

## IV.

NOTES ON SOME PREHISTORIC BURIAL-PLACES AND STANDING STONES IN THE ISLAND OF YELL, SHETLAND. (WITH ILLUSTRATIONS.) BY J. T. IRVINE, F.S.A. SCOT.

Some of the ancient *haugs* or burying-places of the pagan age can yet be traced in Shetland, occasionally occurring in close proximity to the sites of old settlements, locally called "Tounes" and "Brochs." They present considerable variety of character, as the following rough enumeration will show :—

1. Standing Stones unaccompanied by any "heap of stones (cairn) or mound of earth (barrow)." Examples are found near Hubie Broch, in the island of Fetlar ; near the Broch of Underhool, in the west of Unst,

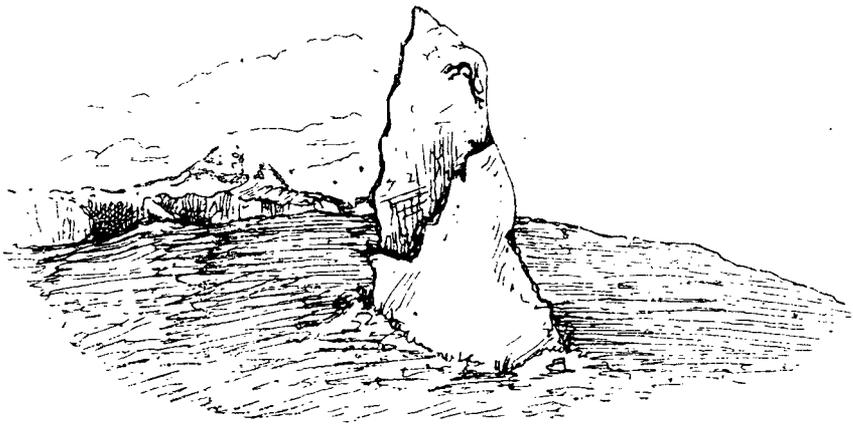


Fig. 1. Standing Stone of Hubie (3 feet 9 inches wide below, 1 foot thick, 7 feet 4 inches high).

on a piece of ground called "Burgar Riggs"; and at "The Brough," in North Yell. The stone at the last-mentioned place is a small one. The one near Hubie (fig. 1) stands 7 feet 4 inches in height above the surface of the ground, 3 feet 9 inches wide at the base, and 12 inches

thick. At Clivocast, in Uyea Sound, is another large standing stone (fig. 2), 10 feet in height and 3 feet 5 inches wide at the base; while

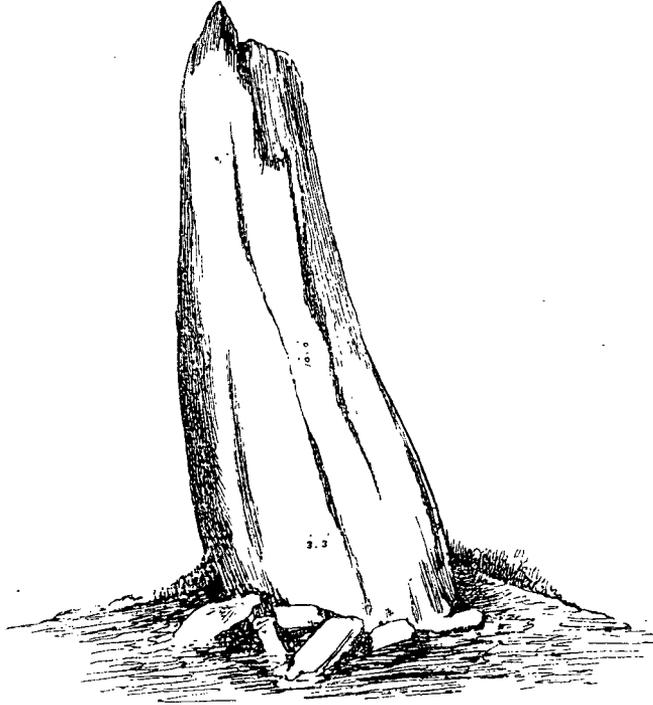


Fig. 2. Standing Stone of Clivocast, Unst (10 feet high, 3 feet 5 inches wide at base).

at Succamires, near Lund, in the island of Unst, is a still larger stone, standing 12 feet high, and measuring 8 feet 6 inches in width and 4 feet 6 inches in thickness at base. Two other standing stones to be described more particularly are situated in the parish of North Yell. The first derives its name from its being close to the burn of Forse, though from the land on which it stood having been common land of Papal, it was sometimes spoken of as standing on the Garths of Papal. The material

was a fairly hard description of pot-stone, found in layers among the rocks left bare at low tide between Tonga of Papal and the boats *noust* of that place. The stone (fig. 3) was a broad flat slab, slightly

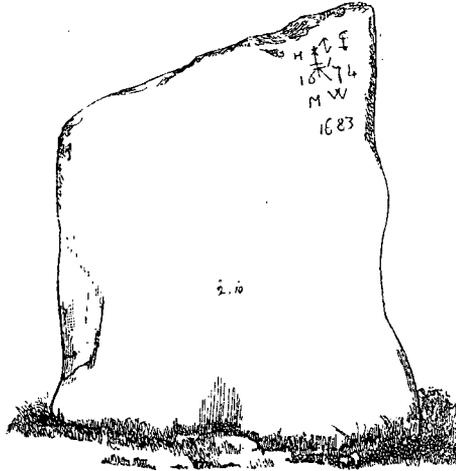


Fig. 3. Standing Stone near Burn of Forse, Papal, North Yell.

lower at one side than the other, and measuring 4 feet 2 inches in greatest height by 2 feet 10 inches in width, and varying from 18 inches to 6 inches in thickness. In one corner were the initials H I 1674 and M W 1683, with an old merchant's mark, or something of that description. It is to be feared that the stone no longer exists. The late Dr Hunt, of the Anthropological Society, dug under it in 1865, with the result that it was left to fall down, and be eventually broken up for building material to be used in the walls of a new schoolhouse.<sup>1</sup> The last stone to be noticed is situated in the "tounne" of Steinsetter to the south of Gatcher, in Yell. It is of a very hard crystalline quartz, its greatest height above ground being 4 feet 9 inches, width about 3 feet, and thickness 1 foot 8 inches. It is interesting as presenting traces of having been rudely dressed to shape.

<sup>1</sup> There is a tradition that a queen who came in a ship to Papal died there, and was buried beneath this stone.

2. "Fairy Knows," as the people call them, are low, flattish circular mounds of very small stones mixed with a blackish mould, the stones often presenting the appearance of having been burnt. Examples of this kind of mound on the burn of Bracon were obliterated when the land was trenched to bring it under cultivation; others exist at the angle of the road (where it reaches the shore) at Cullivoe, and at Sandwick, in the parish of Yell. They have also been noted at Nesting, the Loch of Kirkabister, and Scuddleswick. A superstitious feeling, which used to prevent the tethering of cattle upon them, has greatly contributed to their preservation.

3. Cairns or Mounds, which may sometimes be of composite nature, containing several smaller mounds, each marked by its own ring or fence of protecting stones, and sometimes having a central pillar stone. Of this class seems to be the Knowe of Hoversta, in Unst, 65 feet in diameter, and many of the smaller examples seem on the slope of the hill-side from Windhouse down towards Bartie's Skoe, on Whalefirth Voe. To this class also may belong the remarkable remains on Crossfield, Unst, formed of circular rings, and called "The Rounds of Tivla." Probably also the burial-place on Clody Peat Bank, Midbrake, North Yell (with its central stone rudely squared at the top), belongs to this variety. The barrow high up on the south end of Vallafeld Hill is of the same character, and smaller specimens are scattered over the common land east of the burn of Voegarth, Unst.

4. Cists or Stone Chests, now very often found with the cover wanting. Examples exist near the loch of Belmont, on the side next to the Broch of Oganess; at the back of the yards of Snarravoe; under the south end of Vallafeld; at the north of Balta Sound; and on Scottie's Wart, north of Balliasta, where the cist (3 feet 9 inches by 3 feet 6 inches) is in the centre of a circular cairn of stones 37 feet in diameter, the outer edge of which is defined by a well-built wall.

5. Of the Maeshow class of chambered Cairns, Urns Hool is probably an example.

6. The "Boat Barrow" variety is probably presented in the so-called Harold's Grave at Haroldswick, an oblong mound of stones about 58 feet in length by 28 feet in width, with vacant centre space.

7. In the Christian burial-places the survival of the inverted boat type, seen in the markedly keel-like ridge on the recumbent body-stone, is traceable in many places, and is associated with another singular custom which was almost constant throughout the north, viz., that of making the footstone of the grave, and not the headstone, the principal one of the two uprights, as that looking east.

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