blasting being required, their examination would not be so extensive an undertaking. It is, however, difficult to decide beforehand which of the caves might yield the most satisfactory results.

I have to express my obligations to the proprietor, Sir John Carstairs M'Neill, K.C.M.G., V.C., &c., for the permission which he has granted to make such excavations or examinations as I might consider necessary or desirable on the islands.