

### III.

#### SOME ANTIQUITIES IN THE PARISH OF CRAIGNISH.

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The spit of land that ends in Craignish Point, the northern "jamb" of the Dorus Mor, is something under seven miles in length by just over two miles in breadth along its base, which is defined by the highway from Oban to Lochgilphead (fig. 1). It divides Loch Craignish from the land-locked waters east of Corrievreckan and Scarba, and is formed for the most part of steep rocky ridges, broken hills, and moorland; only a few summits rise more than 400 feet above sea-level. Most of the lower-lying ground has been improved for farming, though the arable land is interrupted from place to place by crags, gullies, and scrub-wood. The shores are diversified by bays, inlets, and islands, and Loch Craignish in particular, being free of dangerous currents, is convenient for navigation by small craft.

Apart from some short notes by Christison on four of the forts,<sup>1</sup> an account by Childe of a cist-grave,<sup>2</sup> and a brief description of the old part of Craignish Castle,<sup>3</sup> the antiquities of this region have received but little notice. In view, therefore, of their rather large numbers in relation to the size of the area, as well as of the particular interest attaching to some of the forts, it has seemed worth while to make public the following notes on some of the earlier remains, which were compiled in the course of a short

<sup>1</sup> *Early Fortifications in Scotland*, pp. 199, 201, 240; *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xxiii. pp. 417-20.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lxx. p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> Macgibbon and Ross, *Castellated and Domestic Architecture of Scotland*, vol. iii. p. 173.

visit in the summer of 1947. And I wish to acknowledge here the assistance very kindly given me in the field by Mrs Lindsay-MacDougall of Lunga, Mrs Collingwood, and Miss Gordon, and at the drawing-table by Mr C. S. T. Calder, A.R.I.A.S., F.S.A.Scot.

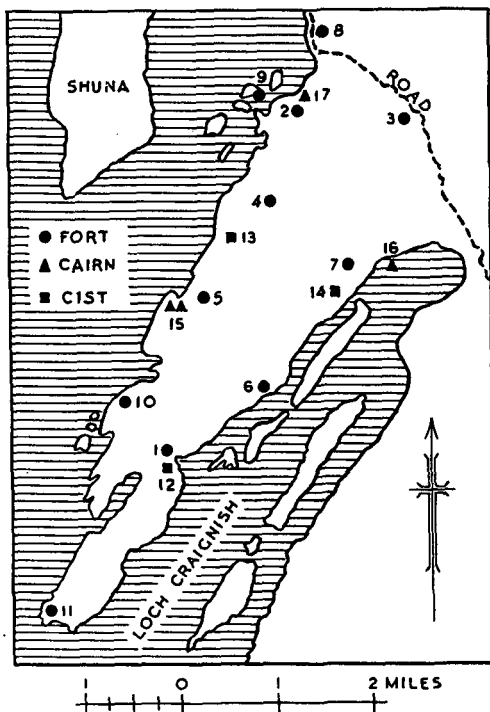


Fig. 1. The Craignish peninsula, showing positions of sites by serial numbers.

### FORTS.

The most notable fort in the peninsula is certainly Dùn Mhuilig (1),<sup>1</sup> a "galleried dùn" which occupies the nose of a rocky bluff and overlooks the meadow at the head of Bàgh Dùn Mhuilig from a height of about 150 feet. The remains, which are much ruined, consist of a building on the nose of the bluff with two walls, now reduced to their foundations, stretching across the neck behind, some 30 and 65 feet respectively from the edge of the debris fallen from the main structure. The inner wall shows an entrance gap 6 feet wide. Of the main building (fig. 2), all that can be seen to-day is the lower part of a massive wall drawn across the neck of

<sup>1</sup> For convenience in locating the monuments, the serial numbers that appear in the text—e.g. in this case ("1")—are shown on the sketch-map of the district reproduced as fig. 1. A list of map-references is given at the end of the paper.

the bluff with an extension, which quickly degenerates into a low mound of debris, curving southwards along the west side. At its southern end this wall seems to have incorporated an outcrop ridge, on the outside of which some facing-stones are still in place. There are no definite signs of

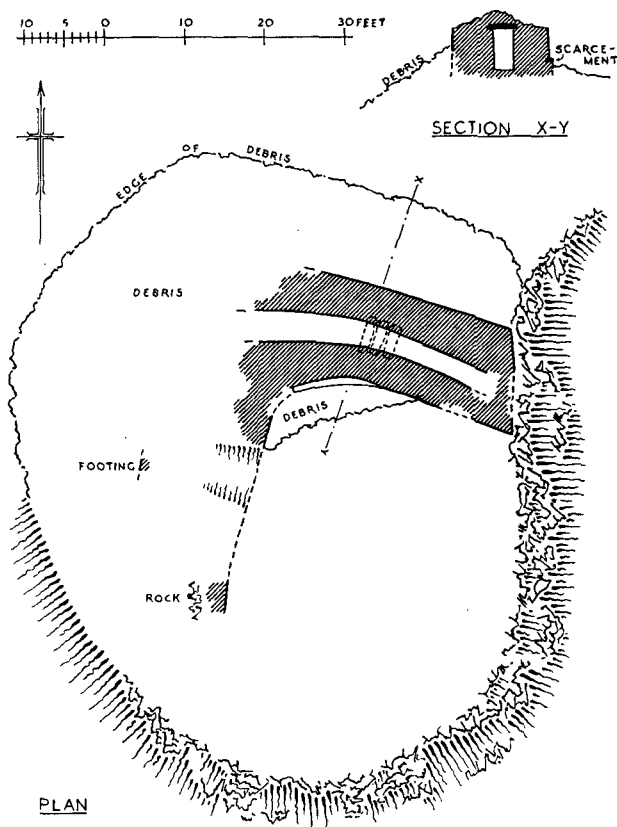


Fig. 2. Dún Mhullig; plan, and section of transverse wall.

fortification along the southern and eastern sides of the site, where the steepness of the slope may have been considered sufficient protection; it is just possible, however, that the circuit may once have been complete and that this part of it may have been removed by landslips. The area at present enclosed by the wall and the lip of the precipice is more or less U-shaped, and measures about 50 feet from north to south by about 30 feet from east to west. No positive traces of the entrance remain, but a depression in the mound of debris on the western side may mark its position.

The massive transverse wall is of great interest, as it contains a mural gallery with three lintels still *in situ* (Pl. X, 1). Its eastern end is finished

to a face along the lip of what is almost a precipice, and with this its northern and southern faces form angles of rather more and rather less than 90 degrees respectively (Pl. X, 2). For a length of 17 feet from the eastern end the wall is about 12 feet thick, but beyond that point the southern face begins to curve south-westwards and then southwards, while the footings of the northern face can be traced on their original alignment for another 10 feet, so that the apparent thickness of the wall—as far as this can be stated subject to the errors resulting from the piled-up debris—increases to nearly 15 feet. Where the inner face begins to curve, a scarcement, 11 inches wide at its maximum, appears just above the debris; its original height above ground-level cannot be estimated. At its highest, the southern face stands rather less than 4 feet above the scarcement; it is to be noted that the masonry of the face above the scarcement is of large angular blocks, while as much as can be seen of the lower part shows well-laid courses of thin slabs (Pl. X, 3). The mural passage varies in breadth from 2 feet 3 inches to 4 feet, and is 5 feet 1 inch high under the surviving lintels. East of the lintels its floor rises gradually, and as the ruined top of the wall is gradually sinking here, all traces of the passage die out about 3 feet short of the eastern face of the wall. Though this face is disturbed on the line of the passage, there is no indication that an entrance to the passage ever existed here; nor does the passage seem to have been entered through the southern face some 7 feet from the eastern end, where further disturbance occurs. West of the lintelling the floor of the passage rises sharply, but whether this is due merely to unequal filling-up by debris or to the presence of a buried stair cannot be determined without clearance. This end of the passage likewise fades out on the surface of the ruined wall, its total remaining length being thus about 30 feet. Its course is nearly straight, two straight sections being united by one which curves slightly.

The massive galleried wall spanning the neck of the bluff immediately suggests a comparison with the structure on Barra Head, Bernera,<sup>1</sup> and at a further remove with other members of the "galleried dùn" series—for example, Rudh' an Dunain,<sup>2</sup> Dùn Ardtreck,<sup>3</sup> Dùn Liath<sup>4</sup>, Dùn Ringill<sup>5</sup> and Dùn Grùgaig,<sup>6</sup> all in Skye. Only four galleried dùns—Dùn Grùgaig (Glenelg),<sup>7</sup> Kildonan,<sup>8</sup> Castle Haven,<sup>9</sup> and Dunburgidale<sup>10</sup>—had previously been known elsewhere than in the Western Islands (outer or inner), or five, counting Ardifuar,<sup>11</sup> and this addition of another example is consequently of considerable interest, especially in view of what seem to be its "Island" affinities.

<sup>1</sup> R.C.A.M., *Inventory of the Outer Hebrides, etc.*, No. 450.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 483.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 484.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 541.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 650.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, No. 651.

<sup>7</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xxix. p. 183.

<sup>8</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lxxiii. p. 185.

<sup>9</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xli. p. 68; R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Kirkeudbright*, No. 64.

<sup>10</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xxvii. p. 287.

<sup>11</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. xxxix. p. 260.

A further possible link with the Islands is supplied by a fort (2) near the base of the hill called Mullach Dubh, though in this case the comparison is not with the galleried structures as such, but with the series of small, broch-like forts—some of which, in fact, have galleries. The fort in question (Pl. XI, 1) stands on the highest point of a low and narrow ridge of rock which runs from south-south-west to north-north-east through the

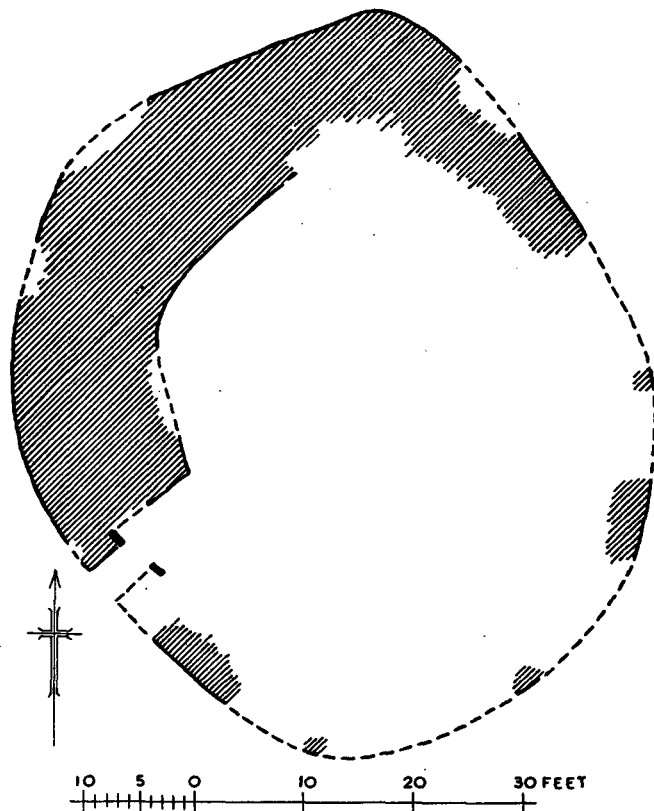


Fig. 3. Fort below Mullach Dubh; plan.

low ground between the foot of Mullach Dubh and the seashore to the west. The slopes below the fort are partially precipitous on the north-west and north and very steep from north-east to south; the easiest access is from the south-west along the ridge; but here again a natural obstacle exists, as the ridge is broken across by a rock-bound gash some 20 yards short of the fort entrance.

The structure (fig. 3) has been heavily robbed, and in only about a quarter of the circumference (the western and north-western portion) can the thickness of the wall be measured. Here it appears to have varied

from about 12 feet to 14 feet. Elsewhere only a few footings of the outer face survive, and from these it appears that the fort measured some 68 feet over all from north to south by about 58 feet from east to west, its shape on plan having been irregularly sub-oval. Christison's small plan,<sup>1</sup> which shows it as circular, is misleading. Except where the footings extend down the slope as a kind of revetment (Pl. XI, 2), the outer face nowhere stands more than two or three courses high, and the inner face generally shows one course only. The entrance-passage, which is on the south-west, is 13 feet long, and most of its western side can be traced, including an upright slab forming a check for a door 4 feet from the outside. The eastern side is ruined except for its check, which may, however, have been somewhat displaced; if it is *in situ*, it would give a width of 3 feet between the checks. While no traces of intramural cells or passages can be seen, and the structure should consequently not be regarded as a broch, its small size, thick walls, and general lay-out are strongly reminiscent of the brochs, and it is for this reason that a comparison is suggested with the broch-like dùns of Skye and the Outer Hebrides.

Mullach Dubh, however, was probably not the sole example in this neighbourhood of the broch-like dùn, as the sites of at least four others, on which virtually no stonework survives, are of shapes and sizes suitable to this type of structure. Thus An Dùn (3),<sup>2</sup> which overlooks the Oban-Lochgilphead road near Barravulin, is now represented only by the flattened summit-area of a steep-sided hillock, with a terrace scooped out of the slope below it on the north-eastern and another on the south-western side; this flattened space is roundish in shape and measures no more than 50 feet in diameter. Dùn Glas (4), on a rocky hilltop a third of a mile south of Lunga House, must have been even smaller, as the diameter of its summit-area, which is again more or less circular, is only 30 feet. Dùn Ailne (5), again, which stood on a flattened hummock forming the summit of a ridge overlooking Bàgh Dail nan Ceann, seems to have measured about 60 feet along the axis of the ridge by 45 feet transversely. Duine (6), on a knoll by the loch-side midway between Ardfern and Craignish, was apparently the largest of the four, but as the flattened space even here measures only some 70 feet by 55 feet the comparison still holds good. Possibly the fort on the summit of Beinn an Duin (7) should likewise be counted in; the flattened summit-area, which still shows some footings and traces of an entrance, here extends to the very modest dimensions of 100 feet by 55 feet.

To all the foregoing structures, however, strong contrasts are presented by the four remaining forts. Of these, Dunan Garbh-Sròine (8)<sup>3</sup> and the fort on Eilean an Duin (9) resemble one another fairly definitely in siting

<sup>1</sup> Christison, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 201.

<sup>3</sup> This structure is, properly speaking, just outside the area defined in the opening paragraph.

and plan, while Dùn an Achanarnich (10) and—in so far as their character can be judged at all—the remains on Rudha na Tràighe (11) seem to differ from all their neighbours. Dunan Garbh-Sròine (8) occupies the summit of an abrupt, rocky mass which rises from the seashore just below the farm of Garrarron; Christison's plan<sup>1</sup> shows it to measure about 250 feet by about 80 feet, with straightish sides following the outline of the site. The walls, which are of very large stones, measure 8 feet to 10 feet 6 inches in thickness, the larger of these dimensions being recorded by Christison; and the approach to the entrance is defended by a roughly constructed outer rampart, not shown on Christison's plan, made of exceptionally massive blocks. The plan of the fort on Eilean an Duin (9) is also determined by the natural outline of the site, and is consequently rather irregular though some considerable lengths of the wall are straight; facilities for its measurement were lacking, but the O.S. map indicates dimensions of some 220 feet by 150 feet. The thickness of the wall could not be determined anywhere. These two large irregular structures, with their fairly long lengths of straight wall, are clearly in a different category from the small forts previously described.

Dùn an Achanarnich (10), to turn to yet another type, is on the summit of a high, steep ridge which flanks the coast south-west of Bàgh Bàn and falls to the sea in a slope which is largely precipitous. The remains of the ruined wall mark out a spindle-shaped structure measuring about 180 feet along the axis of the ridge by about 70 feet transversely. It is uncertain whether a wall ever existed along the lip of the precipice on the north-west. While the plan is again determined by the shape of the site, the builders have made use of all the ground available and evidently had no idea of building a small round dùn. It may be noted that at the north-eastern end, where a hollow way led up to what must have been the entrance, there is, as at Dunan Garbh-Sròine, an outer wall constructed of large rough blocks.

At Rudha na Tràighe (11), the north-westernmost of the tongues of rock that form Craignish Point seems to have been spanned by an ancient wall about 130 yards from its tip. A modern dry-stone dyke partly overrides the remains, which are apt to be obscured by herbage. No other traces of a fort can now be seen on the promontory, but the wall suggests the former existence of some kind of defensive structure; and the impression is heightened by the presence of a hollowed access-track, which leads up from the north-west through the remains of an outer wall set at a lower level. This arrangement is similar to the one noted at Dùn an Achanarnich and at Dunan Garbh-Sròine, but the work is by no means so massive as that seen at the latter site.

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 199.



1. Dùn Mhuilig; mural passage from west.



2. Dùn Mhuilig; north-east corner from north.



3. Dùn Mhuilig; inner face of wall.





1. Fort below Mullach Dubh; general view from south-west.



2. Fort below Mullach Dubh; masonry on south-west face.



3. Gemmil; cist and cover-slab.



4. Gemmil; cist, showing how end-slab was fitted.

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## CAIRNS AND CISTS.

While the head of Loch Craignish is separated from the Kilmartin strath by a considerable barrier of hills, the mouths of Loch Craignish and Loch Crinan actually adjoin one another; access by sea from the peninsula to the neighbourhood of Poltalloch must in consequence always have been easy. For the same reason, both regions would have been equally open to the reception of influences coming from over the sea. The possible affinities that may consequently exist between the Craignish cairns and cists<sup>1</sup> and the great Kilmartin monuments adds something to the interest of the former; while the fact that food-vessels have been found in two of the Craignish cists does something, at least, to provide them with an historical background.

The only one of these finds that has as yet been published was made in 1936, when a cist came to light by the roadside near the southern end of Bàgh Dùn Mhuilig (12). It contained two food-vessels, a small stone axe, and a bunch of human hair; these relics are displayed in the National Museum of Antiquities, and have been described and illustrated by Professor Childe in the Society's *Proceedings*.<sup>2</sup> Relics from another site are on view at the West Highland Museum, Fort William, and are described in a letter from the Curator as consisting of a food-vessel and some jet beads. These objects were discovered in a cist at a point, not marked on the O.S. map, about a quarter of a mile south-west of the farm of Gemmil (13),<sup>3</sup> and the very numerous stones that are to be seen immediately to the north-east, east, and south-east of the cist suggest that it may originally have underlain the western part of a cairn. Such a cairn, if it ever existed, may perhaps have been some 36 feet in diameter; and a slab, 4 feet high by 1 foot 8 inches wide and up to 10 inches thick, which stands on the edge of the stony area some 20 feet east of the cist, may have formed part of a peristalith. The cist (Pl. XI, 3), which lies approximately north-east and south-west, is formed of four large slabs, the south-eastern side-slab having some coursed stonework underneath part of it; it is 2 feet 8 inches long, 1 foot 6 inches wide, and 2 feet deep, but the north-western side is actually 3 feet 4 inches long, as one end of the north-eastern end-slab has slipped or been forced out of a mortise-like notch which had been made for it in the north-western side-slab (Pl. XI, 4). The cover-slab lies alongside; its maximum dimensions are 4 feet 6 inches by 3 feet by 8 inches.

Since leaving the district, I have been informed by Mrs Hill, of Himbleton Manor, Droitwich, that another cist was opened some twenty-five years ago on Soroba Farm (14), and that it contained "pieces of broken

<sup>1</sup> Along with which should also be considered some neighbouring monuments in the Barbeck valley and at the foot of the Bealach Mòr.

<sup>2</sup> *P.S.A.S.*, vol. lxx. p. 396.

<sup>3</sup> This name seems to have been entered in the West Highland Museum's records as "Grimmell."

pottery and one or two plaid pins of a much later date." These relics have not yet been traced, but the stones of the cist are said still to be visible near the farmhouse.

Of the cairns in the area other than the remains noted at Gemmil, two stand close together at the south-western end of Bàgh Dail nan Ceann (15), and another on Eilean Carnaich (16), a small tidal islet a mile north-east of Ardfern. All three are considerably spread, particularly the last, and none shows any trace of cists or regular construction. The remaining one (17) is at the foot of the talus of stones fallen from the north-western side of the Mullach Dubh fort; it is 18 feet in diameter and of negligible height, but it does not seem to have been opened. Being constructed of stones which are similar to those in the talus, it may well have been built after the ruin of the fort; at the same time there is nothing to prove that it was not of contemporary construction.

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#### MAP REFERENCES.

*Six-inch O.S. Map of Argyll*, Sheet CXXX S.W., Nos. 2, 3, 8, 9, 17; CXXXVII S.E., No. 10; CXXXVIII N.W., Nos. 4, 5, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16; CXXXVIII S.W., Nos. 1, 6, 12; CXLVIII N.E., No. 11.

*One-inch O.S. Map of Scotland*, Popular Edition, Sheet 60, National Grid references: No. 1, 17/776019; No. 2, 17/799076; No. 3, 17/818074; No. 4, 17/795060; No. 5, 17/783045; No. 6, 17/791028; No. 7, 17/807050; No. 8, 17/802089; No. 9, 17/792079; No. 10, 17/769028; No. 11, 16/755992; No. 12, 17/777017; No. 13, 17/786056; No. 14, 17/805045; No. 15, 17/777045; No. 16, 17/814050; No. 17, 17/799076.