

I.

NOTE UPON CARN NAN BHARRAICH, OR CAIRN OF THE MEN OF BARRA, A BURIAL MOUND OF THE VIKING TIME ON THE ISLAND OF ORONSAY, ARGYLLSHIRE, WITH AN OUTLINE OF THE POLITICAL HISTORY OF THE WESTERN ISLES DURING THE LATTER HALF OF THE NINTH CENTURY. BY SYMINGTON GRIEVE, F.S.A. Scot.

In August 1881, while I was carrying on the excavations at Caisteal nan Gillean, Oronsay, the late Sir John Carstairs M'Neill, V.C., Proprietor of Colonsay and Oronsay, came to see how the work was proceeding. In answer to his inquiries I mentioned to him several other places upon the islands which might be worth investigating. One of these was a mound quite near, which seemed to differ from the others, which were all known by the name of Sithean (pronounced Shean). The particular mound was known to the natives by the name of Carn nan Bharraich, or the Cairn of the Men of Barra. Sir John inquired of me if I could give any explanation of the name, and I told him I could not, but I suggested it might be the remains of a large cairn erected to mark the spot where some Barra men were buried, judging from the local name.

I have no doubt that from that time Sir John kept his eye upon the mound, but it was not until nearly ten years had elapsed that any excavations took place. I have been told that early in 1891 Sir Malcolm M'Neill, who was then resident in Colonsay, again drew the attention of his brother, Sir John Carstairs N'Neill, V.C., to Carn nan Bharraich. This resulted in an examination of the mound being begun on 15th April 1891, as related by Sir Malcolm M'Neill in the *Proceedings* of this Society, 11th May 1891 (vol. xxv. p. 432).

The discoveries were important, and one of the brooches found

unique. The articles are now in the National Museum of Antiquities, and the collection consists of nine objects, undoubtedly belonging to the Viking period, and two others which may have found their way into the mound by chance. The following is a list :—

Carn nan Bharraich, containing :—

1. Oblong Brooch, 3 inches in length by $\frac{5}{8}$ -inch in breadth. It is of bronze, and unique.
2. Portion of a Bronze Penannular Brooch of Celtic form, $1\frac{3}{4}$ inches in diameter.
3. Portion of a small oval Bronze Ring, $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch in diameter.
4. Bead of Serpentine, a naturally formed and flattened ovoid pebble, 1 inch in greatest length, $\frac{7}{8}$ -inch in breadth, and $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in thickness, with a small hole for suspension perforated through the centre.
5. Bead of Amber of dark red colour, $1\frac{1}{8}$ inches in diameter, the perforation being fully $\frac{1}{2}$ -inch in diameter.
6. Iron Knife-Blade, 7 inches in total length.
7. Six portions of thin Bronze, much corrugated, as if by the action of fire.
8. A quantity of Iron Rivets or Clinker Nails, varying from $1\frac{1}{4}$ inches to about 1 inch in the length of the shank.
9. Stone Sinkers, an irregularly, wedge-shaped pebble of steatite. It measures $4\frac{1}{2}$ inches in greatest length, by $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches in breadth, and $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches in thickness.
10. Small Finial of Turned Bone, resembling the finials on the whalebone ribs of an old umbrella. May have been a recent introduction to the mound, but uncertain.
11. Two Flint Chips. May have no connection with the Viking burial.

The excavations at a depth of 4 feet below the surface exposed two skeletons at full length with the feet pointing about S.S.E. They seemed to be the remains of a male and female, and, from the objects associated with their burial, were judged to have been persons of importance. From the rivets found, and the thin portions of bronze appearing to have been subjected to fire, they had evidently had a boat burial, of which there has been more than one discovered in Colonsay and Islay.

The excavations carried on by Sir John Carstairs M'Neill, V.C., on 17th April 1891 consisted of the cutting of two trenches down to what seemed the true ground level. The first of these passed through

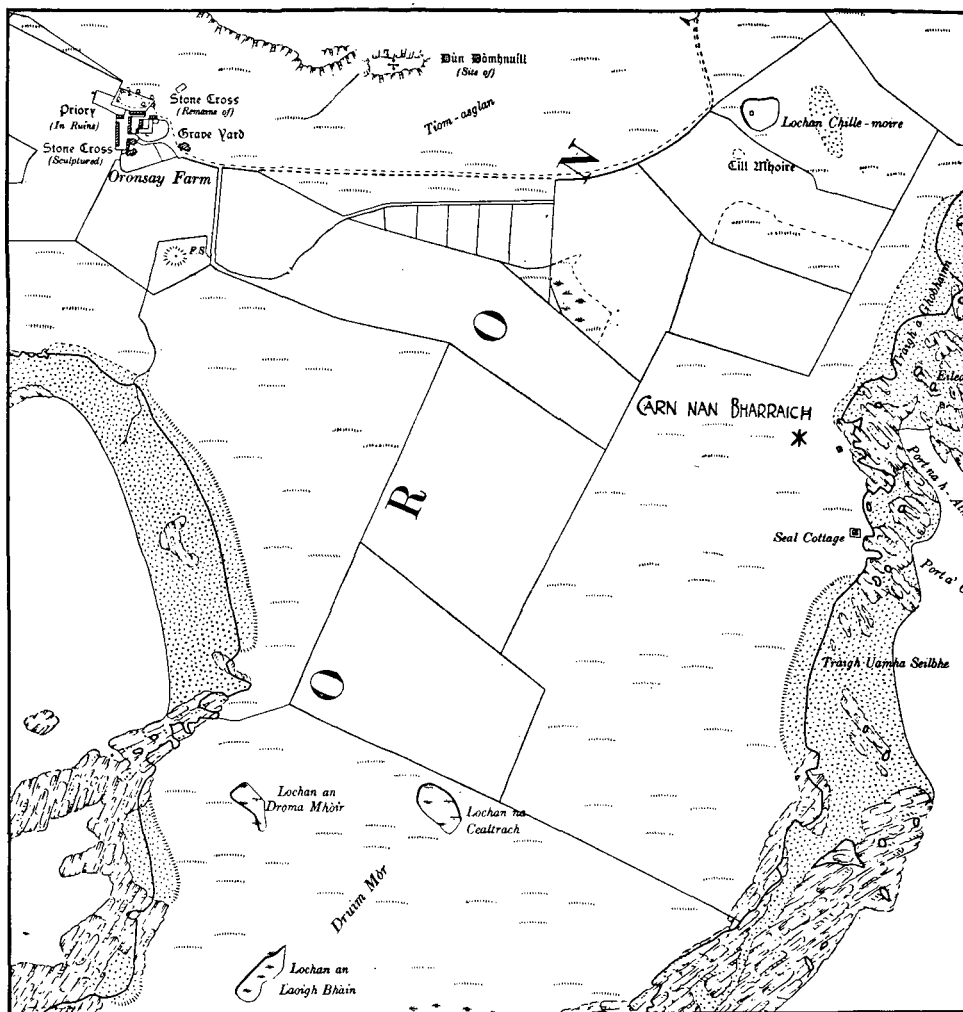


Fig. 1. Showing position of Carn nan Bharrach, from Ordnance Map of Oronsay.

clean sand and was unproductive, but the second exposed the two skeletons. On the following day a third trench was dug, which passed through a considerable amount of charcoal containing boat rivets, some pieces of bronze, and a stone sinker. Although Sir Malcolm M'Neill in his paper does not mention it, I guess from a remark he makes that the trenches were begun at the west side of the mound and cut in an easterly direction right through the summit, the third trench not having been continued beyond the centre of the mound. The south and north portions of Carn nan Bharraich thus escaped examination. They are still to a large extent unexplored, and it is quite possible that other discoveries than those I have now to record may yet be made.

On the 23rd May 1913 Mr Neil (Ban) M'Neill, the farmer on Oronsay, was passing Carn nan Bharraich, when he observed a skull, partly exposed, lying in the sand. The skull was reclining with its frontal aspect towards the east and its crown towards the south, the upper portion of the left side being exposed. Mr M'Neill began prodding the sand with his walking-stick, and immediately brought to the surface the two brooches and the pin, and the bone object with a hole through it which may be a whistle or an ornament of some kind. If it had been made out of solid bone it might have served the purpose of a Japanese Netsuke, but its being made out of a bird bone makes this doubtful.

I happened to arrive in Colonsay the day of this discovery, and in a day or two afterwards I heard that a find had taken place on Oronsay. I immediately went over and saw Mr M'Neill, who was kind enough to exhibit what he had found, and offered to present one of the brooches to me. Knowing the interest attached to the various objects, I suggested he should allow me to hand over the collection to this Society for the National Museum, if I could arrange that they would be permanently placed on public exhibition. To these conditions the finder agreed, and I told him I would like to visit the ground

where the discovery was made, and make a more careful examination along with himself.

As a friend had arrived at Colonsay with his yacht, we sailed to Oronsay on the 6th June, and, having called on Mr M'Neill, he went with us to the mound, taking a spade to do a little digging. Mr M'Neill had reinterred the skull at the place where he found it, so we began digging there. We at once saw from the original position of the skull and the place shown to us where the brooches and pin were found, that, if it had remained undisturbed since its original burial, the body must have been placed lying with the head to the south and the feet to the north. We found the area that had been excavated in 1891 still bare sand, intermixed with broken slabs of stone. The wind had blown out the sand so as to form a hollow from 12 to 15 inches in depth, and at the sides of this circular area the wind had gradually blown away the thin coating of turf all round the space originally excavated, forming arms or projections of sand into the existing grass land. The bare sand in these projections was about 12 inches below the grassy surface adjoining. The whole appearance of the central portion of the Carn nan Bharraich is now that of a star-shaped area of sand cut out of the turf, as shown in the sketch plan (fig. 2), on which the inner circle shows the portion of the carn examined by Sir John Carstairs M'Neill, V.C., in 1891. The outer circle marks approximately the extent of the whole carn. The area between the two circles shows, in white, the spaces from which the turf has been broken away. The dark spaces show where the grass is still growing. The upper portion of a skeleton shown in the south-eastern part of the sketch plan indicates the position of that found in May 1913 by Mr Neil (Ban) M'Neill, farmer on Oronsay. X marks where the brooches, pin, and other objects were found, 23rd May 1913. Xs shows the place where the shears were found, 6th June 1913. F stands for female, and M stands for male. The scale of the plan is about one-eighth of an inch to a foot.

From what is to be seen at present it is difficult to say exactly what has been the diameter of the mound originally, but I think it was probably from 35 to 40 feet.

Digging northwards from the skull we found some of the bones of the upper part of the trunk, and also of the arms, and, on the right side

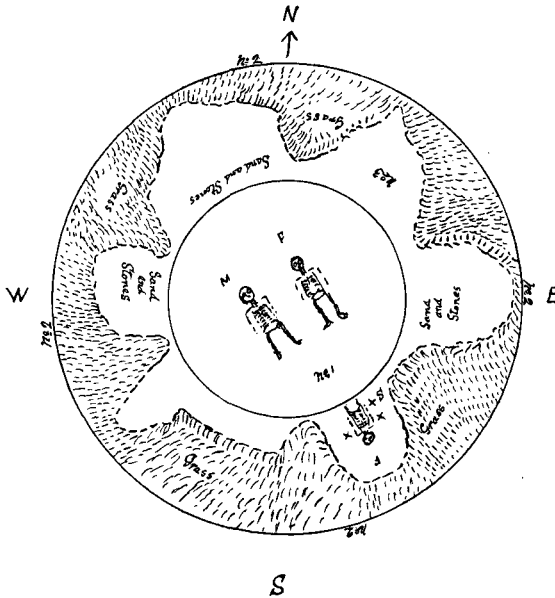


Fig. 2. Sketch Plan of Carn nan Bharraich, Oronsay.

of the skeleton, the iron shears, which are of special interest in connection with this discovery. As far as I have been able to ascertain, it is the first instance of such an implement having been found in Scotland in connection with a Viking burial. In Norway, however, similar shears have occurred in connection with burials of the same kind.

Having found the upper part of the skeleton, our excavations

failed to discover the lower portion; and the only conclusion we could come to was that as that portion of the body would be lying in the area excavated in 1891, it must have been unsuspectedly removed at that time.

It may be that the bones found by Sir John Carstairs M'Neill, V.C., and identified as those of a female, belong to the body recently discovered, which, from the articles associated with it, seems to have been that of a woman, and in all probability a person of position. The skull seemed to be unusually large for one of the gentler sex, and, judging from the size of the other bones, must have belonged to a person with a head rather out of proportion to the rest of the body. The upper part of the skull, although in good condition, showed no visible sutures, which appeared rather remarkable, but may perhaps indicate a person of considerable age. The teeth were in good condition, but well worn, as if the possessor had lived on gritty or nitrogenous food, and the impression given me was that they had belonged to someone who was beyond middle life. After examination I carefully reinterred the remains at the place at which they were found.

The objects that were associated with the burial are of considerable artistic merit, and to some extent unique. Mr James Curle has kindly described these in the paper following this, so I need say nothing more upon that branch of the subject, except that the brooches belong to an early period—probably the eighth or ninth century. They have been well worn, as the state of some of the ornamentation indicates, and they are probably objects that have decorated the females of more than one generation. So it is pretty certain this burial took place in the latter half of the ninth century, or perhaps the beginning of the century following.

There is, however, a good deal of interest attached to the consideration of the period to which they probably belong, as it was a time of much warfare and trouble in Scotland, Ireland, and adjacent Isles.

The political position was peculiar, and it is difficult to untangle the causes that led to the national complications that arose at that time.

It was probably between the years 830 and 930 A.D. that the persons who were interred at Carn nan Bharraich died.

The burial of persons wearing pagan ornaments, on Oronsay, which had for at least between one and two centuries prior to this time been a sanctuary of the early Celtic Church, is worthy of notice. The mound is situated some distance from the Christian Cemetery, but is within the sanctuary. The question naturally arises, were the persons buried in the mound converts to Christianity who still adhered to some of their heathen customs, as so many of the Norsemen did at that time of religious transition? Or was the power of the Christian community on Oronsay so weak as to be unable to prevent a pagan burial taking place within the bounds of its sanctuary?

An outstanding figure at that period was King Harald Fairhair of Norway. There is an interesting story regarding the way in which he got his name. He made a visit to Earl Rognwald of More, whether as a welcome or unwelcome guest is not clear, but in any case the Earl is said to have combed, and afterwards cut King Harald's hair. For some reason, which may have been that he had taken a vow, it had not been cut previously for ten years, and his appearance had become so uncouth that he was called Shockhead. The Earl was so surprised at the abundance and beauty of the King's hair, and the change that its removal made upon his appearance, that he gave him the name of Fairhair, by which he was ever afterwards known.

The chronology of the Icelandic sagas is contradictory as to the date at which King Harald Fairhair invaded the Western Isles, but it is probable the correct period is 852-853, or very near that time. We can with some assurance arrive at this opinion from what we know of other events that took place in the latter half of the ninth century.

One account says it was about the year 880 that King Harald

Fairhair first took measures to punish and bring into subjection the Vikings and others who had fled from Norway and taken refuge in the Western Isles of Scotland, but this date is evidently a mistake.

Some of these men had been outlawed owing to the raids they had made upon the territory of King Harald in Norway. Others were chiefs and men who had possessed extensive lands in their own country, and who, when they refused to become subject to the rule of Harald, had to flee abroad. Having made homes for themselves in the Isles and built strongholds, they made these the base of their operations.

Each summer they raided the coasts of the land of their birth, generally trying to punish those who had been placed to manage their lands for King Harald. It became, therefore, necessary to protect his Norwegian subjects, and to do so, the recalcitrant chiefs and Vikings had to be brought under his authority. There are several accounts of how this was accomplished, but the version that has hitherto been generally accepted is as follows:—

About the year 880 King Harald Fairhair sent one of his chiefs named Ketil Flatneb or Flatnose as his lieutenant to the Western Isles. With ships and men and ample resources supplied by Harald, Ketil Flatneb was successful in his mission, and soon conquered the Hebrides. He probably made Colonsay his centre of government, and, having established himself securely, as he thought, threw off his allegiance to King Harald, and declared himself King of the Isles. When the news of this event reached Norway, Harald made up his mind that he would visit the Hebrides himself the following summer, and bring the islanders under subjection. Starting upon his expedition, he went south through the Isles, conquering everywhere, and sailed as far south as Anglesea and Man. Returning to Norway, he spent the winter, but the following summer he appears to have returned once more to the Western Isles, where, we are told, he "rooted out the Vikings of the West." At this time there appears to have been an influx of settlers to the Isles from Norway, who were

men who held views in accordance with those of King Harald, and who had become accustomed to his supreme authority and were loyal in their allegiance.

If we accept this story, it is evident some reconciliation must have taken place between King Harald and King Ketil Flatneb, as the latter seems to have continued to rule in the Isles, probably agreeing to pay scat or tribute to the King of Norway.

The late Sir George Webbe Dasent, D.C.L., accepted this version of the story in his Introduction to the *Saga of Burnt Njal*. There is, however, a difficulty which is not explained, and that is, how did the reconciliation come about with King Harald by which King Ketil Flatneb was allowed to continue his rule in the Western Isles? From what we know of the history of the doings of King Harald, it seems most unlikely that he would forgive King Ketil Flatneb for breaking his allegiance and refusing to pay tribute.

The version of these events, as told in the *Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason*, Northern Library, vol. i. pp. 166-167, seems more likely to be correct, as there it is narrated that King Harald Fairhair, having gone more than one expedition to the Western Isles of Scotland, "rooting out the Vikings and outlaws wherever he went," returned home to Norway. He then sent Ketil Flatneb, who was unwilling to go, to rule over the Isles for him, giving him ample supplies of men and ships.

Ketil soon brought the islands under subjection, and then, some time later, throwing off his allegiance to King Harald Fairhair, he declared himself King of the Isles. He appears after this to have reigned and exercised his authority in the Hebrides without question until his death, and no mention is made of any attack upon him by King Harald.

The seat of his rule was most likely on Colonsay, as for centuries previous to that time that island had been the place from which, during the rule of the Celtic kings and chiefs, who were the pro-

genitors of the lords of the Isles, the government had been carried on of the Southern Isles. We have also good reason to believe that, for at least one period, the north of Ireland was governed from Colonsay, and possibly at other times parts of the mainland of the west of Scotland.

When Ketil Flatneb sailed from Norway he must have been a man approaching fifty years of age. He took with him his wife Ynghild, his grown-up son Helgi Biola, and his daughters Aud the deep-minded, and Thorun Horn. He left behind him, in charge of his Norwegian estates, his eldest son Biorn, who later became known as Biorn the Easterling, from his adhering to the pagan faith.

Ketil and his family all became Christians and were baptised in the West, with the exception of Biorn. When Biorn arrived in the Isles, after having to flee from Norway, he found his father, King Ketil, dead, and his brother and sisters Christians. This made him sad and sorry, as he regretted their change of religion.

He stayed with his sister Aud, and her son Thorstein, for two winters. He then sailed to Iceland, where he took up land at Breidafirth, and dwelt at Biarnarhaven. When he died he was buried at Borgarbrook in a cairn according to heathen custom (see the *Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason*, Northern Library, vol. i. p. 167; also the *Story of the Ere Dwellers (Eyrbyggia Saga)*, p. 10).

Ketil formed an alliance with Amlaf (otherwise known as Olaf the White), King of Dublin, and gave him in marriage his famous daughter Aud, the deeply wealthy, or some say the translation should read "deeply minded." The issue of this marriage was Thorstein the Red, whom, as her only child, Aud dearly loved. He, as far as we know, must have been brought up in Dublin, where he and his mother remained until about the time of his father's death. When that event happened, Aud and her son fled to the Sudreys, or Southern Hebrides, where they would be under the protection of Ketil Flatneb. There is little doubt they went to Colonsay. Thorstein married

Thurid, the daughter of Eywind, surnamed East-man. She was the sister of Helgi the Lean, who married Thorun Horn, Ketil Flatneb's daughter, and aunt of Thorstein.

Thorstein and Thurid had one son and five daughters. The son was named Olaf Feilan and was the youngest of the children. The names of Thorstein's daughters were Groa, Osk or Olivi, Thorhild, Thorgerd, and Wigdis.

Thorstein became a warrior king, and undertook a joint expedition with Earl Sigurd the Great, son of Eystein Rattle. Their victorious army conquered Caithness, Sutherland, Ross, Moray, and more than half Scotland, over which Thorstein ruled for one year.

After his father King Amlaf lost his life in battle in Ireland (see *Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason*, p. 167), his widow Aud went with her son, and was with him during his invasion and reign in Scotland, and from that time onwards devoted herself to the upbringing of his family. We do not know whether Thorstein had become a widower by this time, but, when he was killed and his followers dispersed, Aud hid herself and her grandchildren in a wood. There, under her direction, a few of her late son's followers cut down timber and built a merchant ship in which they all escaped to Orkney. From there they got a vessel to take them to the Southern Isles, and there seems little doubt they took up their abode once more in Colonsay.

There they lived for some years, but the Celtic element in the population beginning to assert its ascendancy, Aud determined about 892, or more likely some years later, to sail for Iceland, where her two brothers had already settled. The account given in the *Saga of King Olaf Tryggwason*, Northern Library, vol. i. p. 168, says that Aud and her grandchildren went direct from Orkney to Iceland, visiting the Faroe Isles on the way, and spent some time there. The probability, however, seems to be that Aud, after leaving Orkney, returned to the Sudreys for a time.

The Laxdale saga says, Aud (whose name is given as Unn in mistake)

went to Iceland in the year 895 A.D. It was probably in the early summer of that year she left the Sudreys, as we know Aud arrived in Iceland at the beginning of winter, where her ship was wrecked. Aud had called at Orkney on the way north, where she gave away her granddaughter Groa in marriage. She also broke her voyage at the Faroes, where Olof or Ost, another of her granddaughters, was married, so there would be some delay in reaching the shores of Iceland.

The impression made on Norse history by Aud was very great, as references to her occur in so many of the sagas. She was a grand old dame who tenderly looked after the best interests of her grandchildren, as became a good Christian. She lived in troublous times, when the life of no man or woman was secure, but she piloted her ship through all the shoals of life, and, when the end came, she died when her descendants and pagan relatives had assembled for the feast at the marriage of her grandson and heir, Olaf Feilan. She died as she had lived, a Christian, and no dry land in pagan and unconsecrated Iceland was good enough for her burial. She left instructions that her body was to be interred below high-water mark upon the shore, and her wishes were carried out.

Aud had settled at Hvammsfirth in Iceland, and called her estate Hvamm. She probably died during the years 915-920 A.D., although the author of the *Saga of Burnt Njal*, in the Introduction, suggests the period 908-910 as the time of the death of Aud; but that date seems too early to fit in with the correct chronology.

That Aud was intimately acquainted with the leading people of Barra is evident, for when her grandson Olaf Feilan, son of Thorstein the Red, consulted her as to whom he should marry, she told him to obtain Aldis, a Barra woman, the daughter of Konal, son of Steinmod, son of Olivi child's-friend. This marriage took place, as I have mentioned, about the period 915-920 A.D. The *Landnamabok* also takes notice of this event, Book ii., chap. xv., *Origines Islandices*,

vol. i. p. 83. It says, "Anlaf-feilan, son of Thor-stan the Red, married in Iceland Al-dis the Barry woman (Barra in the Hebrides). She was the daughter of Conal, the son of Stan-mod, the son of Aulive Bairn-Carle. The children of An-laf and Al-dis were Thor-gelle and Thora. Thor-gelle married Hrodny, the daughter of Mid-frith Sceg. They had a son Ey-wolf the Grey. He married and had a son, Thor-Kell, who was great-grandfather to Ari the historian."

The date at which Ketil first went to the Sudreys as viceroy is more likely to have been about 855, instead of 880, as we know that Aud was unmarried when her father went to the West. It was probably early in the period when he established himself as viceroy in the Isles that Ketil gave his daughter Aud to Amlaf, King of Dublin, in marriage. We know that intimate relations were maintained between Aud and her relatives in the Southern Isles; also that her son Thorstein the Red married the sister of his uncle by marriage, namely Helgi the Lean, and that there were five daughters and one son by this marriage. Also that the eldest of Thorstein's daughters was married in Orkney not very long after her father was slain at Oykel, on the boundary between Ross and Sutherland, that date being about the year 891. It seems more than probable from these facts that Icelandic chronology in this instance is not quite correct. It is also probable that it was only towards the end of his life that Ketil Flatneb declared himself King of the Isles and threw off his allegiance to King Harald Fairhair, and it is quite likely the date 880 is not far wrong as regards this event. There is little doubt that it was not long after Ketil declared his independence that King Harald seized his estates in Norway and compelled Ketil's eldest son Biorn the Easterling to take to flight. It took him about a year to reach Colonsay, when he found his father had died (see the *Saga of the Ere Dwellers*, chap. v. p. 10).

When we examine this evidence by comparison with statements from Celtic sources of information, we find that Amlaf, who was also

known as Olaf the White, became King of Dublin in 852. The annals of Ulster tell us that in 856 there was a great war between the Gentiles and Maelsechnaill, along with the Gallgaidhel of Munster. In the year following (857), a victory is recorded by Imair and Amlaiph, otherwise Olaf the White, against Caittel Finn with the Gallgaidhel—that is, against Ketil Flatneb and the Scotch and Irish Vikings he had brought under his authority. It may have been upon the conclusion of peace after this defeat that Aud, the daughter of Ketil, was given in marriage to Amlaf to cement friendship between the chiefs. But Aud was not the only wife of Amlaf, as he also married a daughter of Kenneth MacAlpin, the Pictish King of Scotland, as mentioned in *The Fragments of Irish Annals*, p. 172; *Chron. of Picts and Scots*, p. 405. Kenneth began to reign in 832, and died in 860. It may have been over the Pictish succession that war ensued, as we find that in 866 Amlaebh and Imar went to Fortrenn with the Galls of Erin and Alban, and ravaged all Cruithentuath, and carried off hostages. In other words, invaded Scotland as far as Forfarshire, taking hostages.

Out of this circumstance trouble evidently arose, as it was against the Picts that Thorstein directed his attacks when he invaded the north of Scotland and conquered the northern portion of the country. The Picts, having been defeated, and no doubt fearing further losses, were glad to make peace with Thorstein, thereby getting time to intrigue and bring about his murder. It was during the campaign just mentioned that Earl Siguard killed Maelbrigd and cut off his head, hanging it to the crupper of his saddle. Maelbrigd had a projecting tooth, which scratched the leg of Sigurd as he rode along. The wound was poisoned from the tooth, and Sigurd died. He was buried at Ekkialsbakki, at the estuary of the river Oykel, where he was hoylaid, that is, buried in a how, named Siwardhoch or Siward's How, now known as Cyder Hall, *Orkneyinga Saga* (1873), Intro., xxiii.

We do not know the exact date of the death of Amlaf. The annals

of Ulster mention him as alive in 871, as in that year Amlaiph and Imhar returned from Alban with two hundred ships and a great body of men—Angles, Britons, and Picts—in captivity. This is the last notice I have been able to find regarding Amlaiph, and he was probably killed shortly after this time.

According to the Pictish chronicle, Thorstein the Red, son of Amlaiph, is said to have ruled over the northern half of Scotland for only one year, and the annals of Ulster state that in 875 he was treacherously slain by the people of Alban. That this date is a mistake seems probable, as, if correct, we would have to antedate the marriage of Amlaf to Aud by some years.

Besides, if we are correct in supposing Thorstein to have been born about 858, it seems impossible he could have died, the father of six of a family by one wife, in 875. We know from other sources that these warrior kings sometimes began their careers when mere boys, and the wonder is that even high birth inspired their followers with confidence in them.

It is, however, more likely that 891, the date given in the saga, is about the correct year of the death of Thorstein, and that in this instance the annals of Ulster are wrong.

When we return to a consideration of the causes which created the trouble that led to the attacks of King Amlaf and his son Thorstein upon the Pictish kings of Scotland, we find that it was probably in connection with the succession to the throne. Kenneth MacAlpin was Scottish by his father's side, but his mother was a Pict, and there is no doubt that as the succession among the Picts was on the female side, King Amlaf, on the death of Kenneth MacAlpin, believed he had certain rights in the succession, through his wife, the daughter of Kenneth. This rule of succession was directly opposed to that which prevailed among the Scots, who followed the laws of tanistry; and we are aware that as soon as the Scots got possession of the Pictish kingdom, they made every effort that the law of tanistry should prevail.

It was this conflict in the views regarding the succession which probably led to the invasions of Scotland by Amlaf and later by his son Thorstein.

Kenneth MacAlpin began to reign in 832, and died 860 A.D. He was succeeded by his brother Donald MacAlpin, who reigned about four years, dying about 864. Constantine, the son of Kenneth, now came to the throne and ruled for fourteen years—others say sixteen years. It was in 866 and 867 that Amlaf, King of Dublin, raided Pictavia, at which time Constantine was king. He was succeeded by his brother Aedh or Hugh, who had reigned only one year, when he was killed by his own people. These four kings were all Scots by race, but in the Irish annals are termed *Reges Pictorum*.

This succession to the Pictish throne was contrary to the Pictish regulation as to females succeeding. The people therefore made Eocha, son of Run the King of the Strathclyde Britons, king, as his mother was a daughter of Kenneth MacAlpin. They also associated with him Grig, or, as the Irish called him, Ciric, son of Donald or Dungal, the king who succeeded his brother Kenneth MacAlpin. It was probably at this period, when some dispute had arisen about the succession, that Thorstein made claim to become King of the Picts by his supposed rights through his father Amlaf, who had a daughter of Kenneth MacAlpin as one of his wives.

We are informed in the *Saga of Olaf Tryggwason*, p. 165, that Orlyg, the son of Rapp, brother of King Ketil Flatneb, was brought up in the Sudreys or Southern Hebrides as foster son of Bishop Patrick. Orlyg pled with Patrick to supply him with a plenarium and the necessary consecrated articles of equipment, and also wood with which he could build and furnish a church, which he proposed to erect in Iceland. After some delay, and on making certain promises to the Bishop, Orlyg went to Iceland and built his church.

The followers of these Norse chiefs seem to have been mostly of that mixed race named the Gallgaidhel. They, like most other mixed

racés, appear to have developed the worst qualities of each, and, wherever they went, were feared for the outrages and cruelties they perpetrated upon those that they attacked. They seem to have been fearless, but proved terrible and remorseless foes.

When the so-called Celtic element in later times became paramount, they had a large strain of Norse blood in their veins, and their chiefs were sometimes, as in the case of Somerled, as much Norse as Celtic. Possibly by that time some of the more vicious principles in their natures had become toned down, but we know it did not take much to arouse their violent passions, and that they engaged in internecine war.

On the night of the Epiphany, 1156 A.D., a great sea fight took place off Oronsay between Godred, King of the Northern Hebrides (which included Barra), and who was at the same time King of the Isle of Man, and Somerled, who was his brother-in-law, and was Thane of Argyll.

Somerled was living, in all probability, at Dun Evan, Colonsay, at this time, and had a fleet of eighty ships. The "outlook" on Cnoc na faire, Scalasaig, would announce the appearance of Godred's expected fleet. As soon as night fell, Somerled, with his ships, sailed out from Loch Staosonaig and Scalasaig Bay, and, steering south, met Godred's fleet when between Isla and Oronsay. A fierce fight ensued, in which neither party seems to have obtained much of a victory, but many were killed on both sides. Somerled evidently got the best of the contest, for Godred made a treaty with him, confirming him in the possession of Kintyre and the islands south of the Point of Ardnamurchan.

Many of those killed must have been buried on Oronsay, and, knowing that men from Barra were engaged in this fight, I was at first inclined to think that the cairn had been erected over the bodies of the men from that island. The evidence of the objects recovered, however, all points to a period about three centuries earlier. If the

burial had been that of warriors who were on a purely fighting expedition, it seems unlikely that any female remains would be found associated with such an interment.

Before and also long after the ninth and tenth centuries, Barra appears to have been the centre from which the islands north of the Point of Ardnamurchan were ruled; while Colonsay occupied the same position in connection with the Hebridean Islands south of Ardnamurchan—the Isle of Man having at times also an independent administration.

It has even been thought that the Clan Neil of Barra owe their name to a Norwegian named Nicolas, the abbreviation of that name being Neil in the Norse. This was the opinion of Johnstone, the translator of the *Anecdotes of Olave the Black*, as he mentions at p. 28 of his notes.

When the Hebrides and Man were under one rule, as happened in the time of Somerled, and probably both before and after his reign, then Colonsay became the place from which the rulers ruled the whole of the islands from the Butt of Lewis to the Calf of Man, along with certain portions of the adjoining mainland of Scotland.

At other times Barra seems to have been the seat of government in the Northern Isles or Nordereys, while Colonsay was the centre of the administration of the Southern Isles or Sudreys.

At the present time the greater portion of the Colonsay families have the blood of the chiefs of the Clan Neil of Barra in their veins, and claim descent from Iain & Chuain (John of the Ocean), who was a son of the Chief of Barra. He was born while his mother was in a boat on a voyage to Colonsay. A very remarkable and interesting story is told in connection with this event, but it is too long to narrate here.

That there were intimate relations between Colonsay and the people of Barra for many centuries is undoubted, if we are to trust to oral tradition and also notices in the sagas and other sources of

information. Who the persons were who were buried in Carn nan Bharraich, Oronsay, we do not know; but we may feel assured they were persons of importance belonging to Barra, who met their death at Oronsay, that so celebrated were they, either from the circumstances of their deaths or their position in life, that their names were associated with the cairn in which they were buried.

What was the story of their lives may never be known, but that it made a great impression at the time and for generations afterwards seems certain, or the name of the mound in which they were buried would not have been handed down the centuries by oral tradition as Carn nan Bharraich.

PROBABLE APPROXIMATE DATES OF EVENTS MENTIONED
IN THE FOREGOING NOTE.

	A.D.
<i>Kenneth MacAlpin</i> reigns	832 to 860.
<i>Amlaf, King of Dublin</i> , reigns	852 until after 871.
<i>Aud</i> , probably married about	857.
„ became a widow about	873.
„ arrived in Iceland about	898.
„ died between the years	915 and 920.
<i>Ketil Flatneb</i> came to the Isles about	855.
„ „ died King of the Sudreys about	884.
<i>Thorstein the Red</i> , son of <i>Amlaf</i> , King of Dublin, and <i>Aud</i> , daughter of King <i>Ketil Flatneb</i> , was probably born about	858.
<i>Thorstein the Red</i> , married about	879.
„ „ killed about	891.
<i>Groa</i> , eldest daughter of <i>Thorstein the Red</i> , married in Orkney about	897.
<i>Olaf Feilan</i> , son of <i>Thorstein the Red</i> , and his youngest child, married about	915.
<i>Biorn the Easterling</i> , eldest son of King <i>Ketil</i> <i>Flatneb</i> , settles in Iceland after staying two years with his sister <i>Aud</i> and her son <i>Thorstein</i> in the Sudreys	886.