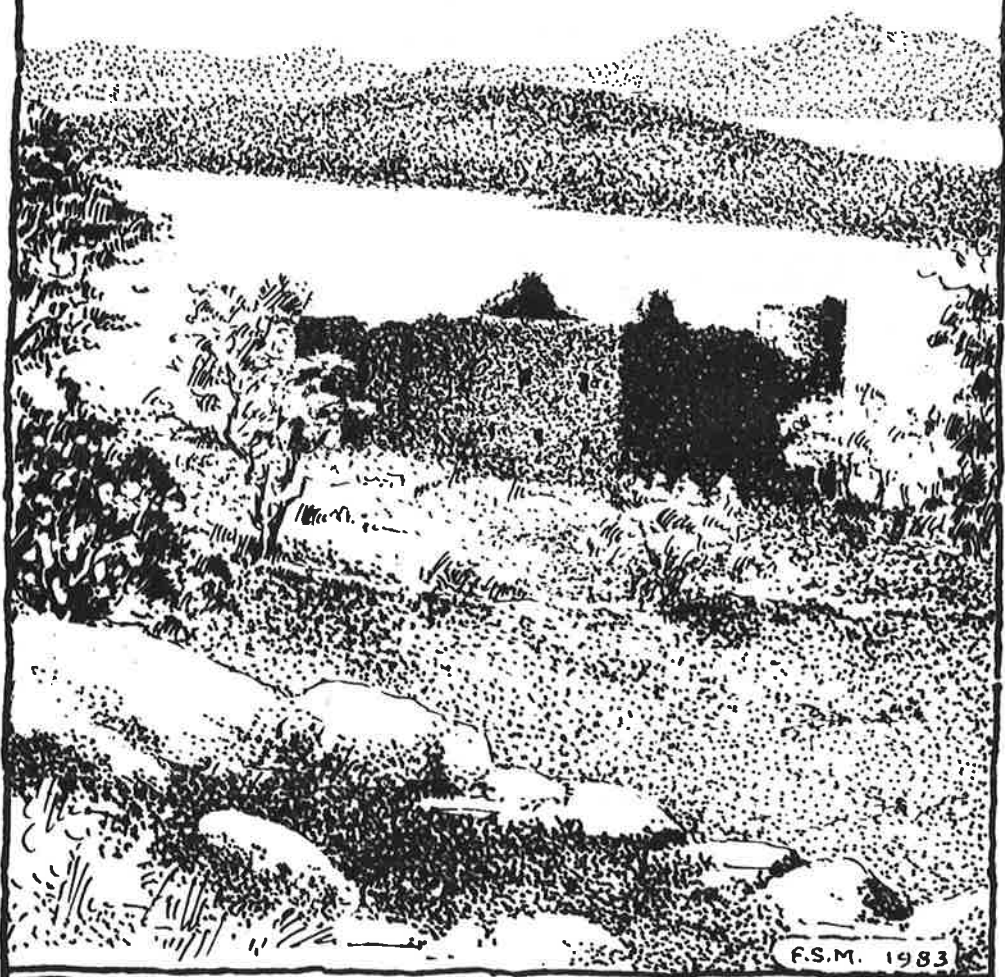


Castle Sween cwan



F.S.M. 1983

The KIST 28

T H E K I S T

The Magazine of
The Natural History & Antiquarian Society
of Mid-Argyll

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Hon. Secretary for Membership and Publications

Mr E.S.Clark, MA., Northlea, Tarbert, Argyll. (T. 793)

Price 60p. (Post extra)

NOTE ON THE COVER

(The historical details are based on a recording of a talk by Miss Campbell of Kilberry at a Society outing to Castle Sween in 1974).

This is considered to be the oldest stone-built castle on the Scottish mainland, placed by authorities in the late 11th century, possibly about the time of the Norman invasion or soon afterwards.

The 16th century Leabhar Chlainne Suibhne (Book of the MacSweeneys) gives the builder as Suibhne, whose son Dugald held Skipness Castle. From another source we are told that Iver, the eponym of the MacIver Campbells, was grandson of Swinaruo (i.e. Suibhne Ruadh - Sween the Red) who owned Castle Sween.

There was a very strong Irish connection with our part of Scotland in the 11th and 12th centuries, with cultural and political affinities and the MacSweens were related to many of the most powerful families in both countries. The castle was held by MacSweens until the 13th century.*

The reason for siting a castle here is fairly obvious. The much older nearby stronghold, Dùn a'Chaisteil, which could have been in occupation at any time from 3-400 BC to 1000 AD, may well have served the area until the use of larger boats rendered their carriage to a distance from the sea impossible and called for a defensive building close to the shore. In any case the site had been used from prehistoric times, for there is a rock-shelter below the castle foundations which was occupied after the recession of the sea by hunter-fishers from the late Mesolithic. Relics found in it include a polished Antrim axe and a Bronze Age sharpening stone. On the adjacent land surface at least one bronze tanged arrow-head has been recovered. It will be seen that the roof at the back of the shelter has been filled in with edge-set stones in order to carry the foundations of the west wall of the castle; large flags seem to have been put in from behind, and it is quite possible that we have here a sea-gate which

.....

* For a very full account of the matter see W.D.H.Sellar "Family Origins in Cowal and Knapdale".

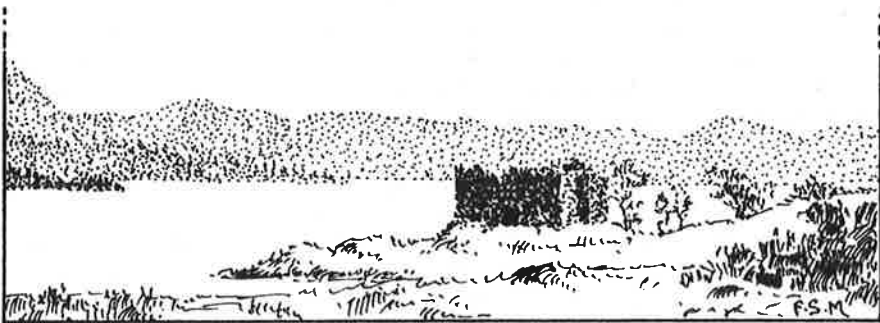
was later blocked to remove the security threat it presented. Of the castle itself it can be stated that the main block, with its arched door and flat buttresses, is the oldest part - a similar flat buttress is found at Duart. The wall is solid up to the first floor; eventually, possibly in the 13th century, it was given added height, topped with battlements, which at this date had openings smaller than the intervening solid part - only later did opening and wall assume the same proportions. As the wall was twice heightened we can see traces of battlements of both types. The subsequent addition of the Hall wing was made in the time of Alexander III (on the right of our drawing) The conspicuous MacMillan Tower (extreme right of drawing) is still later, dating from the 1400s - the MacMillans were custodians under the Lords of the Isles. It is not known whether the present well in the courtyard was originally a spring or if it had to be bored.

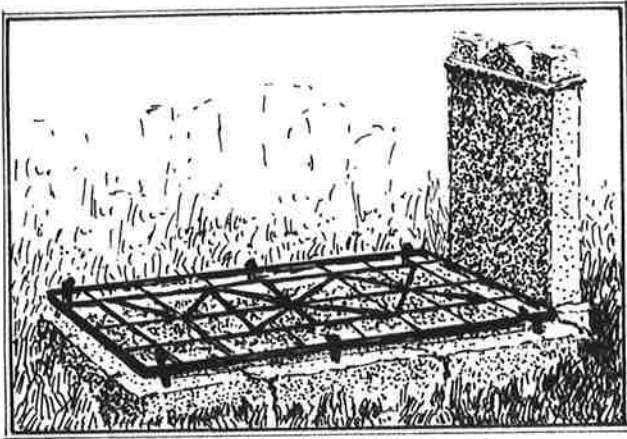
The castle's turbulent history must be summarised. In the early 13th century Dugald Ruadh MacSween had also the control of Skipness and the intervening area and up to Dunadd. About 1240 he styles himself Lord of Glassary in a charter of Dunadd with the Comyn Earl of Menteith. This charter was designed so that Menteith could grant it back to one of his knights who was about to marry Dugald Ruadh's daughter. Dugald had sons, but had fallen out with them and they had removed themselves to Ireland. Dugald must have died about 1260, and possibly Alexander III or one of his earls took charge at Castle Sween and proceeded to effect the additions and wall-raising already mentioned. The MacDougalls of Lorn come next on the scene, possibly being given custody by Alexander III. They and Bruce were at enmity and there is a tradition that ships of Robert I were taken overland at the Tarbert isthmus to invest Castle Sween with the help of a landward force accompanied by the king. One camp of this army is known to have been near Clachbreck farm. The expedition was successful - all this presumably before Bannockburn; indeed it was twice captured by Robert I. The English decided to try to regain their ground, and we have a heroic work, the oldest Gaelic poem in the Dean of Lismore's collection, describing in fanciful detail the composition and progress of the expedition which, in the end, never got

fully under way and proved abortive. The castle was last occupied in 1647 and then 'slighted'.

It is not proposed to go more fully into the varying fortunes of Castle Sween; they included forfeiture in the 1690s (one charge against the Lord of the Isles being that of "treasonably stuffing Castle Sween with men and munitions of war"); entrusted to the Earl of Argyle, who was to set all castles on short leases to reliable people, an undertaking which failed of execution owing to Argyle's fall from favour, though he or his son managed to restore themselves sufficiently to keep the castles, and as a result certain Campbell families were put into the area as official agents. The Campbells of Achnabreck were Hereditary Captains of Clan Campbell, and they provided the first Campbells of Castle Sween. Campbell of Castle Sween and Campbell of Danna were brothers. Danna had two sons, the second of whom, between 1500 and 1600, was placed in another spare castle, that of Kilberry - in other words our President's ancestor.

Today Castle Sween remains a prominent and spectacular ruin, unchallenged in its dignity until recent years when it has had the grave misfortune of being at the centre of a monstrous caravan village. At the time of writing it has had to be closed to the public for reasons of safety, and inevitably one speculates on the part played in this structural deterioration by the hordes of caravan people who have swarmed over it. The only hopeful thought is that the castle ruin must eventually survive long after the caravans of this materialistic age are erased from memory.





MORTSAFES: A Local Modification?

Colin F. Fergusson

*Hang Burke, Banish Hare,
Burn Knox in Surgeon Square*

So sang children as they played their street games in Edinburgh 170 years ago.

The subject of this musical ditty were the infamous pair of body-snatchers, who in the early 1800s regularly in the darkness of night, dug up the grave and removed the recently-interred body, to sell to those who wished to use it for anatomical purposes. Such was the demand for newly-dead bodies that bands of these Resurrectionists, as those who raised the bodies from the graves were so aptly called, that no lonely graveyard was safe from their evil work.

Country burial grounds, within a reasonable distance of cities, where the exhumed bodies would be disposed of, were prime targets. Especially cities with a medical school attached to their University, where students of these schools were always eager to obtain specimens for study and furtherance of their knowledge.

The strong feeling against the Resurrectionists so intensified throughout the country that precautions were adopted to protect the graves from desecration.

Night watches over the graves were undertaken by relatives and friends for several weeks until it was felt that the body would be of no use to the medical profession. This entailed much hardship on the recently bereaved.

There then occurred the idea to guard the coffin by

placing immediately above it a heavy object to hinder the removal of the body. The simplest form was a heavy stone, requiring at least two men to lift it, being placed on the coffin. The stone would be left in this position for several weeks, then removed from the grave and stored in the graveyard, ready for the next interment. Then even heavier stones were carved to the shape of a coffin, generally measuring 6 to 7 feet long, 1ft 10ins at head, 2ft 4ins at shoulder, 1ft 6ins at foot and 6in to 1 ft thick. Later mortsafes were made of iron to roughly the same sizes. Two well-preserved specimens of the latter are to be seen at the entrance gate to the Auld Kirk in Ayr.

When it was seen that both stone and iron mortsafes were no barrier to the removal of a corpse, a combination of a stone with an iron railing bolted on below and covering the coffin on both side and ends was devised which had a much greater effect as a deterrent. Again after a reasonable time had elapsed the grave would be dug and the mortsafe hauled to the surface, no easy task, to be used for the next burial.

Mortsafes as such seem to be unknown in our area, due no doubt to the distance from the main teaching university in Glasgow, thus rendering burials free from disturbance.

However in the old graveyard at Kilmory, one mile from Lochgilphead, is to be seen a flat iron rectangular grille over the grave of Sarah Cooke. Covering two lairs, it measures 7ft 5ins long and 5ft 1in broad.

Obviously it was not intended to be buried in the grave to protect the coffin but to remain fixed above ground, lead-mounted on substantial kerb-stones. Of pleasing design, as the heading drawing by the Editor clearly shows, all except two of the iron rods in the centre part, are intact.

The headstone reads of only one interment, namely:-
ERECTED / TO THE MEMORY OF / SARAH COOKE / WHO DIED 13TH /
FEBY 1839 / BY HER HUSBAND / ANGUS McCALLUM / MERCHANT
LOCHGILPHEAD / 1ST APRIL 1839. In spite of it being a double-lair grave there is no mention of the said Angus McCallum being buried along with his spouse. In 1832 an Act of Parliament was passed which was intended to provide for the supply of bodies necessary for the proper study of anatomy, and this made the trade of body-snatching illegal and certainly unprofitable.

As we have seen, this interment was in early 1839 and

it may be that the thought still lingered in the mind of Angus McCallum that he had better just take that extra precaution to safeguard his beloved.

.....

Editorial note:- We are glad to welcome a newcomer to our list of contributors. Mr Fergusson brings to our attention an antiquity which few people will know of already, and raises at the same time the possibility of there being other examples. None are known to us in our area despite a fairly thorough investigation of graveyards in Mid-Argyll and Kintyre while recording old stones for the Scottish Genealogy Society some years ago. We are very willing to admit ignorance if any other similar structure is brought to our notice.

FROM THE KILBERRY ARCHIVES

Letter from Colin Campbell, styled Lord Berners, regarding the destruction by fire of his house of Kilberry in 1772.

To
Mr George Buchannan
Jamaca Street
Glasgow.

Dear Sir

I have herewith, according to my promise to you in my last, inclosed you the severall Plans & Elevations of my house, which will show you the state of the Building before the fire, & in what manner each parte was finish'd. I have described as near as possible in each of the Plans, to which Every parte or room in the whole refferrs, as well as the different Measurements of every particular Apartment marked on the verry part of the Plan where Every Room or Closset in the whole had formerly Stood, The least attention to these Planns, with your own Experience in Matters of Building, After making allowances for all the inconveniencys attending the Carrying on of Buildings here, to all which youll observe, Mr Menelaus in his first Estimate of the Loss sustained has payed a due, & verry just attention, You Yourself must remember in some parte the baddness of this Coast, its inhospitable Shores & the great distance of Harbour from this place, must make the providing of all

Materials for Building far more Expensive than otherwise it would. I have no Limestone nearer than two Leagues distance & both a Land & sea Carriage, & Coals no nearer than Clyde & Ireland to burn Lime with & those at a Considerable Expense, tis true, I have Hewen Stone enough on the Ground, at least a verry good but Expensive Quarry, The Stone is of a harder nature than the Duke of Argyles hardest Stone at Inveraray which the Late Duke was Obliged to give up, for its Expense. I never had a foot of the Commonest pavement of my own under 18d, nor a Corner or Door or Window Rebbet under 3 sh. a foot. But the Stone is verry durable & pritty, & of this Stone, was Every parte of Hewen work in my House finished, all the Corners, Doors, both outside & inside, as well as Windows, Chimney pices, Hearths, Chimney heads, & every other hewen Stone in the House. The most Expensive part of Which, Such as the Stepps Stairs Door & window Lintiles & Soles, Chimney pices & hearths, Most, or all of which, are totally destroyed, as you will see, from the red dotts & lines on the Severall planns & Elevations, which distinguishes such parts as have suffered & rendered useless by the fire, from all these & ye Expense of Timber & Every other Materiall Necessary towards the repairing or Rebuilding, of such a House as Mine, I leave you to Judge of the two severall Estimates I have now sent you. The 1st was done by Thos. Menelaus on the 29th of July 1772 & witnessed by Patrick Campbell one of the Joiners or House Contractors who finish'd parte of the Rooms in the Castle. This Thos. Menelaus a Master Builder at Greenoke, was sent me from thence. I had no acquaintance of this man, it was his brother John Menelaus, Who plannd & Conducted the Building of Loups House, I wrote for, But Thoms. came in his stead. On Enquiry I found this man had suffred from Every Contract or Estimate he ever made, & at last Bankrupt himself & his Brother, by his want of Judgement & the generall lowness of all his former Contracts, & Estimates; one Instance of which is Loups House for I finde both the Menelauses were concernd in Planning it. Their Highest Estimate for Executing & finishing the Whole, did not Exceed £500, & it has already Coast, Loup assures me, near £1000 & it is scarce half finishd, from all these Considerations as well as Maney others I requested the Sun fire Office would take the Rebuilding & Repairing of the Castle on themselves, &

desired my Agent in London to endeavour if possible to get them to agree to this. In answer to which his letter of the 15th Decr 1772 Says "I have at last with much difficulty & trouble succeeded in your Business with the Directors of the Sun fire Office, they have determined not to build but to pay what was Insured on it, so that you will no longer Neglect what you think necessary to be done in the Rebuilding. If you are not Coming soon to London you may send me powers of Attorney to receive for you, which I will do, & pay it into your Bankers hands or any Person you please to appoint." I defferd sending my Agent my Powers as I had thoughts of taking London in my way to Ireland, & in this situation (After agreeing wt. some for Timber, & others for other Materials, towards Carrying on the rebuilding of my House) matters stood until the month of Aprile last when I was Informd of a Mr Key, a Mr builder on the part of the Sun-fire Offices arrivall, with one Mr Smith of that Office Accompanyd wt Thos Menelaus whom I had formerly Employd to make out an Estimate of the Loss sustaind, & whose first Estimate & Survey of the 29th of July I have already told you. This was the first intimation I had of any Survey intended on the Part of the Sunfire Office or of Mr Menelaus, whose last Survey & Joint Estimate wt Mr Key of the Eighth day of Aprile was all by the direction & at the Expense of the Sunfire Office & their Agent: Who have but within these few weeks favourd me with this Strange inconsistent Jumble, of the Joint Survey of Mr Key & Mr Thos Menelaus, & I leave you to judge which of the two the first or last is most to be relied on. The first was done from regular Planns & 4 Severall Elevations of the Building, & all the Measurements of the whole Parte which I sent the Office. The last Estimates (I can assure you) for I attended these People the only day they Stayd Here, were made without either Plan, Elevation, or Measurements, & the only rule for their guidance I myself afforded. Which was a Copy of the Originale Estimate of Thos. Menelaus on the 29th of July last, & from this Cutting & Carving on the 1st Estimate, & from no other Proof or Conviction, the last Estimate of the 8th of Aprile is totally founded. I shall not take up your time with Calculations or Measurements with regard to the severall Articlcs of this same Joint Estimate of Keys & Menelaus, for I can assure you, their have been no Attention payd to one, or

other, in any one of the Articl's for I have attended to them all, with the outmost precision. I shall leave it to your own good understanding to Judge of the whole from a few of the Articl's which I begg leave to point out to you. Art. 1st of Mr Keys & Menelaus Joint Survey of the 8th Aprile, "All the walls made sufficient including the Gables, Chimney Heads, vents, Stairs & Chimney pices &c. £40..-" pray let me intreat your attention & attend to & Compare the Article I have stated, to Mr Menelaus former Estimate of the 29th July where the 1st Eight Articl's are all comprehended in fact, in that of the 1st Art of the Joint Survey already quoted & yet the one is but £40.. and the other amounts to £340..12 no less than £300..12 of difference in the same Express Article that the most Bungling blockheads could be Audacious Enough to affix their names to such an Estimate or any that could suppose £40 a 6th part of a Sume adequate for the 1st Article, when I have now the Masson alive at my Door who was pd more than £20 alone, for the Single Article of Chimney pices & hearths & that only in parts of my house, by my Father, My Unkle & myself. So much for that Article, beside the verry Masson who is an old experienced person in Matters of that Nature assures me he would not take £360 to Make Good the 1st Article in the Joint Survey Charged only £40 -

I shall next bring you to the 8th Article & leave you to judge what Credit is due to the whole of this Estimate which Charges only for "19 Sash Windows viz 230 feet supt in 19 sash windows, 2 sh.& 6.., £28..15"

I give you my honour their are no fewer than 27 large windows & 6 or 7 lesser windows now to be seen on the Building as you will See from the severall Elevations, besids 4 large & 3 smaller ones which have fall'n in with the roof of the House.- And the 11th Article is Equally barefaced with the former viz

"22 pannelled doors locks & hinges £1..5. inde £27..10" I have not been at pains to Consider whether they are right in the Calculation of the number of doors, tho I may safely say they have not Calculated above one half of the whole Doors, yet I am certain no tradesman I believe since the reign of Queen Elizabeth would furnish a Pannelld Door with Locks & Hinges at £1..5. one thing I am certain of I pd for the verry Article of Locks from 15sh to 20sh each, Exclusive of Hinges or Doors within these few months for

the verry Cabin I now live in - And the 17th or last Article of this same Survey is still more Absurd, & must show the whole of this Estimate of the 8th Aprile to be the production of two Fellows of no Charracter, for Mr Menelaus must have forfeited his Charracter if ever he had one, by subscribing two Estimates of one & the same thing so different from one another & I believe the other Fellow Key; to be some low hirelyng under the influence & direction of some low understrapper of the Sunfire Office. As you may judge from the 17th or last Article as well as all the rest the 17th Article is "100 yds of printed paper for the Stairs &c at 6 -- £2..10" - Could any person, but such as I have Stated affix their names to so much ignorance & Impertinence. The Little Epitome of a House in which I now dwell I have had it but tother day paperd, & it has Coast me Above £15 -

On the whole I hope the Elevations & planns of the Castle wt which I have now furnished you, together with such remarks as I have now made on the Estimates I have enclosed you, wt others, which I dare say will Occurr to yourself, or any others youll be so good as to State them to, for your further Aid, & information, I say from all these you will Soon Judge & determine, & when I further Assure you I have not the least desire to benefite a Shill from a single insurance I have made, on the Contrary I shall be a considerable looser on the whole, & to avoid all Cavile or doubts on the parte of the Office as well as my own I would far rather they took the rebuilding of my House entirely on themselves, as well as the Furnishing of it in the Slightest Manner, I will be satisfied to allow them a verry great discount & they shall not be disered to furnish an Article that shall not be Authenticated to their utmost wishes by Me. I hope when you Consider the import of all these Matters I have now stated to you, & their great Consequence to me it will in some measure Appologise for a trouble I should not have given you but from my Idea of your own love of Justice & a desire of doing good. Compliments to Mrs Buchanan & all friends in Stockwell Street & I am, My Dear Sir

Your Most Obedit H S

C. Campbell

Kilberry 27th June 1773

IN A KNAPDALE FOREST

Anon.

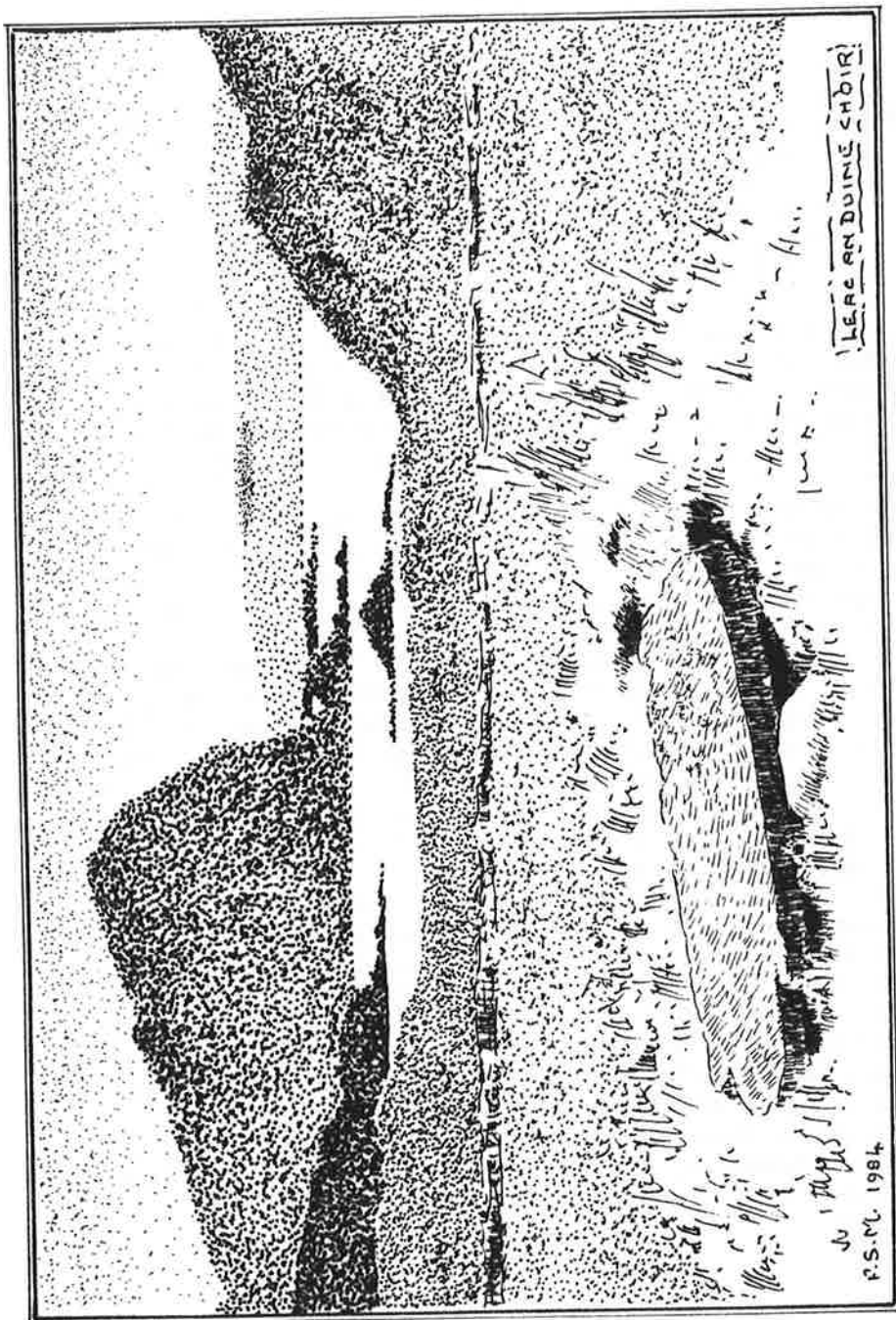
What secret place is here, deep within the wood, shaded to green dimness, starred with the ghostly mist of wind-flowers and royally ringed with foxglove spires? What is this tall stone, shapely and white, that lifts its tapered head towards the unseen sky?

It is Diarmaid's grave.

All peace is here, and silence too; even the lightfoot deer, flitting between the trees like shadows, raise no sound. Only the quiet watcher thinks back to older times when men came hunting the fierce boar, with Diarmaid far ahead of all - Diarmaid, the mighty hunter, who had been beguiled by Grainne, wife of his uncle Fionn, into a dalliance which both were powerless to avert. Have we not, all of us, our geasa - the things which it has been ordained that we must not do, or else So Diarmaid's fateful attraction could no more be evaded than could the single flaw in his magical protection from poison be disregarded - a spot on one heel which had not received immunity - to save him from settled fate. Sooner or later it gets you, do what you will.

Diarmaid killed the boar, but in 'stepping' its length at his uncle's insistence, the unprotected heel was pierced by a poison bristle. Some say that the geas could have been averted if Fionn had overcome his vengeful feelings towards his nephew and had given him the draught of water he pled for before it was too late, but that could not be.

Far-off days, with more-than-life-size figures performing impossible feats. Fantasies? Yes, certainly, but set so far back in time that reason ceases to function normally, and such heroic doings seem too remote to be covered by considerations of possibility. What matter though Diarmaid's grave is claimed for other parts of the country or that the gigantic boar figures in more than one terminal hunting - the grave, deep in the forest of Knapdale, was made for someone, Diarmaid or not, and keeps for us today an air of mystery and timeless peace. If not Diarmaid, then surely someone of stature and note amongst his fellows; why not indeed Diarmaid himself - or was the doom-led hero only a sgeul, a story told round a winter fire?



LEAC AN DUINE CHÒIR, BARRACKAN, CRAIGNISH

This singular-looking slab, the Stone of the Just Man, which is lying on a stony mound, most probably a ruined cairn, on land pertaining to the now derelict Barrackan farm in Craignish, was quite certainly intended to be placed upstanding, though no memory of its original position survives. Like the Watchman Stone a few miles away it raised a voice of noisy lamentation and disapproval when it was appropriated as a house lintel, and thereby secured its speedy removal from such secular surroundings. The design seems to be a failed attempt at a cross, and in



1962
Miss
Campbell and
Miss Sandeman knew
of only one
other rather
similar treatment,
on an Irish
stone.

The situation of the Barrackan slab is a very beautiful one, with extensive views over the Sound of Jura to that island and to Scarba, with the Gulf between. Nor is it alone as an antiquity, for there are two large almost contiguous cairns in the vicinity, closer to the sea, and two cup-marked boulders are passed on the farm road. Indeed the Craignish peninsula is particularly well supplied with objects of great archaeological and antiquarian appeal. The Barrackan stone is 5'10" long and is drawn to a scale of one-tenth.

Three Notes: BASS ROCK, GULL'S VISION and SKUA REPORT
F. S. Mackenna

Many years ago we received a letter from a correspondent in Copenhagen which contains a passage of potential interest to our readers.

Scandinavians of the fifth century, when raiding Britain was a national preoccupation, were troll-ridden and weighed down by superstition. Naturally these 'freits' accompanied them on their forays and caused them to name the spectacular island they found as they sailed up the Firth of Forth 'Baas Rokke'. Baas means ghastly or awful and is found in many Scandinavian place-names such as Baastvede (tvede = wood or forest) and Baasmo (mo = moor). In Scotland too there are examples, such as Bassendean in East Lothian, originally Baasendynn, meaning the ghastly mire. In Scandinavian 'en' is the definite article, and comes after a noun. 'Dynn' is a mire or morass, and occurs frequently in Scotland as 'den'.

A demonstration of the remarkable eyesight enjoyed by gulls occurred when sailing in Loch Fyne. A solitary herring gull had eaten some scraps thrown overboard and remained sitting on the calm water. Having a notion of testing its powers of sight a hand was placed on the cockpit coaming, with a small scrap of biscuit between the fingers, but concealed. In due course the bird became only a tiny speck far astern, hardly to be noticed. Without any other movement the fingers relaxed and the scrap fell into the water, and instantly the gull rose and flew up to take it.

An unusual sighting took place some years ago near Skate Island in Loch Fyne - a Great Skua (*Catharacta skua*). It was close to the yacht and identification was positive, from familiarity with the species in Shetland. Probably it was on passage. Incidentally the Skate area has provided our only sightings of Puffins in Loch Fyne, though they are relatively less rare farther south towards Campbeltown and the Mull, and off Arran.

A RECORDED KILMARTIN STONE

F. S. Mackenna

On 1st September, 1840, Lord Cockburn travelled from Oban to Lochgilphead and his Circuit Journeys contain the following passage:-

"I found a lad carving a monument from a design of his own, in Kilmartin churchyard, whom I mention because I should not wonder if he should hereafter be distinguished as an artist. He told me his name was Mossman. His conversation, and that design, a blasted tree, standing over a broken column, gave me the impression of his being an able young man. There are a great many old, and curiously carved, flat tombstones in this churchyard, generally without inscriptions, but probably identified to the families by the carved devices. There is also the remains of a cross, which had been in the form of a human figure, on a cross, with outstretched arms. Though it be nearly covered with dirt and nettles, and the arms be broken off above each elbow, enough remains to evince considerable taste and skill in the artist. It was Mossman who pointed it out

to me. There is also a very respectable and hoary monument, built into a wall, to the memory of the last Catholic minister of the parish.

There is little to be seen between Kilmartin and this [Lochgilphead] - eight miles - but all the rest of the road, from Oban to Kilmartin, about thirty-two miles, is most admirable - most admirable indeed."

The monument stands today in unweathered condition, a

tall well-proportioned obelisk quite unlike any of the stones around it. There is an inscription on both front and back.

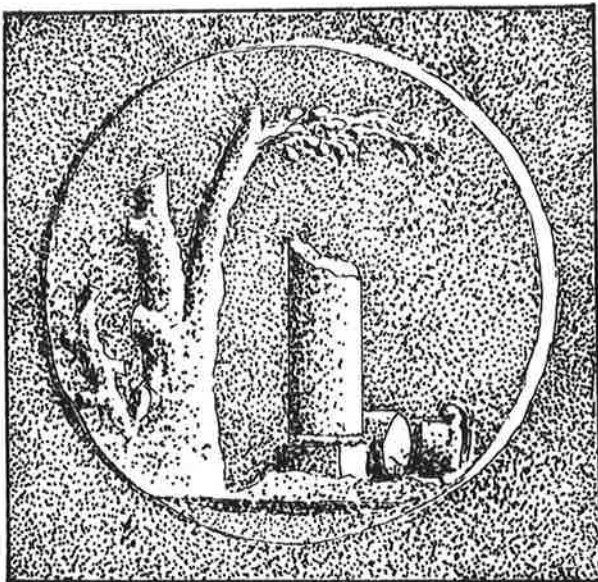
On the front:

IN MEMORY OF /
JAMES GOW ESQ /
DIED / 4TH MARCH /
1837 / AGED / 33
YEARS.

On the back:

ERECTED / BY THE
WORKPEOPLE / ON THE
ESTATE OF POLTAL-
LOCH / WHO WERE /
USUALLY EMPLOYED
UNDER HIS CHARGE /

AND / A FEW PERSONAL FRIENDS / WHO DESIRED TO UNITE IN
PAYING / THIS TRIBUTE / TO DEPARTED WORTH / MDCCCXL.



The monument is flanked by stones to this James Gow's parents; to the right there is an upright slab: SACRED / TO THE MEMORY OF / CATHARINE ROYLANCE / WHO DIED MARCH 19, 1828 / AGED 60 YEARS / THIS MONUMENT OF / CONJUGAL AFFECT-ION / IS ERECTED BY / JAMES GOW AT EXPERIMENT.

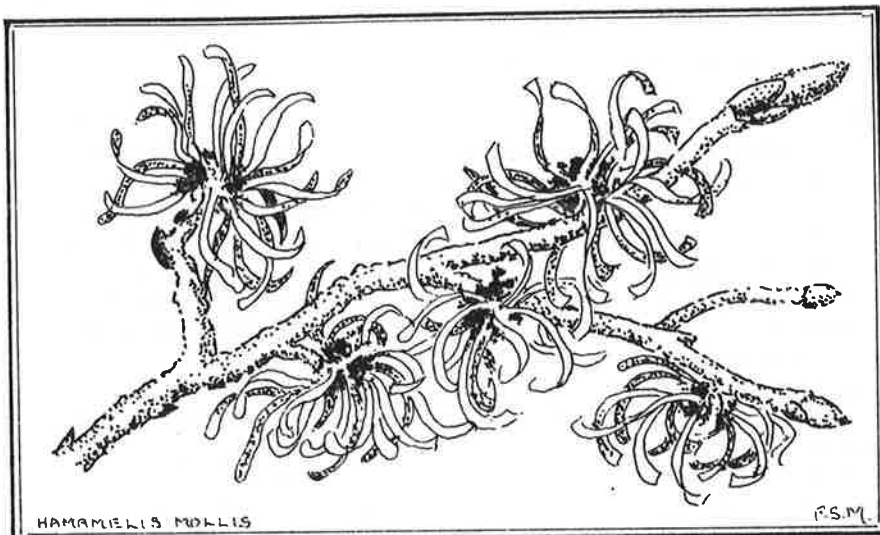
To the left is a table stone; IN MEMORY OF / JAMES GOW / WHO DIED AT RUDALE / ON THE 24TH NOVEMBER / 1855 / IN THE 88 YEAR OF HIS AGE. *

The place-name 'Experiment', mentioned above, may cause speculation. It was the farm on the edge of Crinan Moss now known as Barsloisnach (Bàrr sliosnach = cut-away bluff). The name 'Experiment' arose from an extensive moss reclamation scheme which was initiated there.

Cordial thanks are due to Colin Fergusson for much help at Kilmartin and on many other occasions.

...oooOooo...

* Many years before 1864 a number of Poltalloch cists had been opened "by a factor called Gow". PSAS. LXV. p.279.



A GARDENER'S REFLECTIONS IN AUTUMN

Helen Martin

On reaching the climax of another year it is possible that a depressing sense of futility sometimes threatens to supervene to cloud the gardener's thoughts, a feeling of unending effort seemingly in vain. It matters little that the year may have been adequately productive and that plans have been carried through, for the thought begins to obtrude that much of what he has done will have to be tackled again next year - and the year after that. And behind that daunting reflection lies the consciousness that in the end all his achievements will be lost and forgotten. Only the very few amongst the myriad gardens tended so carefully throughout the country will survive for more than a few generations, and practically none will escape fundamental changes of character.

These sober reflections would be hopelessly daunting if gardening were indeed a matter of fixed and lasting attainment, but when we come to give more thought to it we realise that this is not the case. It is an occupation which knows neither finality nor completedness - like life itself. Our enjoyment of anything depends very largely on an understanding that change, decay and renewal are

immutable factors. If an unchanging perfection were ever possible it would be rendered meaningless and few would crave for such an arid prospect.

The pleasure we get from our gardens each year is not confined to a succession of flowers and produce, however large a part these may play in our satisfaction, but in the ever-changing aspects of their life - the leafless branch with its tight-held buds as much as in the blossoming and fruiting phases which follow; in the dried crispness of the unplanted bulb as much as in the golden miracle which follows its burying. There is not a day throughout the year when the seeing eye fails to note something of vivid interest.

Gardening calls for an understanding of the necessity for producing and maintaining order in our activities, an avoidance of muddled haphazard competition and for the constant goal of an ideal. Order in this sense is greatly different from a mean neatness, where everything is reduced to uniformity and anonymity. Freedom of growth is essential, but all that is jarring or invasive or even wasteful must be dealt with.

To lavish such devoted attention on one's plants, to see them flourishing happily under this careful protection, to reach the point where they become well-loved individuals whose particular needs, and perhaps even foibles, have always been affectionately provided for, is all the reward a good gardener desires,

In tending a garden the same attributes are needed as those called for in the general affairs of life, and there is untold satisfaction in earning the returns of so much unending interest and beauty. But beware of imagining that these benefices arrive as a result of deliberate striving or as the automatic realisation of some sought-after selfish plan; regard them rather as a quiet benediction which crowns the practical part of our year's work.

So he is not perhaps a true gardener who allows feelings of despair and frustration to linger for a moment if they pass through his mind in autumn. Let him reflect rather on the cumulative effect as season follows season in his garden with the subtle developments in character which their succession induces, affecting in turn all aspects of his daily life and contacts.

Extracts from Lord Cockburn's CIRCUIT JOURNEYS

On the Upper Loch Fyne villages- 1838: "The worst thing is the contrast between the quiet little Indian Wigwam-looking hamlets, when seen at a distance, and their utter abomination when approached. It is horrid that human life should be passed in these disgusting holes. It is true that fishing especially when combined with curing cannot be conducted without filth, but there are many proofs that its slobbery nastiness may be concealed, and kept apart from the fishers' dwellings, and that a fishing village may be a beautiful thing. But until the lairds be civilised and cease to be all regularly and systematically bankrupt, it is in vain to expect decency or comfort in the domestic habits of their people."

On an Inveraray jury - 1843: "A jury of fifteen stots acquitted a most aggravated assaulter in spite of the clearest possible evidence, to make up for which they repeatedly and obstinately tried to convict him of another offence, with which it was over and over again explained to them that he was not charged. One does fall in with a bad drove occasionally."

Opinion of Inveraray - 1843: "I have been acquainted with Inveraray since I was a lad, and I never saw it without feeling that it was unworthy of the great reputation that it has contrived to get The castle is abominable, and it and the town are so conspicuously near, that each hurts the other. The head of the loch is too narrow. Except Dunaquaich, which is certainly picturesque, the hills are all insignificant, and those which bound the east side of the loch are utterly paltry. Except in being strewed over by some very fine trees, every one of which, however, is dying of moss, there is nothing in the laying out of the grounds. A brilliant sun gilds anything, but in its ordinary state, Inveraray to me is a scene of heavy dullness."

(Lord Cockburn's strictures related to the town as it was before it became dominated by the Bell Tower, an erection which many people regard as a disaster so far as the appearance of the community goes. Ed.)

THE FAMILIES of BARVRACK

Duncan Beaton

Barvrack (from Bàrr a'Brachd - hill of the cropping; or say some sources, Bràigh-na-bruaich - bankbrae) is a name resurrected by the new house above Dalchenna [just over 2 miles south of Inveraray - Ed.]. The siting is close to the mark as Barvrack of old lay between the farms of Auchnagoul, Auchenbreck (the Commonmuir), Dalchenna and the Garadh crom (Crooked Dyke) near the Kennels at Auchnagoul, the main Furnace-Inveraray road and the Horse Park at Dalchenna. Once supporting a fairly large population and a dairy, the ruins of the farmhouse are in the wood above the entrance to Battlefield Caravan Park; the only place habitable today, apart from the new house, is the roadside cottage above Dalchenna.

From 1700-1900, however, several families based themselves at Barvrack. The following were among them.

Macvicar. Before the arrival of the Campbells in the early 15th century the area of Mid-Argyll was divided among small 'barons'. These included the Macvicars of Barvrack as well as those of Stronmagachan, Cromalt, Carlunan and Brenchoille, all in the parish of Glenaray. The Macvicars were traditionally in the area from the 12th century. The 10th Duke, in his footnote in Highland Papers (vol.IV, pp.49-55) believed that the Macvicars shared a common origin with the Macarthurs of Tiravadich and Inchdrynaich on Lochaweside, and that they in turn were a branch of the Campbells.

Fisher. The MacIneskars, 'Sons of the Fisher(man)', were in Barvrack as early as 1685 when Malcolm Fisher was listed as a rebel for supporting the 9th Earl of Argyll in rebellion. In the following century a James Fisher was Provost and merchant in the town of Inveraray. His daughter married James Campbell, Writer in Inveraray and founder of the Inverneill line. His son Angus succeeded as merchant in Inveraray and by 1746 had purchased Pennymore on Loch Fyne.

Munro. The Munros were also in Barvrack by 1685, when Martin was named as a rebel. Although possibly of different stock from the other Inveraray Munros, descended from

families in Glenshira and Glenarary at this time, the christian name Martin is common to all branches and used today by direct descendants of that Munro in Barvrack almost 300 years ago. The family moved to Kilian in the next generation, and a grandson was amongst those cleared about 1766 to make way for the building of the big house. They then settled in Auchendrain, where they were to remain until early this century.

Campbell. The Barvrack Campbells were not really Campbells at all, but another branch of the Macivers. Duncan Maciver of Stronshira, ancestor of the Maciver-Campbells of Asknish, had possession of Kilian in 1562, but there was a family of the same name in Pennymore as early as the 1470s. From that family the Campbells of Clonary are believed to descend, the most notable being Neil Campbell who had Sasine of Clonary and Auchendrain in 1710. He became a minister and was Principal of Glasgow University from 1723 to 1761.

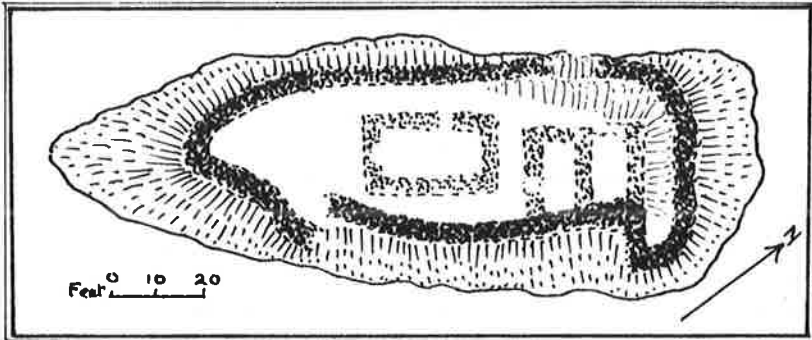
The Macivers, or Campbells, in Barvrack and Auchnagoul were probably 'clansmen' of the Clonary family. They were still there in the 19th century, and a gravestone in Kilmalieu Cemetary commemorates "the family of Dugald McIvor Campbell in Auchnagoul".

Clerk. The Clerks, or Clarks, anciently MacClerichs, were not really a Barvrack family of any antiquity, but one of the last inhabited cottages was known as "Peter Clerk's croft". It stood behind the Crooked Dyke at Auchnagoul and is now engulfed by Forestry.

A family of Clerks were in Mid-Argyll as early as 15th March 1514 and over the next nine generations had various Charters of Braleckan and Pennymore, and even a Sasine of Gortangour (Goatfield) from Lachlan Maclachlan of Strathlachlan on 6th November 1630. The last landowner in this family was Dugald Clerk who sold various properties in 1746-7, and died in 1754.

In the "List of Rebels" for 1685 an Archibald Clerk appeared in Kilian. Peter Clerk, in Kilian in the 1750s, was one of those cleared with his family ten years later. They lived in Auchnagoul for over 100 years, but, like the others, have all gone.

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EILEAN na CIRCE: CAOL SCOTNISH
A Provisional Report

Michael Wyatt Wheeler.

Eilean na Circe (NR767893) is the largest of six small islets at the northern end of Caol Scotnish (1), several of which are submerged at high tide. It is the only one with any appreciable vegetation and is approximately 160 by 60 feet. It lies about 100 yards off the eastern side of the loch and about 175 yards from the western shore. It is composed of fine-grained metamorphic rock with a very pronounced cleavage. This Dalriadian slate is probably of the Cambrian period (2). The dip of the rock, about 45° , is from west to east. The depth of water surrounding the islet varies from under 4 fathoms on the east to 3 fathoms on the west.

The main interest is in the existence of a fortified outer wall enclosing the remains of two buildings. These structures were first noted by Dr David Christison (3). The only other discussion of their significance was by Dr W. Simpson (4).

The fortified outer wall varies in width from 4ft to 4ft 6ins, with a height up to 3ft 6ins. The maximum internal length is 102ft with a width of 32ft. The

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- (1) Ed. note: A narrow, elongated offshoot of Loch Sween
 - (2) Identified by Tim Pettigrew, Sunderland Museum.
 - (3) P.S.A.S. XXXVIII 1903-4 pp.241-243.
 - (4) Dundarg Castle Reconsidered. Trans. Buchan Club. vol.XVII, pt.IV, pp.15-16.

two huts are of rubble construction with walls 3ft thick. The highest remaining section is 5ft 6ins, at the southern corner of the main hut. This hut measures internally 25ft by 12ft; the other has two rooms, 14ft by 7ft and 14ft by 9ft. The entrance through the outer wall is on the southern side, where there is a reasonable landing-point. Christison thought that it was on the northern side but I feel that he was misled by a missing section at that point, probably washed away by storms. When I surveyed the site in July 1980 with my son Angus, I was hampered like Christison by wet weather and undergrowth, but subsequent visits have not altered the details of this survey.

As to dating the remains, Christison felt they were a mixture of prehistoric and mediaeval. Simpson considered it to be an early Christian settlement. However Ian Fisher (5) expressed the view that there is a marked similarity to other island sites in Argyll with defensive walls, which are 16th century or even later, especially the re-entrant angle in the north-east wall (not noted by Christison), which is paralleled in some mediaeval sites. I feel this is a very reasonable dating; however there is a possibility that the hut remains and the outer wall could be of slightly differing dates, as I suspect that there is not enough fallen stone to rebuild both sets of structures to their original height, and I cannot see much incentive to rob the walls for mainland use. Further work is necessary to obtain a definite dating for this interesting site.

The name Island of the Hen-wife refers to a local legend (6) that there was a man whose wife went bad on him so he put her on the island with the hens (7).

The vegetation seems to be entirely natural and included in 1983 Oak, Rowan, Holly, Pine, Birch, Dog-rose, Honeysuckle, Heather, Stonecrop, Knapweed, Ragwort, Sea-pink, Bramble, two Lichens and various Mosses. No mammals or reptiles were seen, and insects were not noted.

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(5) Letter: 8.8.1980. R.C.A.H.M.S.

(6) Letter: Miss Campbell of Kilberry.

(7) Ed. note. The name and legend do not 'fit'; Eil,na Circe is Island of the Hen (gen. of cearc), plural is cearcan, and no 'wife' is implied. In Blaeu's map of 1654 it is clearly named El. Kerk.

HOMING INSTINCT IN CATTLE

Uttermost Part of the Earth by E. Lucas Bridges (Hodier & Stoughton) contains the following passage, from 1887.

The author's family had settled at the southernmost part of Tierra del Fuego, pioneers in the truest sense, with only native Indians for neighbours, treacherous and murderous between themselves, whose language was gradually learned and friendship gained. They eventually owned vast tracts of land in the region.

" a number of indignant cattle from the Falklands were landed on the Harberton peninsula. One day it was reported that four were missing /they/ had swum the harbour at its mouth, where it was over a quarter of a mile wide, and taken to the great forest beyond. From the direction of their tracks /they/ were making a bee-line for the Falklands. Information that reached us years later confirmed that they had continued their course in the same direction, deviating from it only when they encountered insurmountable obstacles. One of them must have perished on the way, but the other three managed to reach the sandstone cliffs that guard the Atlantic coast. From there they could proceed no farther towards the Falklands, and soon fell victims to the arrows of the Ona Indians.

On their voyage from the Falklands to Tierra del Fuego these cattle had been dragged aboard and dumped into the dark hold of a sailing-vessel which, owing to contrary winds, had tacked about in all directions. After more than a week they had been hoisted from the hold by their horns and lowered into the sea, to swim to the nearby beach. How did they know at Harberton the exact direction of their Falkland home? It is over three hundred miles as the crow flies. Even with the best magnetic compass in the hands of an expert mathematician, it would be hard to calculate the meanderings of the Shepherdess in the confines of her hold. Yet the animals knew their course, and only the Atlantic prevented them from continuing on their way."

The route these cattle took was of almost unimaginable difficulty, beset with innumerable sea-inlets, forests, lakes and mountains, and their exploit must be regarded as highly creditable to creatures which are usually looked on as stupid to a degree - 'bovine' in fact.

This paper is abridged from the forthcoming
book on Inveraray by Mr Mackechnie.
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OLD INVERARAY: Two Notes
Donald Mackechnie

Ferry Land and The Jetty.

The name recalls the old days when the ferry was an essential link. Here lived the ferryman above the Ferry Inn - a dram shop the takings of which supplemented his income. Some seven ferries once joined Cowal to real Argyll, the most important being that between Inveraray and St. Catherine's. Another was from Wester Creggans (two miles south of Inveraray) to Easter Creggans in Cowal. By this route in 1563, Mary Queen of Scots, after visiting her half-sister the Countess of Argyll, crossed Loch Fyne on her way to her castle of Dunoon.

From the 17th century, the ferry was let annually to the highest bidder by Inveraray Town Council who provided two sailing boats, one for passengers and a larger one for beasts and goods. The ferryman kept the fares and was bound to carry the magistrates and the minister gratis. In 1827 David Napier introduced competition with his steamer Thalia (later David was to inaugurate the Loch Eck Tour via. Kilmun, Loch Eck, Strachur, Inveraray). Competition was intensified by the intervention of the Loch Goil and Loch Long Steamboat Company in 1829. They ran the ferry with a steamer on a three-year contract with the Town Council. A coach carried passengers from St. Catherine's via. Hell's Glen to Lochgoilhead where they joined a steamer for Greenock. In 1856 their new steamer, the Argyll, appeared. She was not a success. Alexander Smith (1830-1867) author of A Summer in Skye, described her as "a small wash-tub of a steamer that carries you across Loch Fyne in an hour". Smith advises travellers to sit near Coachy Jock, driver of the Lochgoilhead coach, who will shorten the journey by his humourous tales. With the tips from his happy passengers, John Campbell built the school at St. Catherine's in 1857.

In 1865 a new firm, the Inveraray Ferry and Coach Company, outbid the Loch Goil and Loch Long Company. Their steamer was the Fairy I. It did not pay and in 1892 the Inveraray Town Council set up the ferry as a municipal

enterprise with Fairy II, a beautiful little steel paddle-steamer. Following her wreck in a gale in December 1912, the ferry reverted to a sailing boat, later to be replaced by a motor-launch. In 1917 the Ferry House, now no longer an inn, was occupied by the ferrier who received a small subsidy from the Town Council. The coming of the motor-bus, Link Lines and MacBrayne's, put the ferry out of business and it ended in 1963.

The little jetty pre-dates the introduction of water and water-closets into the houses. From it at nightfall pails of household filth were emptied from the jetty into the loch to be swept away by the tide. This did not always happen and in summer heat the stench became abominable. On occasion the Town Council employed men to clean the breast wall. An illuminating item from the Estate Accounts - "1869 June. Paid Philip Kelly cleaning away filth from the breast walls half year - £3."

The mediaeval practices of the old town persisted in the new and people still deposited their "ashes, filth and other nastiness" on the street in front of their houses. The herring-fishers threw refuse from their boats on streets and shore "to the great stink and putrefaction" of the town. Pigs and cows wandered about the streets. In 1803 Dorothy Wordsworth described the backs of the houses as a doleful example of Scotch filth. The duke erected dung-pits but hygiene made slow progress. Throughout the 19th century epidemics were common.

Crombie's Land.

Built in 1825 this house still bears the name of its first tenant, Alexander Crombie.

It is the birthplace of Neil Munro (1863-1930), the Scottish novelist and poet and Inveraray's most distinguished son. His mother was Ann Munro. His father is unknown. As his mother was employed as a maid in the Castle and at other times in the Manse, Neil was brought up by his grandmother. Like most 'Hielan' grannies', she had an endless repertoire of old tales and traditions of which in days to come Neil was to make good use. She appears too as the Goodwife of Lecknamban in Gilian the Dreamer. As Gaelic was his first language, it is no surprise to find many a Gaelic turn of phrase in his novels.

Neil attended the Parish School in Church Square whose

head from 1854 to 1901 was Henry Dunn Smith, M.A., a sound scholar and a notable disciplinarian. His nickname was "Old Skull". The curriculum was the 3 Rs, Bible knowledge and a smattering of Latin, Greek, French and Mathematics. Of his schooldays Neil was later to write - "Those lovely unperplexed and simple days when I deliberately refused to learn anything and yet in some mysterious way was learning all that was to be of any use to me in after life."

Early he discovered the charm of books. By the age of eleven he had read all the novels in the Sunday School library. A local shopkeeper, fallen heir to a deceased gentleman's books, set up a lending library which supplied Neil with such 'way-out' volumes as The Castle of Otranto, The Mysteries of Udolpho, The Monk (which she told him had been written in Inveraray Castle), Frankenstein and Moll Flanders.

His private reading room was the foot-wide ledge on the Ramparts Wall, behind the Courthouse yard. Concealed from view by the projecting bastions, with his legs dangling above the sea, he read the sunny hours away.

His school chums, whose friendship lasted throughout his life, were Charlie Markland, Bob Fraser, Bob Clark and Archie MacKellar. Three of them carried him to his grave in Kilmalieu.

In 1875 Ann Munro married the widower Malcom (sic.) Thomson (1803-1891), the Governor of the Jail, and Neil went to live in the Governor's house in the Courthouse.

Aged 13 Neil left school and went to work as a junior clerk in the office of William Douglas (1823-1903), a lawyer, where he remained for five years and where he learned shorthand. Douglas's house in the Main Street is marked by the "Brass Man's Hand" of which Neil was to write in The Daft Days. Later it was to be the holiday home of Neil and his family. In the garden behind the house is the gravestone of Douglas's dog, Footles, which appears in The Daft Days.

In 1881 Neil and Archie MacKellar set off for Glasgow to seek their fortune. Neil's first job was as a clerk in an ironmonger's shop. But his mind had turned to journalism and he submitted poems and reports of Highland activities in Glasgow to the Oban Times. Next he became a reporter on the Greenock Advertiser at 25s. a week. This was followed by reporting jobs on the Glasgow News, the

Falkirk Herald, and in 1888 he became chief reporter on the Glasgow Evening News at a salary of £100 per annum. With this paper he was to be closely associated for the rest of his life. As editor he brought it to a high level of excellence.

The Lost Pibroch appeared in 1896. It is a volume of short stories, many inspired by the old tales and traditions recounted by his granny round the fire. Then followed the novels which brought him recognition and an established place in literature. John Splendid (1898), Gilian the Dreamer (1899), Doom Castle (1901), The Daft Days (1907), Fancy Farm (1910), The New Road (1914), Jaunty Jock (1918).

Glasgow and Edinburgh Universities conferred on him the degree of LL.D.

In 1901 the Town Council of Inveraray enrolled him as a Burgess Freeman. The words he spoke at the ceremony bring home to us his love of the place ... "The things we love intensely are the things worth writing about. I never could keep Inveraray out of any story of mine and I never will. I'll not even try though I may cunningly manage to conceal the fact from you. A small field to till it may be said, but I know better. This parish though you may not think it, is a miniature of the world."

Neil Munro apparently thought little of the hilarious sketches he turned out every Monday evening in the Glasgow Evening News over the name of Hugh Foulis. Nevertheless the Vital Spark, Para Handy, Dugie, MacPhail, Hurricane Jack were immensely popular. For many nowadays, Hugh Foulis has eclipsed Neil Munro.

Neil Munro died on 22nd December 1930. He was buried in the ancient graveyard of Kilmalieu where lie many of the heroes of his novels.

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MID-ARGYLL: An Archaeological Guide. Marion Campbell,

Miss Campbell's highly successful earlier booklet on the subject, despite re-printings and new editions, became once more 'sold out'. Rather than continue a process of up-dating, the author decided to start from the beginning and produce an entirely new work. Everyone must agree that this has been done superbly; not only is all information brought up to date by incorporating the latest attitudes on the subject, but the entire lay-out has been changed to make the booklet much more useful to visitors (and 'natives' too) and more logical in presentation. In every way it is essential reading for all who are interested in our Mid-Argyll antiquities and their background.

F.M.

From Tourist Information Centres, Argyll shops, £1.60 or direct (post extra) from the Publications Sec. (address on inside of Kist front cover.)

Tayvallich and Taynish. Veronica Gainford.

This is not a guide book or, as the author declares in her Preface, a history of this delightful part of Argyll. Rather it is the product of fifty years' residence - her thoughts of people and places in the district and holding a perfect balance between the past and the present.

Agriculture, education and transport are well covered and good use has been made of old documents relating to them. All have been written with a deep feeling of affection for things past. But not for long, as with a bright eye she views the present mode of life with pleasure.

With so much to recommend it, it is a pity that a proof-reading of the booklet had not been done before final printing, as a number of typographical errors could have been avoided. However, this is a slight defect which in no way detracts from a well-researched and nicely-priced book.

C.F.F.

Tayvallich and Taynish - Veronica Gainford. Price £1.50, from local booksellers or direct from the Dowager Lady Gainford, Duntaynish, Tayvallich, by Lochgilphead.