

II.

NOTES ON ANCIENT STRUCTURES IN THE ISLANDS OF SEIL AND LUING, AND IN THE GARBH ISLAND; WITH PRELIMINARY NOTICE OF THE NORTH FORT OF LUING. BY W. IVISON MACADAM, F.S.A. Scot.

Erection in Loch Seil.—Loch Seil, a small loch about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile long and about $\frac{1}{3}$ mile broad, lies on the east side of the road between Kilninver and Clachan of Tigh-an-truish. Near the south end of the loch there is an artificial island 24 feet long and 18 feet broad. It is regularly built of stones, some of which are large. On the west side there is a slip, as if for a narrow boat, and on the east side a square place, as if for a landing-stage. There is no evidence of a causeway, unless these before-mentioned points represent the places from which a wooden gangway started. Tradition in the locality refers to this island as having at one time been inhabited. I made careful examination of the structure, but could find no trace of wooden beams, although I was told that at a comparatively recent period a beam had been removed from the centre of the structure. I made soundings round the island, and found on the north side 6 feet 2 inches of water, on the east side 8 feet 4 inches, on the south side 7 feet 6 inches, and on the west side 6 feet 4 inches of water. The loch at one time extended much further south, and must at that time have been from $1\frac{3}{4}$ to 2 miles long. I made careful examination, without finding any remains; but I propose to dredge the bottom at an early date.

Standing-Stones.—To the west of Loch Seil, and overlooking the Dubh loch, there are some very fine standing-stones, one of which is fully 10 feet high. At Kilninver, about a mile and a half nearer Oban than Loch Seil, there is one standing-stone. It is almost at the mouth of the river Euchar, and on the shores of Loch Feochan.

Eilean-an-Dùin (The Island of the Heap).—The form of this island has probably led to the belief that a fort once existed. The word Dùin, originally only used for a "fort," has now come to be used simply for a "heap." There is an opening in the whin bar on the north-west end

of the island. Local tradition states that one of the giants of old pushed his thumb through the rock in his endeavour to pick up the island.

Ardfad Castle—(*Ard Fad* = *the long height*).—This castle, once the home of the MacDougalls, was a well-built structure of stone and lime. It occupies a prominent position on the shores of Ardincaple Bay, about 500 feet from Ardfad farm-house. The structure must have been a stronghold of no mean strength, occupying a situation on a crag and tail rock, not unlike Edinburgh Castle rock. The lower part of the building has been cleverly adapted to the irregularities of the rock. There are two well-defined round corner towers, one on the east and one on the west side of the building, and there are the usual arrow slits. There is an outwork on the "tail" side, covering the only possible approach. The present mansion-house of the estate lies about 600 yards to the south-west.

Ach-a-luachrach—(*The field of the rushes*).—About 500 yards south of Camuslaich farm-house, and situated on a hill about 200 feet high, stands the remains of a large structure, locally known as Caisteal Ach-a-luachrach. This structure must have at one time been very large, as from 500 to 600 cartloads of stones have been removed within the last fifty years for building purposes. Many of the stones are of enormous size, and the ruins are yet of great extent. About fifty years ago a bar of gold was found within the ruins, as also a sword and other articles. It is not known what became of these relics. The ruins appear to be very similar to those at the North Fort of Luing, as the divisional wall is visible.

Sgeir Carn—(*The rock with the heap of stones*).—This rock lies in the Sound of Seil, immediately below the schoolhouse to the south of the Tigh-an-truish inn. It is about 100 feet long and 30 feet broad. There are distinct traces of an irregularly built structure made of rough stones without lime. Dr Patrick Gillies, Dunmore, Easdale, possesses a very fine stone cup found some years ago on this rock. It is of the usual type.

Sgeir Liath-mhòr—(*The big grey rock*).—This rock lies in the Sound of Seil, in Balvicar Bay. It is about 250 feet long, and 75 feet broad at

its widest part. I found here very distinct evidence of a roughly built structure. The rock is much exposed to the waves, and the stones are therefore being very quickly displaced.

Eilean Torna.—This island lies in Balvicar Bay. It is irregular in shape, and about 1000 feet broad and long at its greatest measurements. I found clear indications of the foundations of a rough stone building. The rabbit-burrow earth discloses numberless shells of the whelk, &c.

Tom-na-croiche—(*The round hillock of the gallows*).—About 800 feet south-east of Balvicar village there are well-defined vitrified walls. The structure is not of great extent.

Smic-mhic-mharcuis—(*The chin of MacMarguis*).—In the churchyard of the old chapel of Kilbrandon there are several sculptured stones which will well repay a visit. Especially is this the case with the gravestone of the Maclachlans of Kilbride, which stands close to the old chapel wall, and on the south side. There is a curious tradition regarding a stone of irregular pyramidal shape which stands on this gravestone. It is said that when a burial has taken place, that the following morning the stone has turned upon its axis, and is found pointing towards the grave.

The natives hold this stone in great veneration, and will neither themselves remove the stone nor allow of others doing so. Within recent years a well-known member of this Society is said to have removed the stone, but the usual result of such a sacrilege—want of sleep—speedily caused the return of the relic.

Two natives are believed to have the power of “second sight,” and to be able to foretell death.

Sgeir Carnach—(*The rock with the cairn*).—About 300 yards north of Dun Edin in Luing there is a rocky mass in the sea, to which, at dead low tide, there is a passage. The top of the rock is covered by a mass of stones, and the remains of several heavy wood beams are still visible. The structure has evidently been of the lake-dwelling class.

An-Caisteal—(*The Castle*).—The structure is commonly referred to as the North Fort of Luing. It lies about 350 yards to the north-west of Ardinamir (the field of the flax-steeping pool). It occupies a

commanding position on the top of a ridge, about 150 feet above sea level. The fort proper is of irregular oval shape, being from north to south about 99 feet, and from east to west 57 feet; inside measurement. There are two entrances, the first being on the east side and the second on the south-west. The east entrance is 4 feet 10 inches wide on the outer side and 6 feet 8 inches inside. It is guarded by an irregularly round chamber, 4 feet 6 inches by 6 feet. The outer walls are 15 feet thick, and about 6 feet high inside and 12 feet 6 inches outside. The fort is divided by a wall 3 feet thick, running from south-east to north-west, and having a central chamber or cell 3 feet by 5 feet, inside measurement. There is evidence that this was not the only chamber inside the erection. Surrounding the inner fort at a distance of about 24 feet, there is a circular wall 6 feet thick. This wall is only pierced at a point opposite the east entrance. A second outer wall starts from the easterly termination of the previously mentioned wall, and runs in a south and west direction to a point where the rocks become precipitous. From the north-east side of the entrance-chamber a wall, evidently protecting the road to the fort, runs also in a south and west direction. The diagrams and photographs will give a more clear idea of the structure. The building proved so interesting that I applied to His Grace the Marquis of Breadalbane for permission to remove the debris, and that Nobleman, with his characteristic kindness, at once granted leave. Dr Patrick Gillies of Easdale and other local gentlemen have promised assistance, and we hope to start work during August 1896.

Tobair-na-suil—(*The well of the eye*)—This so-called well lies to the south of Ardinamar farm-house, and midway between the North and South Forts of Luing.

The water of this well is held by the natives of the neighbourhood to have curative properties for diseases of the eye, and I was informed that it is still largely used for such purposes. It is a mere hollow in a stone, into which there is no opening or fissure. We cleaned out the receptacle, but could not note any inflow of water, and after several hours the cavity was still empty. Local tradition describes the well as never being dry. I took a small bottle of the water, and on analysis I obtained the following results:—

In Imperial Gallon:—

Saline Matter,	5·44 grains
Organic and Volatile Matter,	0·43 „
Total Solid Matter,	<u>5·87</u> grains
Nitrates,	None
Chlorine,	1·92 „
= Chloride of Sodium,	3·16 „
Calcium Carbonate,	0·87 „
Calcium Sulphate,	0·42 „
Iron Oxide,	Slight trace.

In Million Parts:—

Saline Ammonia,	0·005
Albumenoid Ammonia,	0·021

The mud which was in the bottom of the cavity contained only the ordinary constituents of a slate clay, and the water, even when concentrated, was perfectly neutral. The results show that the water is similar in constituents to the other hill surface waters of the locality. It is pure in character and can do no harm; it is certainly not medicinal in character: may the extra cleanliness induced by its use indicate its powers? The hollow in the stone is very similar to that of the form of an eyeball, from which character it may have got its name: once named, the hypothetical curative properties may have followed.

The South or Leccamore Fort of Luing has already been so fully described by Dr MacNaughton of Taynuilt, that it is unnecessary and impossible to add any further notes. (*Proceedings*, vol. xxv. p. 476.)

Dun Chonneil—(the Fort of Conal).—During the latter part of August we visited the Garvelloch Isles, the nearest of which is about 5 miles south-west from Easdale. The group consists of four larger and several smaller islands. The difficulties encountered through cross tides and weather have been well described by Dr Christison in his paper on the Forts of Lorn,¹ but the results warrant the trouble and risk. Dun Chonneil, the northernmost of the group, contains a large ruin, the description of which can be obtained in Dr Christison's work. It must

¹ *Proceedings*, vol. xxiii. p. 407.

have been very strong, and the works are on a large scale. The ascent is difficult, not to say dangerous. There is no landing-stage. A local tradition says that the castle was originally built by Chonneil, whose brothers Oran and Muchie were in possession of castles on the island of Seil, named respectively Dun Erin and Caisteal Muchie. It is said that Chonneil, on awakening in the morning, was in the habit of taking his snuff mull from below his pillow, having a snuff, and then passing the box to his brother Muchie on Seil. Muchie then passed the box to Oran, who returned it to Chonneil.

Garbheilach—(*the rough island*).—There is a burial-ground on this island, called Claoth dubhan (the hill of the fish-hook). The grave-stones are of a rough description, and are not sculptured.

The next island to the south is called *Cuil-i-breannan*, which, from its name, may at one time have contained a chapel belonging to Saint Brandon. No remains are now visible.

To the south lies *Eilach-an-Naomh*—(*the Island of the Saints*).—This is the most interesting of the group, since it contains the ruins of two beehive cells, in fair preservation, and connected with each other by a covered passage.* The inner cell did not appear to have had any direct opening to the outside. The ruins of a third beehive cell are visible.

There is also an underground cell, the top of which is level with the ground. It is regularly built of large stones, and is 4 feet 4 inches in diameter. The height is 4 feet 1 inch. At a point opposite the entrance there is a recess, 2 feet from front to back, 1 foot 10 inches broad, and 1 foot 1 inch high, and placed 1 foot from the roof and 2 feet from the floor. The roof is composed of flat slabs, and the floor is paved with stones.

There are two rectangular buildings, which have been roofed. Each of these buildings contains a cell, very similar to the underground cell, but placed above ground. The entrances are by low passages on the level of the ground.

Opposite the underground cell is the only remaining carved stone which we could find, although in the burial-yard there are some stones

* A representation of these, from a photograph taken by Rev. J. B. Mackenzie, is given in *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, p. 98.

carved with rude crosses. Macculloch, in his *Western Islands* (1819), states that the votive crosses and carved stones on this island were more numerous than those on the Shiant Isles and St Cormac's Island, but if this was so they must have been removed. The boatman who accompanied us stated that, to his knowledge, four carved stones had existed.

Close to the carved stone are the well preserved walls of a chapel. The present tenant of the grazing appears to use this building as a sheep-fank.

To the west of the chapel there is an erection, stated in the maps to be a sheepfold, but in our opinion it originally formed part of the ecclesiastical buildings.

There are two burial-grounds, the upper of which contains the remains of two small circular cells, and the foundations of a square building. It is in this enclosure that the rudely carved crosses were noticed.

Further to the west, and on higher ground, there is a grave within a rude enclosure. There are head and foot stones, the easternmost of which has a rude carved cross. Tradition affirms that this is the grave of the mother of Saint Columba. Dr Reeves and Dr Skene have identified these remains with the Monastery of Hinba, established by Saint Columba, under the superintendence of his uncle Ernan (Adamnan's *Life of St Columba*, [Scottish Historians Series], p. 318).

In presenting these notes to the Society, I beg to acknowledge my indebtedness to Dr Patrick Gillies of Easdale, on whose local knowledge I have largely drawn. Dr Kennedy Melville of Edinburgh also assisted me greatly during our visit to the Garbheilach Islands, and I desire to record his services.