

II.

NOTICES OF THREE STONE FORTS IN KINTYRE. By
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The fort marked on the Ordnance Survey Map at Sròn Uamha, and which a local shepherd tells me was known as Rhu Varkie or Mharkie, is

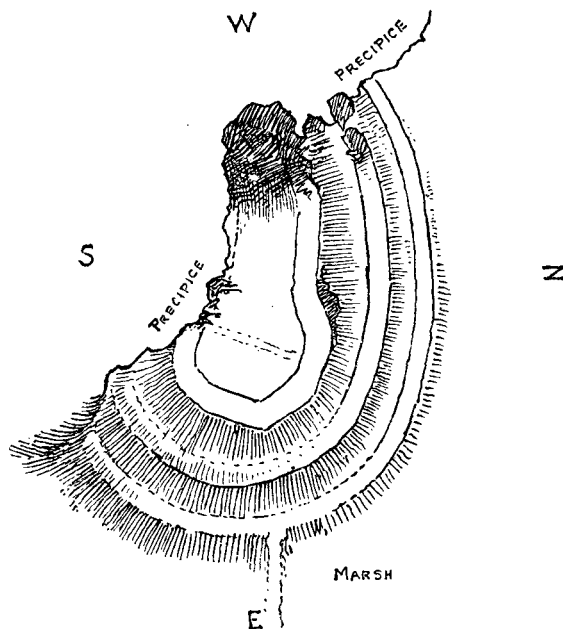


Fig. 1. Ground Plan of the Fort, Rhu Varkie, at Sròn Uamha, Kintyre.

situated on a prominent rock on the hill side about 400 feet above sea level and close to the most southern point in Kintyre. It commands a magnificent prospect of the sea, with the coasts of Ireland and the island of Rathlin as well as the coast of Ayrshire, Ailsa Craig and Sanda.

The natural situation is strong, although it is overlooked by higher ground. On two sides (as shown in the ground plan, fig. 1) the fort is

protected by a precipice and very steep ground falling to the sea, and on the other sides, viz., east and north (figs. 2 and 3), there are three



Fig. 2. Rhu Varkie from the East, showing the three walls.

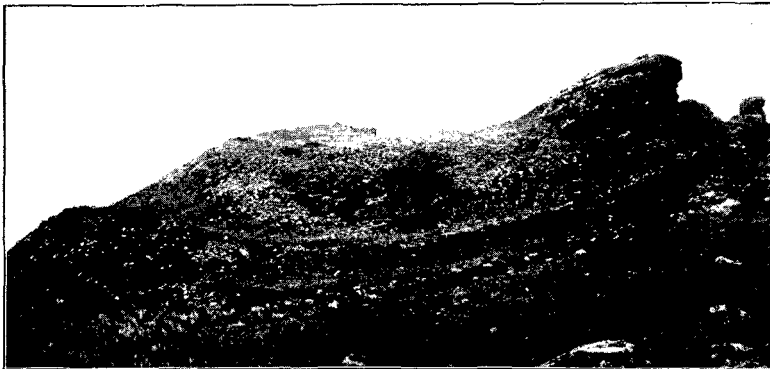


Fig. 3. Rhu Varkie from the North, showing walls.

strong dry stone walls. The inner wall encloses an irregular space of from 30 to 45 feet wide by about 80 feet long; at the west end of this enclosure the rock rises to a prominent summit, and on the east the

ground descends in a terraced slope. The inner wall is from 9 to 12 feet in thickness and stands upon a higher level than the others. It is about 150 feet long from the high rock round to the precipice. The space between it and the middle wall varies from 15 feet to about 25 feet. The middle wall is 6 feet thick, and a considerable part of it still stands, to a height of nearly 6 feet. It measures from end to end

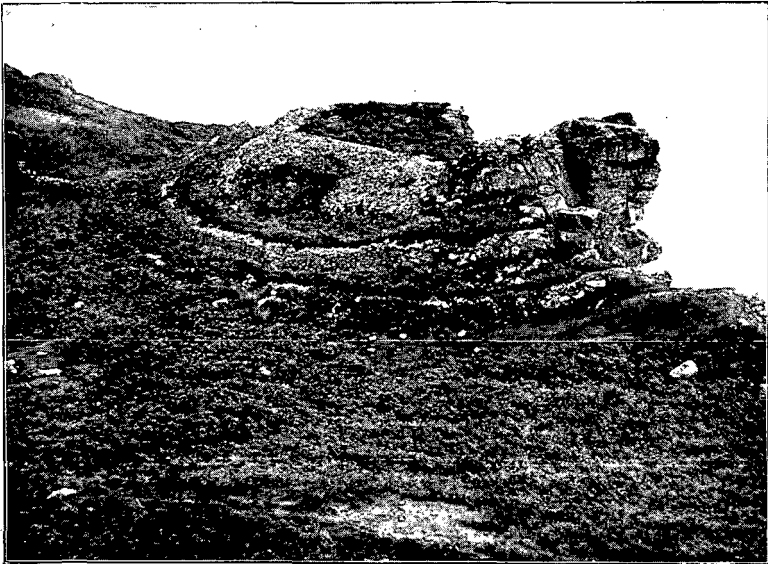


Fig. 4.—Rhu Varkie, from the North-West, showing relative position and height of the walls.

along the outer side 315 feet; between it and the outer wall there is a space of about 10 feet. The outer wall, which is on a lower level, has been built of rather larger stones. It is 5 feet thick, and is well defined, although more broken down. At the eastern end of the structure the ground slopes in such a way that the walls appear as terraces round to the edge of the precipice, the spaces between them being filled in with debris and forming one continuous slope. There

is no trace of any doorway, but the entrance may have been at the end of the wall overlooking the precipice. In the inner enclosed space there are traces of foundations chiefly at the eastern end, also remains of a parapet wall. The photographs (figs. 4 and 5) show the general appearance of the fort, and also the character of the masonry.

There is a smaller structure within sight of this one, and about a



Fig. 5.—Rhu Varkie, showing masonry of the middle and exterior walls.

quarter of a mile to the east ; it is nearly circular, being about 50 by 45 feet over all, and 150 feet in circumference outside measurement. The wall is 5 to 6 feet in thickness, the outer facing stones of which are clear, but the inner face is not well defined. The doorway appears to have been on the north side looking to the hill. This situation is not one of any particular strength ; it is overlooked by higher ground, and does not command such an extensive view as the larger fort. The coast in the neighbourhood of these forts is very rough and steep,

and there are no places near where boats could find harbour or shelter.

I also visited the west side of the Mull and saw there the forts marked on the Ordnance Survey Map. I send a photograph (fig. 6) of one situated about 2 miles north of the lighthouse, near to an old homestead known as Inian Dounan. It is on a naturally strong position near the sea, strengthened by stone walls; little of these are left, and only the foundations can be traced.

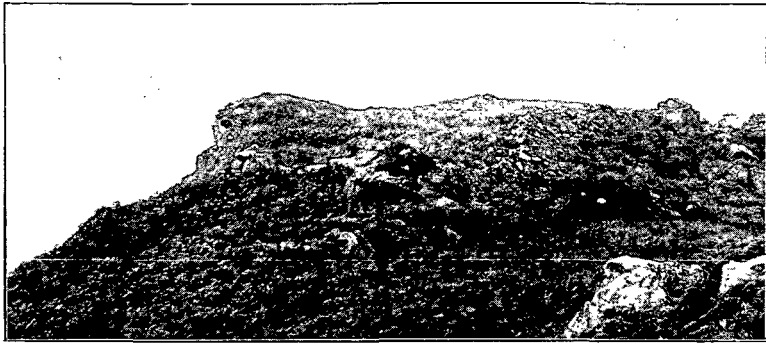


Fig. 6. Fort near Inian Dounan.

There is another ancient structure further north on the point named Rudh' a' Mharaiche on the map, a photograph of which (fig. 7) I also send. It is very ruinous and is buried in its own debris; outside of the larger mound there are three small circular foundations. This structure is about 400 feet above the sea and commands an extensive view. It is near to the ruins of another old place called Inian Beach. The steep hillsides forming the coasts of the Moile are green and afford good grazing, and although now deserted there are many ruins of old clachans where the earlier highland population found a meagre subsistence, and where in the smuggling days they carried on their operations without much fear of the cuttersman. On some future occasion I hope to examine more of the old forts in Kintyre.



Fig. 7. --Fort on Rudh' a' Mharaiche, with circular foundation in the hollow to the right.