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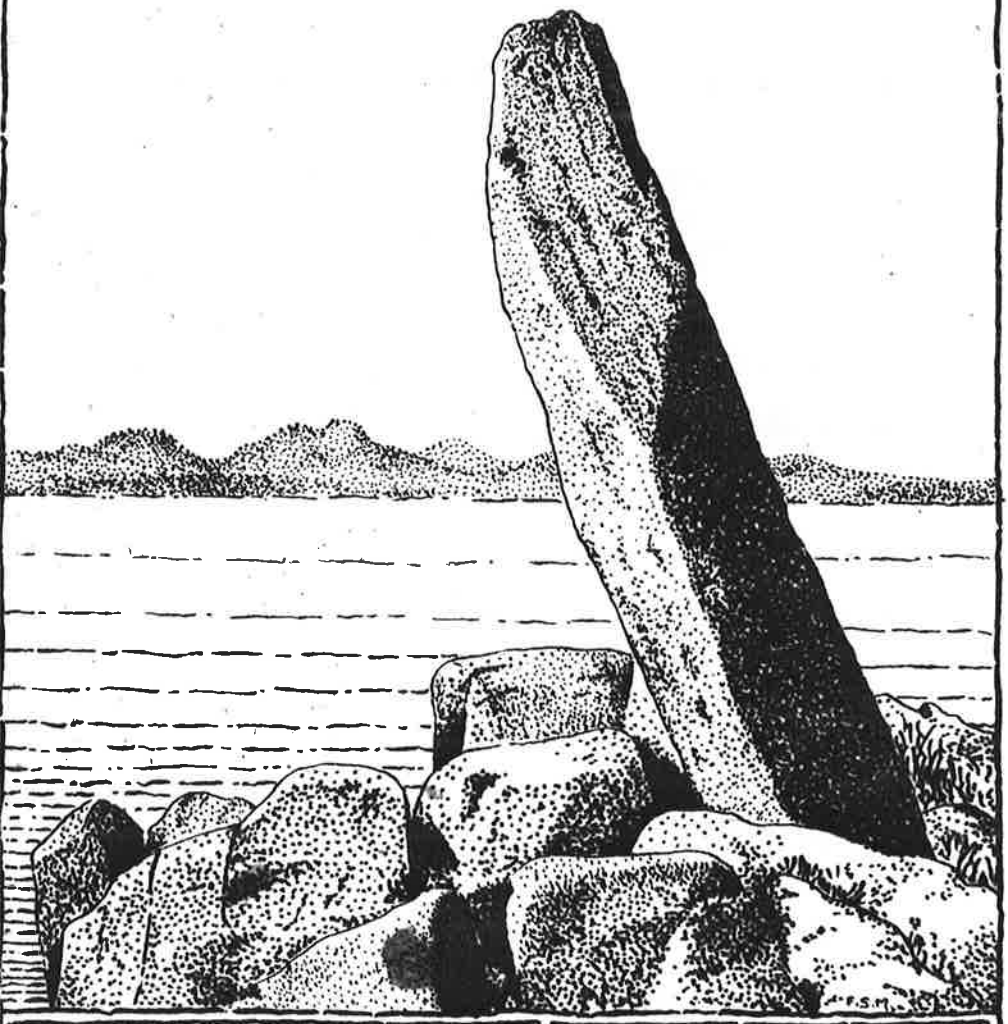

The KIST : 19

THE KIST

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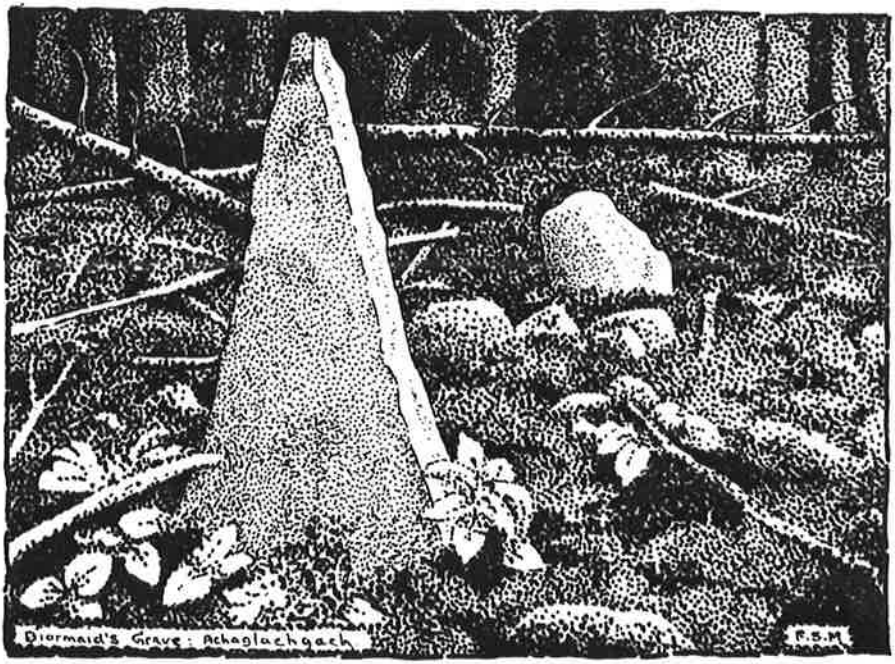

THE BOAR HUNT

Marion Campbell

Celtic legends (as I have said elsewhere) have as many skins as an onion; one strips off the fairystory to reach the joke, and inside that the explanation of placenames, and the compliment to a local chief, and a pun or two, and then you reach a layer of grim reality; and still within that is hidden a moral or a deeply-rooted religious truth. I say "or" - for Celtic religions were not necessarily moral in the Christian sense; the Dagda, whose title was "the good god", was good at fighting, feasting, drinking, craftsmanship - not "virtuous" though he "had virtue" in the early use of that phrase. If one comes to these myths as an alien, they may appear ludicrous or uncouth; if one has grown up with them, one may never get round to thinking of their inner meanings.

I must have been in my fourth year when I first went to Diarmaid's Grave at Achaglachgach - an oval mound with a conical "headstone", now hidden in the depths of Achaglachgach Forest. As we went, my father told me the story of

Diarmaid - how he was, perhaps, the ancestor of all the Campbells; how he had belonged to a war-band led by his uncle Fionn, ("Fingal"), and how he had run away with his uncle's wife, which had made Fionn very angry. (I reasoned that probably he had made Auntie run too fast - they were always telling me "You mustn't ask your poor aunt" to do this or that). Well then, Fionn had a horn - no, not a poop-poop rubber horn like the old Ford's, a sort of trumpet - and when he blew it, all the band had to fall in. So, when he was asked to hunt down a vicious wild boar that was terrorising the district, he blew his horn to bring Diarmaid back, because Diarmaid was his best hunter. So Diarmaid heard, and came, and when the hunt started he went ahead of all the rest, and when they caught up he was standing by the boar which he had just killed. And then Fionn told Diarmaid to step the boar and see how big it really was; and Diarmaid had been dunked in a magic cauldron, as a baby, to protect him from poison, but the back of one heel wasn't protected because his mother had held him by it - just like Achilles. So he stepped the boar from nose to tail, and Fionn said it couldn't be as big as that, "Step it again". And he turned and stepped it the other way, and the boar's poisoned bristle went into his heel, and he fell down dying.

Now he begged for water, and Fionn ran to fetch it from a burn nearby; but as he rose with his cupped hands full of water he remembered Grainne and the elopement, and he spilt the water. Then he heard Diarmaid call, and he remembered instead his love for his nephew, and he turned back to the burn. And so on, twice more, until at the third time love triumphed over jealousy and he brought the water - too late. So they buried Diarmaid here, in this grave, and to prove it there's Torr an Tuirc, the Boar's Hillock, over there - and Leum na Muic, the Pig's Leap, across the loch (for the great boar had leapt West Loch Tarbert during the chase) and many other places that you may see some day. And the whole story sank into my mind as surely as if I had witnessed the hunt myself.

Years later, I was shocked to find that there was another supposed "Diarmaid's Grave" near Strontoiller, in the hills east of Oban. This was a blatant error by the Lorn people; so too were attempts to place the great hunt

outside Argyll altogether, even in Ireland. It was a terrible display of ignorance by everyone else; I knew the true place.

But recently I have gone through all the 1" Ordnance Survey maps for Scotland, and I find traces of at least a dozen "tracks of the boar", some with their legends still attached to them, from the flanks of Ben Loyal in Sutherland to Galloway, and even to the neighbourhood of Falkirk. Strangest of all is a reference in early charters of the Cathedral Priory of St Andrews to cursus apri, "The Boar's Race", which seems to have run from near the village of Boarhills in a half-moon circuit round the city. (Can this have been some pagan sanctuary made over to the Celtic monastery that preceded the Cathedral?).

The placenames usually include a Beinn a'Chaillich, Hill of the Old Woman, and in Gaelic-speaking areas a Suidhe Fhinn, Fionn's Seat; southward, in the British - (Welsh) - speaking area, Fionn is replaced by Arthur. Sometimes (as in Glenshee) the action takes place around a hill called Ben Gulvain, which suggests that the whole Irish story has been bodily transferred to Scotland, for the Irish hunt centred likewise on Benbulben (Beann Gulban)in Co. Sligo.

The story is told in full in Irish sources - how Grainne, the young bride of the ageing Fionn, bewitched Diarmaid into eloping with her; how he protected her but refused to yield to her; how the pigs of "Old Grey Eyebrows" (Mala Liath) ravaged the land until Fionn was implored to hunt them down; and how Diarmaid alone killed the boar and died of Fionn's jealousy thereafter. A great part of it is told again, with Arthur at its centre, in the Mabinogion, the early-medieval recension of native traditional tales. Here the hunting of the Twrch Trwyth and his seven young pigs forms only a part of the tale of Culhwch and Olwen, a vast epic full of outlines or headings for secondary stories. There is no elopement here and no jealousy, but Olwen, the bride to be won by heroic feats, is a Spring Maiden, for white trefoils spring from her footprints; and once the boar has swum out to sea, the heroes can go on to kill "the Black Witch, Daughter of the White Witch", who had set him loose.

The Twrch Trwyth is not killed, but swims away from Cornwall. A tiny fragment of our own Boar Hunt only

reached me in 1974 when I found, in a booklet of local tales collected by children in Lorn and sold for the Red Cross, the statement that the whirlpool of Corryvreckan was "Supposed to be a gateway to the underworld of the seagods", and that a sow escaped from that underworld, swam ashore on Scarba and had nine piglets which grew up to roam the mainland forests. "The boar killed by Diarmaid, founder of Clan Campbell, was supposed to be one of these".

So what do we have? Simply an Irish myth transplanted and localised, as good story-tellers always localise, with the incorporation of established names? But if that was the case, why were the placenames there already?

I think it is possible that by the early centuries AD the tale was indeed transplanted and localised; but I think also that beneath both it and the placenames lay a deeper stratum of forgotten religious meaning. Of course the wild boar was widely used as a tribal symbol - especially among Celtic races; from Dunadd to Pictland, southern Britain, and Gaul, there are carvings and statuettes of boars, and a charging boar was the emblem of the Twentieth Legion, Valeria Victrix. (When this Legion served on the Antonine Wall, what effect did this totem have on the natives?). Anyone who saw the STV film of wild pigs attacking a leopard, at Christmas 1978, must have acquired a powerful impression of these beasts' speed and courage. But looking behind all this, I think I can glimpse a time when the earlier Celts, perhaps following their pre-Celtic neighbours, revered a trinity of goddesses, the Matres of Roman Gaul, the Cailleach, the Mother and the Maiden of Irish myth. I see the boar as the special animal of the Cailleach, the Old Woman, the winter-goddess of storms (who, as we know, washes her blankets in Coire Bhreacain and spreads them on Scarba with the first snows of winter). I have suggested (in The Dark Twin) that there was once a real hunt, a test of courage and of fitness to be the mate of the Spring Maiden, a rite of passage between boyhood and manhood. (Diarmaid alone could kill the boar, which should have proved his innocence to Fionn). And I suggest that through time such hunts died out, perhaps when there were fewer boars to hunt, and instead a procession "walked the track of the boar" with bards reciting each episode of the legend at the appropriate place.

Today in Brittany there are annual processions called Pardons, which range over a dozen miles of country to visit places associated with episodes of a local saint's life; many of these sites are marked by prehistoric cairns or standing-stones.

Before this is swept aside as wholly unsupported, let me add one thing. Ten years ago I met a man younger than myself who told me that during his childhood in Tarbert, his father used to take him out on summer weekends to visit Leum na Muic and Torrantuirk and the other places of my own childhood knowledge; he was too young, he said, to be able to do the whole thing in one go, but each weekend they would walk a different part of "the Track of the Boar".

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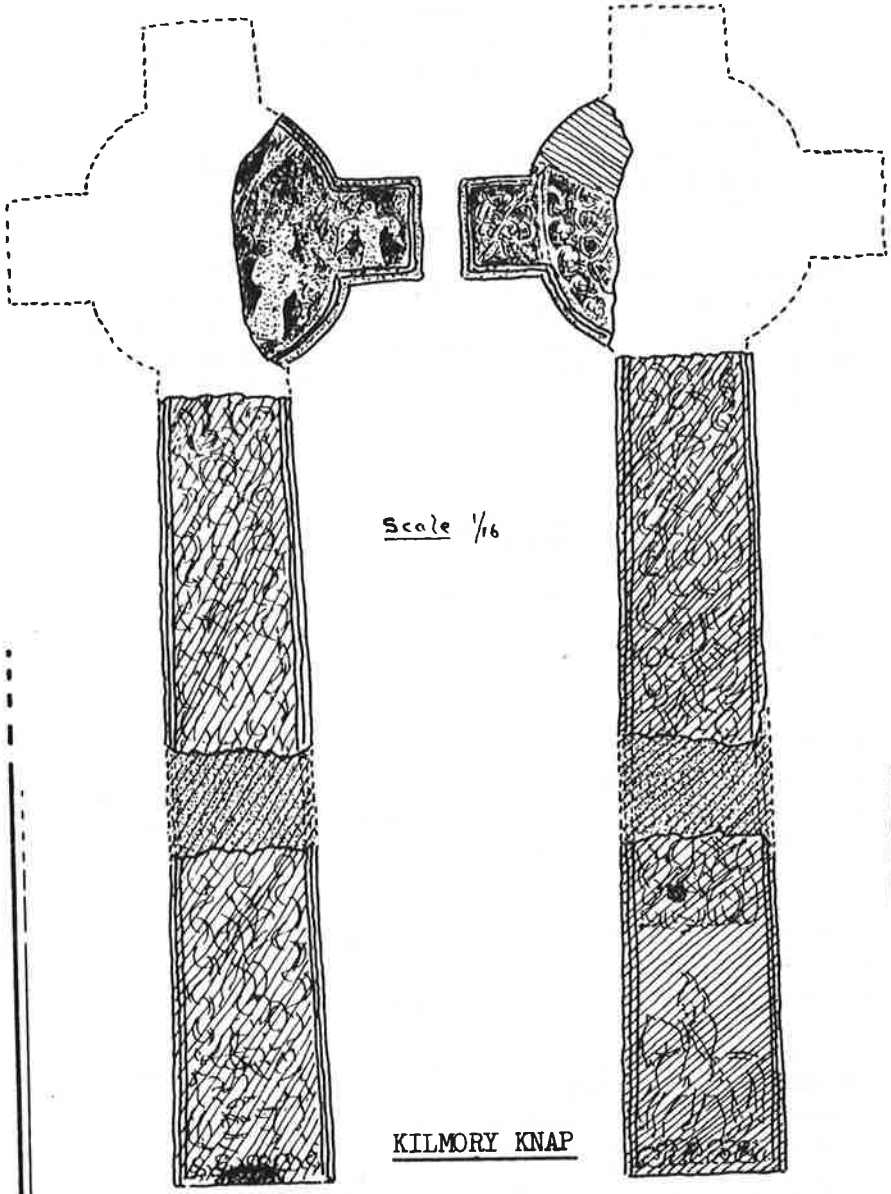
ARCHAEOLOGICAL NOTES

Kilmory Knap. Dunadd. Kintraw.

Kilmory Knap. In early June, 1979, Neil Iacopi, from York, a young man who is a frequent visitor to this area with his parents, was in the process of making a dam in the Kilmory burn, near the Chapel, when he found a fragment of sculptured stone. This was reported to our Committee member, Mrs Hooton, who at once recognised its significance and alerted our President as well as the authorities in Edinburgh.

The stone is part of a cross head, with one lateral arm and the two adjacent segments complete, and it belongs unquestionably to the cross shaft at present erected inside the Chapel. The identity of the original cross is established from a reading by Edward Lhuyd in 1699 or 1700 of a now-erased inscription above the horseman, stating (in translation) "This is the cross made by Duncanus for himself and his father Colinus MacMillan". This enables us to suggest a date early in the 1500's for the carving of the cross, which is of Iona School type.

The shaft is in two portions with a missing central section, and until now nothing was known of the head. It is beyond question that the newly-found stone belongs



The cross of Duncan and Gille-Colum MacMillan, with the portion of the head found in June 1979 shown in its approximate original position. F.S.M.

to this shaft. Apart from the matching border of two plain bands there is the repetition round the central medallion of the curving trefoil design which occurs on both faces of the shaft at its base.

Mrs Hooton tells us of the statement of an aged local resident who used to declare that he had seen part of the cross in use as a stepping stone over the burn. This led to searching which proved fruitless as the find-site lies well up-stream of the supposed crossing-place. (This is a circumstance which suggests the possibility that the old man may have been referring to another fragment, still unlocated. It seems that the course of the burn has been considerably modified by children's activities, and the several small 'islands' were made, no doubt, with the aid of a foundation of stones. An organised search might be a good thing),

Coming to details, the area represented by the newly found fragment is shown on the scale drawing opposite, in which the carving on the shaft is indicated roughly while that on the head-fragment is as detailed as space allows.

The front shows very distinctly on the arm a typical angel, with another, larger, figure inside the circumference of the disc, very clear as to lower outline and probably representing a figure with one or both arms bent at the elbow (parallels exist), and finally a clearly defined left hand and forearm, obviously in the crucifixion position. The intervening spaces seem to have been occupied by carving but its nature can only be surmised.

In the case of the back of the fragment, about one third of the segment of the central disc is missing where the surface has been broken away but the remaining portion amply suffices to demonstrate the original pattern of the whole carving. There has been a large central rosette of interlace, bordered by a band of trefoil-headed curves. The arm has a square interlace of pointed and oval-ended loops; the central resolution of this interlacing is not entirely clear. The whole of the undamaged surface is bordered, like the shaft, with two plain bands separated by a groove.

The carving on the front of the shaft is very well shown in the frontispiece of Late Medieval Monumental Sculpture in the West Highlands (Steer and Bannerman).

The nearest parallel to this cross, and it is a close one, is the cross at Kilchoman in Islay, although the latter is rather more sophisticated in some of its details. (vide Steer and Bannerman, op.cit. pl.12A and B. At Kilchoman we have the attendant angels, two smaller figures beneath the cross (at Kilmory there is room for only one), the pair of animals at the base and the horseman on the back.

This recent addition to our sculptured stones is very welcome and satisfactory.

Dunadd. Anxiety has been felt for many years regarding the deterioration of the carvings at Dunadd (see Kist 12). All previous measures towards protection had proved unsatisfactory, but the final solution this year was to have a minutely exact replica cast in a modern stone-based material and placed over the original. Much uneasiness was felt at any such manoeuvre being adopted, but having inspected the finished product in situ, it is safe to claim that it is absolutely impossible to notice any difference from the original surface and carvings, and with the edges and the holding-down bolts concealed by turf, no one can detect that it is not the original they are examining. There is the paramount advantage of total protection, with the capability of removal at any time in the future.

Kintraw. The standing stone at Kintraw (Kist 4 cover) fell during the night of 3-4 March 1979, and apparently the Editor was the first to notice what had happened. The appropriate authorities were alerted, and after professional investigation of the socket hole (negative except for numerous pieces of white quartz) it was again erected a few weeks later and securely founded. It had been inclining increasingly over the years and its fall can be attributed to the excessive and prolonged winter. The total length, now for the first time ascertainable, was 17'7", and of this there had been 3'6" below ground.

Some local people obviously regarded the falling of 'their' stone as a dire warning of personal mishap. We have not heard that their anxieties were justified.

Kist 20 will have an official report on the re-erection from Mr Trevor Cowie of the Central Excavation Unit, Scottish Development Department, who carried out the task.

THOUGHTS ON THE USE OF THE BRAINPORT BAY STRUCTURES

P. Fane Gladwin

General Introduction.

Nearly three years have passed since the first discovery of structures at Brainport Bay, and it seems an opportune time to set down a number of ideas and speculations concerning the manner in which they may have been used in prehistoric times.

Whilst there is a fair amount of negative evidence against the site having been used for any purposes other than solar observation and ritual, the positive evidence still depends to a large degree on an interpretation of the physical facts which is not as yet supported by scientific proof.

In spite of this, however, so much has been learned about the site that it is hoped the ensuing paper may be of some value in building a comprehensive picture.

The first and most important physical fact about Brainport is that on this particular spot a series of man-made and natural features are set exactly in line towards the North-East over a distance of some 150 yards. They are in fact orientated in such a way that their central axis points slightly less than 1°E of the spot on the far distant skyline where the first flash of the rising sun at Mid-Summer would have occurred around 1800 BC. Indeed, there is a possibility that, originally, in what I have termed Phase 1, the alignment may have been directed more closely on the "first flash" position. This, however, would have been more difficult to achieve as well as being probably less accurate. It may, therefore, have been abandoned at a later stage in favour of more accurate methods. Before going on to consider in more detail how the observing at Brainport may have been carried out, it could be of interest to look at the position of the site in a prehistoric context. How does it fit in with the known pattern indicated by other sites nearby?

The strip of land between Achnagoul south of Inveraray and Lochgair (about 13 miles) contains the remains of at least six chambered cairns and several smaller cairns. The largest of the chambered cairns, that at Crarae, is a little more than one mile from the Brainport site. If,

as is supposed, these tombs were used mostly for collective burials, they would seem to indicate the existence of quite a large population in the area at the time of their construction and throughout the period of their use. Brainport is near the southern end of this coastal strip, and it may also be significant that from time immemorial a route has existed over the pass known as the Bealach Ghearran west of Brainport, which connected it with the better known prehistoric settlement sites of Kilmichael and Kilmartin.

Moving nearer to the structures themselves, we find a group of weathered cup-marks a short distance away, and an interesting ovoid cairn of unusual type close to the South West end of the alignment. There is in addition some evidence that large slabs were quarried in prehistoric times just west of the site. With all this evidence of local prehistoric activity it is perhaps not too surprising to find a small sun observatory and ritual centre at a location such as Brainport which is so well placed geographically for this type of activity.

Requirements and Possible Phases.

At Brainport, where the constituent parts are orientated towards the Summer Solstice, it seems fair to assume that the site could have been constructed for several differing purposes. The first of these could have been the noting of the exact date of the Solstice for the compilation of an accurate calendar. Another could have been for the carrying out of religious practices connected with sun worship. Yet another could have been for the practising of more advanced forms of astronomy. All the available evidence at Brainport, leads one to suppose that the first two of these purposes were intended, but probably not the third, except insofar as it may have been possible from solar observation alone.

It seems reasonable to suppose that all sites such as Brainport may have passed through three phases in the course of their history. The first of these could be termed the "establishment" phase, during which the extreme northward movement of the sun would be noted and perhaps marked in a temporary manner until such time as the observers became confident enough to set up permanent markers. This phase could perhaps have been completed within about ten to fifteen years, if conditions were favourable. After this, the very long phase of use and development, perhaps over

a period of centuries, would have occurred, and it would be during this phase that religious rituals might have developed whilst at the same time more sophisticated methods of sighting were worked out. Finally, we may visualise a third and last phase, of decline, when some of the old skills became lost, religious observances became less fervent, and new types of calendar appeared, culminating in the general acceptance of the Roman calendar brought, perhaps, by the first Christian missionaries.

Although we see the site today as it was when it fell into disuse, there is no reason to suppose that it would have changed much in its physical aspects during the period of its ultimate decline.

Before going on to discuss the possible sighting arrangements at Brainport in detail there is an important point to consider. Whilst for calendar purposes it would be necessary to fix the exact day of the Solstice each year; for religious purposes, so that people could be assembled, perhaps from some little distance, it would in fact be necessary to obtain at least a week or even ten days warning of the event. How can the two requirements best be reconciled? At first sight it would seem to be difficult but it need not have been, if the site were to incorporate a clear horizon mark against which to check the position of the sun at the appropriate time before the Solstice. This could well have been the case at Brainport. After a few years experienced observation, the number of nights from the check-point to the Solstice would be known with accuracy and the necessary warnings could be sent out.

The great advantage of this system would be that the observation is made at a time when the sun is moving each day by a noticeable amount. Besides being able to give an accurate warning, the date itself can be checked by counting the nights until the sun returns to the horizon mark and then making up the calendar from the middle night.

There remains the question of whether sighting is best done on the path of the sun's rim or on its apparent centre-line when rising. This would no doubt depend to a large extent on the shape and distance of the skyline, but in the case of Brainport it has been noted that the apparent diameter of the sun's disc varies very greatly from day to day during the period around mid-summer owing to differing haze and refraction conditions. This fact might

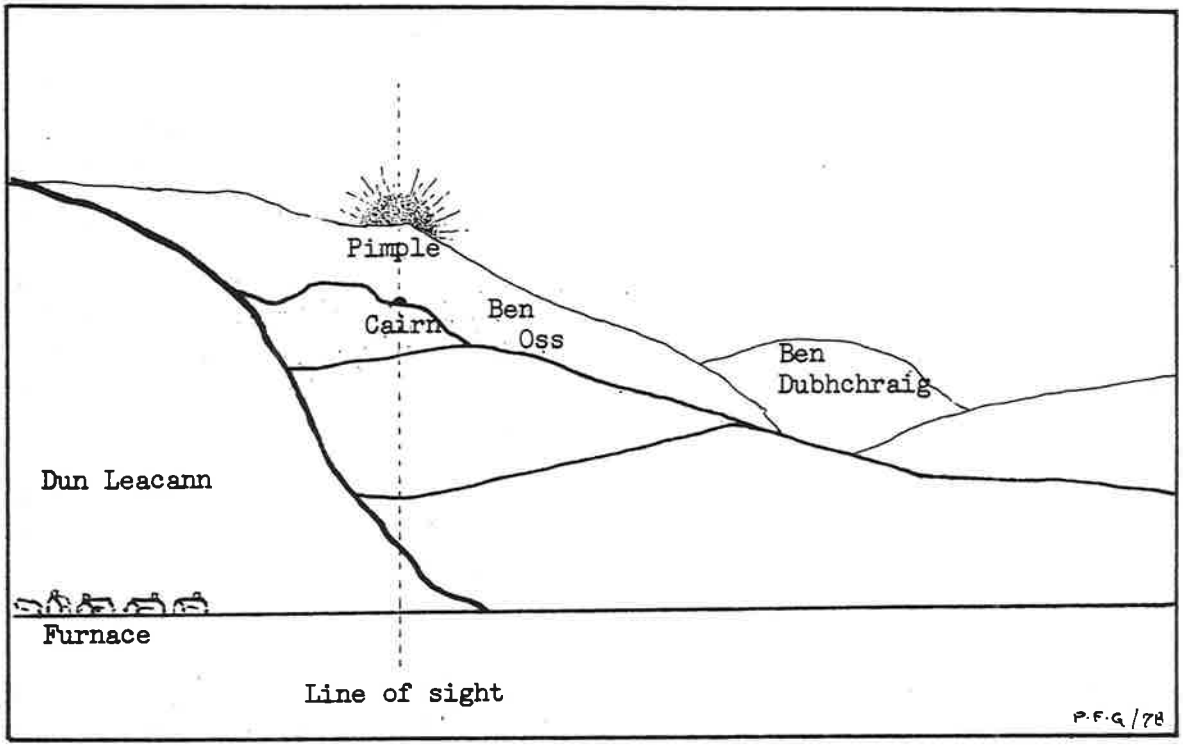


Fig. I

BRAINPORT
Solstice Sighting. Phase I

well militate against the accuracy of "rim" sightings and might make sightings based on the apparent centre-line of the sun's disc more accurate. In general it would seem that the greater the distance to the skyline, the more likely it is that variations in the apparent size of the sun's disc will occur and we must therefore remind ourselves that in the case of Brainport, the skyline is far indeed, 27 miles!

Conjectural Sighting Systems at Brainport.

There seems to have been the possibility of two separate sighting systems at Brainport. One of these was towards the actual point of "first flash" about 1800 BC and the other was towards a convenient sighting notch on the skyline which would give perhaps ten days notice of the Solstice.

The first system would have depended entirely on the fact of the cairn on the skyline of Doire Na Criche having been built as a part of the alignment. Certainly it was very exactly placed on the sight-line from the back platform at Brainport to the area of the "Pimple" on the slope of Ben Oss, 26 miles away, a rather unlikely coincidence (see fig.1). This would have been the point of "first flash" about 1800 BC.

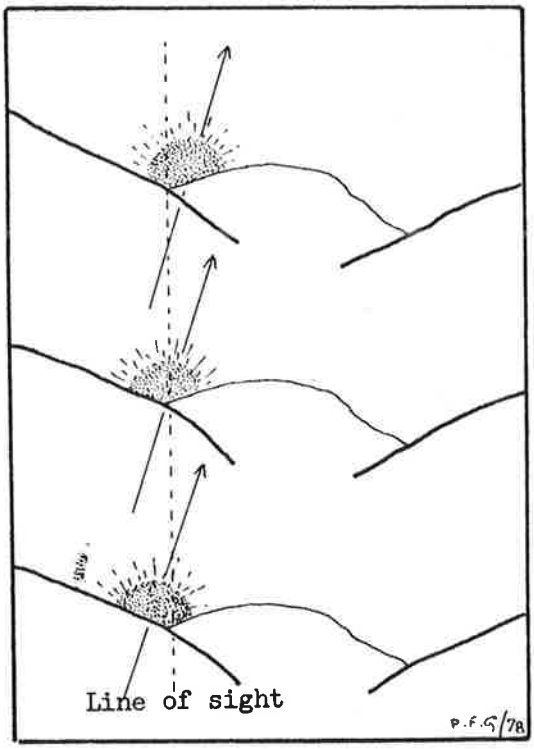
One can perhaps visualise a fire being lit beside the cairn each morning to provide a "fixed line" of sight towards the Pimple, against which the movement of the sun would have been judged.

This system would have had one advantage, namely that even when distant visibility was bad the Solstice date could be roughly judged by sighting on the fire alone. In fact, owing to the near impossibility of observing the movement of the sun during the last two days, this system would probably have produced an accurate answer only once in three years or so.

The second and perhaps later sighting system would involve noting the approach of the sun to the Solstice until, say, ten days before the date, the sun would be seen to rise with the V-shaped nick between the slopes of Ben Oss and Ben Dubhchraig at its centre (see fig 11).

To the experienced observer this would then indicate a specific number of nights to the Solstice and would enable due warning to be given to the local population. Later, to check privately that the date was correct for calendar

Fig. II



BRAINPORT
Judging the right day. Phase II

purposes the number of nights till the sun returned to the same skyline nick could be counted and halved. As with any method of sighting, it would be desirable for the observer's eye to be in the same position each morning to obtain accurate results, and to ensure this may have been the main purpose of the two upright "pointer" stones.

These stones are placed 15 yards apart, the nearer one being approximately 20 yards in front of the observer and along his line of sight. If we were to assume that the stones stood perfectly upright in their sockets as at present placed, one can adjust the line of sight so that the "nick" between Ben Oss and Ben Dubhchraig appears in the centre of a narrow gap between the inner faces of the two stones (see fig 111).

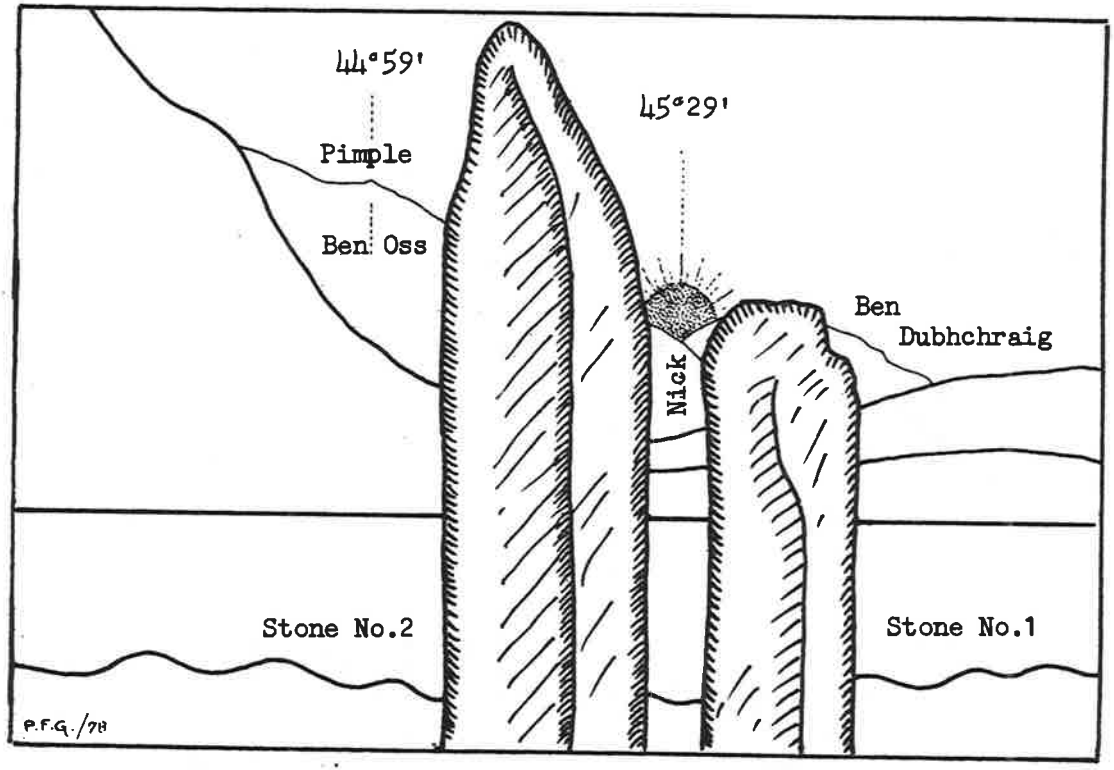


Fig. III **BRAINPORT ALIGNMENT**

Pre-Solstice Sighting. Phase II

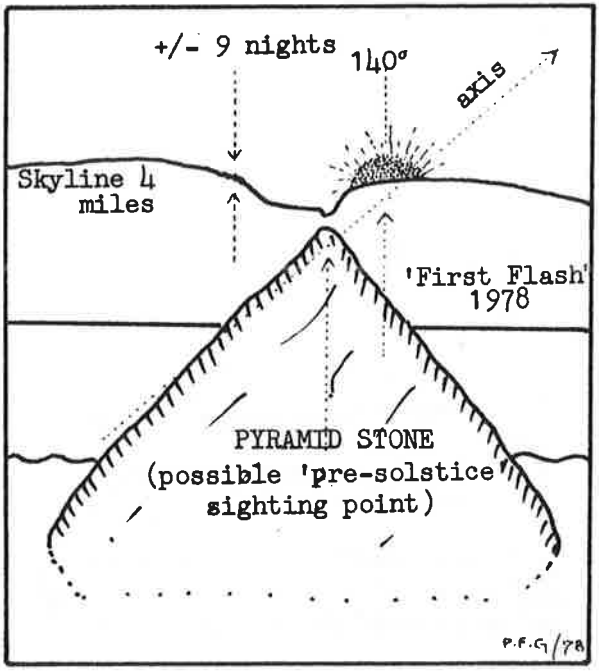


Fig. IV

Mid-winter Solstice as viewed from BRAINPORT

The effect of narrowing the sight-line in this way between the stones is to focus the eye on the distant nick, and it should have helped greatly in noting the arrival of the sun at the correct point.

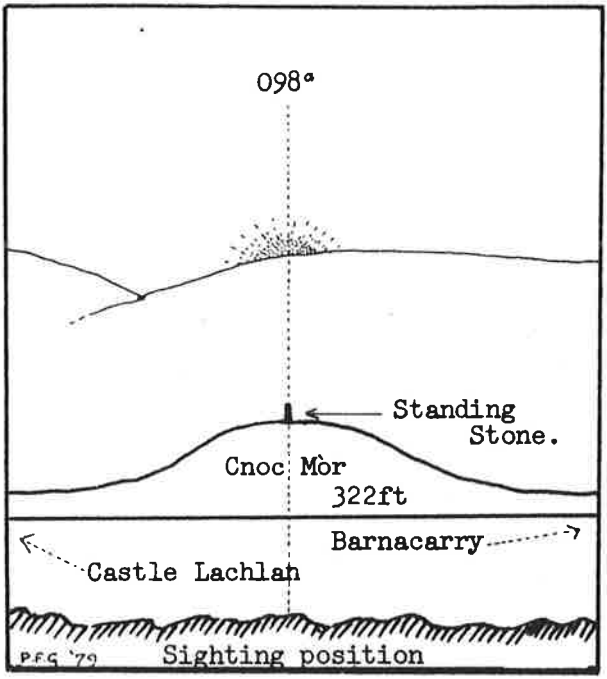
Given a few years experience this second method of sighting seems simple enough to have been done by "rule of thumb" methods and the use of no particular skill other than keen observation and simple counting ability.

There remains the question of whether the people of Brainport attempted to make observations at the three other "Quarter" days, namely the winter Solstice and the two Equinoxes.

The mid-winter sun rises over rather a flat skyline less than 4 miles distant on the other side of Loch Fyne, making accurate observation near the Solstice difficult. It is possible that some system existed for a pre-solstice observation making use of the tip of a large pyramidal stone as a pointer and lining it up with a distant notch on the opposite skyline formed by the gully of a burn, (see fig IV). As regards the Equinoxes, however, the

Fig.V

Brainport
Equinox
Sunrise.



picture is somewhat different. Here we have a neatly constructed stone platform facing due west and a skyline which, although close, consists of a serrated ridge of rock ideal for observation. Furthermore, we have at the Equinoxes, the greatest daily movement on which to sight. It would, therefore, have been fairly easy to carry out a good calendar check at sunset on the days of the Equinoxes in March and September.

As regards the Sunrise on these days, when the "first flash" occurs on a featureless part of the skyline, it may be significant that across the Loch there is a Standing Stone on the highest point of Cnoc Mòr (322 ft) which appears to be on the identical bearing.

Although now hidden by trees, this stone could have been perfectly visible at a distance of $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles. Although well below the skyline, it might perhaps when used in conjunction with a stick or post, have served as a marker for the Equinox Sunrise (see fig V).

Conclusion

The thoughts expressed in this paper leave many questions at Brainport unanswered, not merely those of interpretation, but also those of even tentative dating.

We are accustomed to think of supposed prehistoric observatory and ritual centres as massive megalithic constructions of standing stones and circles. Although large slabs were quarried right beside the Brainport site none were used in its construction, which relied on the use of medium and smallish boulders. Why no megaliths? Was it perhaps because the ground is nothing but bedrock or beach material which would not have held very large upright stones? Does this indicate a surprising degree of flexibility in the minds of the Brainport constructors? The realisation that, on this site at least, their requirements would best be served by a type of small stone construction.

Above all, was this site a primitive fore-runner, or was it a late after-thought? Did it perhaps bridge the gap between the Megalithic monuments and the early Christian era? There seems little reason to suppose that the old religion or the old calendar died out at any time before the advent of Christianity. In fact, the evidence from the early missionaries is quite to the contrary. To add to the problem we have artefacts of both flint and iron turning up on the site in recognisable forms which could, between them, have spanned a gap of up to 2,000 years. It is to be hoped that in time more hard and fast evidence may emerge to help resolve some of these problems but this will only be the case if and when the full resources of science are called in to assist in the further investigation of the site.

NOTE: Observing the Sun with the Naked Eye

Experiments on the observing of sunrises and sunsets with the naked eye have brought out a number of interesting and relevant points.

1 The best conditions are through a heavy natural haze (heat haze) which is often present round midsummer but seldom in mid-winter in Argyll!
It is also evident that the further away the skyline, the better chance there is of sufficient haze to enable close observation at the moment of

rising.

2 If there is not a haze the first flash of the rising sun is far too bright and blinding to observe at all with the naked eye. However, it is possible to create an artificial smoke haze which can make all the difference, rendering observation possible.
Experiments have shown that distant skylines can be seen surprisingly well through smoke. Obviously there is quite a lot of experience required in making smoke of exactly the right density. In general it seems more satisfactory to observe through a deeper but thinner smoke haze than through a shallow but denser one (i.e. that from a single point of emission). If the smoke is allowed to "billow" observation becomes intermittent.

3 Observation has also been attempted through a pin-hole, and through a narrow tube (the dried stem of a reed). Both these methods, by cutting out all surrounding light, make it possible to observe for a brief instant, possibly long enough for an experienced observer to judge the position of a first or last flash.

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Note on the Cover Illustration

The Standing Stone at Cretshengan, between Ormsary and Kilberry (NR708669) is clearly seen from the road near the Crear Farm turning, down on the shore, on the edge of the 50ft raised beach. It is 6ft x 1ft x 9ins, and is remarkable for the fact that its base can be felt between the small packing stones which alone serve to maintain it upright. Those who believe that there was an astronomical purpose in some standing stones include this particular example in relation to sightings on the Jura outline. There is a ruined fort immediately adjoining the stone, its components having been used for dyking about 1830.

This note is based on the entries in Mid Argyll: an Archaeological Survey by Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Miss Sandeman. P.S.A.S. vol.XCV. 1961-62.

"STOP AND LOOK" - AT VOLCANIC DYKES

J.S.Andrews

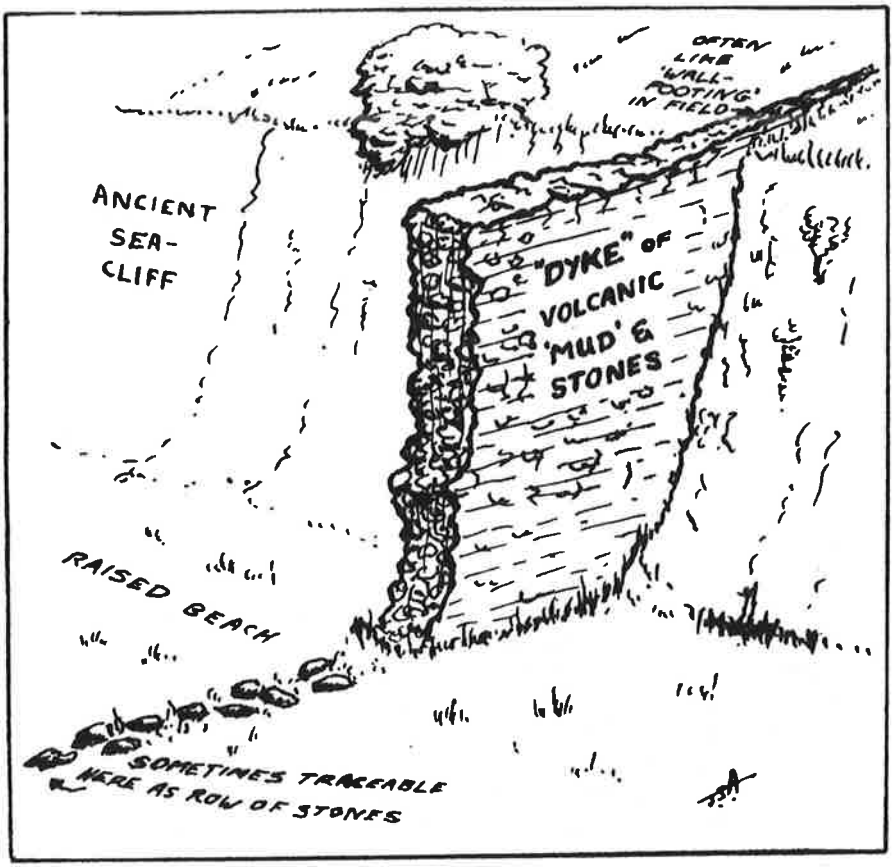
It is all too easy to travel through Argyll and just think how nice it happens to be, without ever discovering or noticing those fascinating features which in fact make it one of Britain's most exceptional and varied landscapes. Only when the eye learns to pick out the strange but clear writing of past aeons, which have moulded, marked and inscribed its surface, does the full beauty and sheer marvel of its countryside and coastline (and what a coastline!) truly begin to sink in.

There's what the gouging, polishing power of maybe a mile's thickness of ice-sheet (which once covered where you sit reading) did to the scene, resulting in weird rock-scratches and the peculiar humps, hollows, flats, and massive isolated boulders deposited in its lingering retreat. It shoved Argyll down eighty feet (24 metres) or more into the earth's crust with its incredible weight - and for ages at a time the sea later cut away at it, eroding rock here and flinging up storm-beaches there which nowadays appear in unlikely places, often visible well above our modern coastal roadways, and some surprisingly far inland. Then the earth breathed, and ancient Argyll was elevated to its present glory.

And man came to see what it had to offer him, raising stones as marks of his intelligence, and making long-lasting monuments to his arts and sciences. His quarrels with his fellows have left us forts from almost two thousand years ago, and castles of half that venerable vintage, just as his peaceful farming and fishing methods have passed down to us traces of half-forgotten walls and foundations, furrows and ridges. And his more spectacular tombs too, so often sited in quiet and pleasant places, are as many of us know, also well worth at least a brief inspection.

Before it all however, came the fire and thunder and the unbelievable earthquakes and unimaginable upheavals, which twisted, tore, folded, cracked, and canted, and finally covered with fingers of flowing magma, the older base on which Argyll was first founded. And all of it is right

there for us tiny creatures of the momentary Present to see and touch - if we care now and then simply to stop and look ...



Take volcanic Dykes, for example. Well have they been named, for so often indeed they appear to be nothing more than low stone walls in odd places - until you go over and find that their construction is frequently of stones set fast in once-volcanic mud, and that they lie in directions few farmers might choose for boundaries. In Argyll they normally radiate in two basic directions; either north-west or south-east from the vast horror that

was once the mighty Mull volcano, or almost at right-angles, south-westwards out of the still impressive Glen Coe area. It is those from the 6-mile wide crater on Mull, however, that are most apparent - Dykes from it are traceable as far away as Yorkshire!

They happened, like so many things, because of coincidences, and show in two manners. Sometimes they stand clear out of the side of cliffs, as on the shores of Loch Shuna and from the inaccessible shore overlooking Sheep Sound near Easdale, like masonry walls maybe forty feet (12 metres) high and seldom more than ten or fifteen feet thick. Other times they are like a shallow trench, cutting through an island or across a hilltop ridge. The odd thing is that one seldom sees the top - because it has almost always gone, worn away by ice and weather.

So what exactly formed these Dykes?

Think back to sixty million years ago. Due to volcanic and seismic action, the earth's crust was then being cracked (and there's an understatement) again and again by earthquake and explosion, and along these cracks lava welled and flowed, often bearing boulders and stones in its white-hot mass, like the pouring of baked-beans from a tin. Then in cooling, it set solid, more like jelly in a mould.

The Ice Ages came - and went - and chipped and wore at the mantle of surface lavas (weak sort of stuff, it seems), so that its frigid friction finally removed old and new surfaces alike. Probably because in the cracks below, the lava had cooled slowly and so became harder than that which had spread over the surface, these tended to remain, but in any case it took a softer and even more persistent hand than that of mere ice to expose it. The sea is an expert at erosion.

If the ancient land which had cracked open turned out to be less tough than the solidified lava which had oozed in, then when the post-glacial seas washed and sucked at it, and in time crumbled it away, the Dykes - the cores of vanished cracks, so to speak, were left standing proud and jutting and firm, sticking out on their own. And this is mostly what has happened in Argyll, because so little of the old bed-rock base is strong.

Just occasionally the lava was not as sturdy as the

surrounding rock, and here, especially if the movement of the later ice-cap was along roughly the same direction (another coincidence), the upper few metres of the crack's filling may have been rubbed or scooped out and away, leaving a trench-like dip or notch, such as the one in the skyline of Seil Island, for all the world as though a massive wall had been removed along with its foundations, and the site abandoned.

A fine section of a 'black' Dyke (looking almost like a vein of pitch against the much lighter background stone), can easily be seen in the north wall of the old Crarae quarry, if driving from Lochgilphead towards Inveraray.

The Craignish peninsula is positively criss-crossed with scores of Dykes; a massive one comes curving over sideways down a field (all bubbly and unmistakably volcanic in origin), just beyond the first farm you come to on the right after turning off the main Lochgilphead/Oban road onto the B8002 towards Ardfern. There are others beyond the village, but a walk beyond the road-ending by the old quay at Little Loch Craignish will reveal Dykes galore descending to the tide-line, definable easily where they cross vegetation, but more clearly still where they cut down through the different-looking bed-rock into the sea. One of the finest of these disappears off the end of Craignish Point into the turbulent jaws of the Dorus Mòr itself, beside where Bell's "Comet", the world's first sea-going steamship, broke her back on the shore and sighed her dying hiss of steam into the chill December of 1820.

Better still, if you want to be impressed (and climb 450 feet - or even 137 metres), go to Easdale by the B844 from Kilninver, and take to the high land above the cliff overhanging the village. Then most carefully walk round the clifftop to look out up the Firth of Lorne. From the right place you may peer down on a curved and narrow Dyke of exceptional thinness and height - if you have the head for that kind of thing.

The Dykes I like most however are at Puilladobhrain ('Puldoran', if you weren't certain), and the way to get there is most pleasant. It's off the same road, just where it has brought you over the breath-taking hump of Telford's famous single-arch 'Bridge Over the Atlantic' at Clachan Seil. There you may leave the car by 'The House of the Trouser', Tigh an Truis (where I heartily

recommend a refreshing visit either before or after your walk). Cross the hotel car-park (on the right) to its far corner and then follow the signposted foot-track up 'over the brae' (dogs on leads). The track is well defined by the countless seaboots of thirsty sailing folk who enjoy the benefits of the totally unspoilt Puilladobhrain (the Otter's Pool) as one of Scotland's finest natural anchorages.

From the gap at the top, on a dry day, the sudden view north-west out over island-studded Ardencaple Bay towards the range of peaks that are all that's left of the Mull Volcano itself, across the Firth of Lorne, is quite unforgettable. Begin descending and you'll see that the most northerly and furthest-out of the group of islands, Eilean Dùin, has a fine Dyke running right through it, and through the island inshore of it. The same Dyke runs on over the next little islet too, and again climbs over the grass and wildflowers of Seil itself, where you may go, up near its northernmost tip.

Alternatively, having reached the beach (boots are recommended in dampish weather), turn south-west instead, following the foot of the cliff round, keeping it on your left for about quarter of a mile, and you'll be rewarded by a magnificent Dyke which projects grandly from the cliff. Well worth scaling (no trouble) for the view, and to study its make-up.

As to that cliff, set like so many with a goodly stretch of grass between it and the shore, well - perhaps I'll tell you about that next time we 'stop and look' ...

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THE SEVENTH DAY

Mary Sandeman

On the Seventh day God ended his work .... and he rested on the seventh day - and so did we.

I woke to a sense of deep peace, silence full of little sounds. No rumbling carts or horses' feet but our fantail pigeons cooing, sparrows chiriping and cocks crowing, cocks near answering cocks from far away. Do cocks crow more on Sundays or is it just that we can hear them more and they each other? And a lovely smell of coffee - a good day Sunday, especially in summer.

Sunday clothes - on hot days I wore a white muslin dress with a blue or pink ribbon at the waist over a starched cotton petticoat with Ayrshire work and cotton knickers that buttoned at the waist and were trimmed with lace which scratched one's legs.

After breakfast - father sitting in the sun on the front door step with nothing to do but fondle the dog and play with me except to look at his watch every now and then, giving the women a count down to church time. They were preparing the dinner which was organised so that we could all get to church. Then mother giving out gloves, 'shammy' leather for father and white cotton for me, and he gave me a penny to put inside them. Then "Church, good dog, back soon" and we were off, joining the gentle stream of all my friends from farm and croft and shop, and far ahead Coll from the smiddy; soon he would be tolling the bell to hurry us along. I would have loved to help him but I couldn't have reached the rope which lived, except on Sundays, inside a dear little house with a door of its own on the gable of the church. It used just to be fixed to the wall but consternation was caused one fine day by the bell tolling apparently all by itself, on a week-day too. No, not the devil, just an omnivorous and experimental cow chewing the rope.

People came from all directions calling "Lovely day", "Beautiful weather" and in we went, plonking our pennies in the plate at the door. Father used to say he'd take the change on the way out but, do you know, he never did; I watched carefully, there didn't seem to be any halfpennies so I didn't see how I could. Then I'd wriggle up on to the varnished pew which did rather stick to my legs. There was no stained glass but a big tall window just full of sky. I could watch the shiny clouds sail by against the deep blue and hear the sandpiper calling from the shore while the familiar stories and prayers flowed over me and we gave with paraphrase, psalm and hymn. Not being able to read and not knowing the hymn I am alleged to have sung Three Blind Mice lustily; I dont believe it, but if I did I'm sure God was not mocked. I liked church. I liked it best in winter, mother's fur muff was so nice to cuddle up to and I liked doing things with both parents at once. I felt a bit smug too I fear. I was a little child and for some reason all these wonderful grown-ups

couldn't enter into the Kingdom, which was clearly some sort of good thing, unless they became as a little child so I had a head start so to speak.

When we came out there was Hugh, rosy and smiling, waiting to go in to the Gaelic Service, and some dogs who had been sent to fetch their masters. Charlotte would leap up on her bicycle and hurry off to put the potatoes on and we would follow more slowly; or perhaps father would take me to see some of his old people, perhaps Mary in her dear wee house, a walk over the moor and across the stepping stones while the larks sang. He might show me a peeweep's chick pretending to be a lump of dung, so soft, so small, so brave, so obedient. I'd slip my hand into his, rather overcome by the wonder of it.

While we were finishing dinner there would be voices on the road as groups of young men passed in their good suits and carrying their horn-headed crooks, going up to the common grazing to look over the beasts. "Looking beasts" is not work and as all the cattle were running together it was as well that a member of each family should be there.

In the afternoon father sometimes went off on his motor bike and side car to play tennis at the Big Hoose. Mother and I might walk the three miles to have tea with them and come back in the side car, plus the dog who was escorting us. It was a weary way and I needed a good deal of encouragement, the hills were steep - they still are - but one good thing was once you had passed the cross-roads where a murderer was said to be buried and climbed the last of them it was down hill all the way and no cheating. Past "John the Master of the Horse"'s house where his Labrador-Spaniel cross but not by nature would give us a welcome, and under the big trees to the house and a lovely tea and a parrot and a brass fish that wiggled if you held it right, and kind, kind people.

Or we went for a family walk. I didn't much like that because they would never say where they were going for the excellent reason that they didn't know themselves. There was always something that one or other of them would show me, bird beast or flower. We might rest on the "Listening Stone", just a whalebacked boulder by the roadside at the top of a hill. On the other side of the road was the "Gush", a spring that never dried but gushed out of

the bank into a basin of stones where there was always one of MacAlister's dippers so you could pour water on to the stone and watch it make watersheds and tributaries and confluences and deltas - how pleasant learning was. Or you could just listen - the waterfall, hidden in the gorge of the Murder Burn where I'd soon be catching trout, came in pulses on the wind which, however gentle, sang in the grasses, a cock grouse "Go back"ing, a curlew falling, falling, a snipe drumming like a thrumming string, a pipit, larks, a lamb, a chough who had a nest nearby, a raven on passage, and in early autumn, faint far and fearful, the first stag's bellow.

In bad weather we battled to church heads down with no breath for conversation while the wild white horses leapt close to the road and inside it was so warm and safe and perhaps they would light the lamps - they went up and down on long brass chains - fascinating. After dinner mother would "read me", a constant plea but sure of success on Sundays; Bible stories of course and dear Pilgrim's Progress which I knew by heart, in abridged form, long before I even knew my letters, Kipling's Just So Stories, The Jungle Books, Puck of Pook's Hill, Scott's Ivanhoe and Guy Mannering, Kidnapped, Coral Island and so on according to my age, until she went to sleep.

There were lots of houses where the blinds were half drawn and families just read their Bibles and no one thought the worse of them; in fact they were rather admired, for tho' that was what they did from choice others could do otherwise and if ever anyone needed help or a meal they would give it willingly.

I can't say that I liked Fastdays, the Thursdays before Communion. As we had three or four denominations and we all kept each other's Fast day that could mean four weeks with two Sundays in them which was rather too much of a good thing. They all fell in the summer and had none of the advantages of Sunday, you did lessons for instance and the parents were not nearly so available and neither was anyone else, and I didn't even go to church.

I was allowed to do almost anything I liked on Sundays inside or out so long as it didn't mean making a noise or disturbing anyone. I still don't cut the grass or hang out a wash in case it should spoil Sunday for someone. We never played cards or mended clothes. Mother said Sunday should be different; she was wise. I had special

Sunday bricks; I had everyday bricks too, but these were only for Sunday. They came down to me from my father, undamaged, via my brother and sister. They had Bible pictures on them but once you had made all the pictures they built most satisfactorily. All in all a very good day was Sunday.

HELLEBORINE : A DISCOVERY

D.M.Hooton

There have been rumours that the uncommon orchid, the Long-leaved or Sword-leaved Helleborine (CEPHALANTERA LONGIFOLIA) was to be found in Mid-Argyll. My mother remembered being shown a flower some fifty years ago, picked in the Castle Sween area, which we thought must be of this species. I have only found it myself in beech woods in the Chiltern Hills. So I was delighted to be shown two groups early in July 1979. One of about fourteen was growing in the Fairy Isles at the head of Loch Sween, and a group of three was less than a hundred yards from the road to Tayvallich in the Scotnish area.

Although this has been a very late year, the flowers were all over, and several plants had developing seed pods. In both locations they were in light shade near oak trees, in leaf mould on sloping rocky ground, and were well camouflaged among tall grasses. Though the Helleborine is associated with beech woods in the South of England, usually with chalk soils, here it appears content with oak shade.

Perhaps there are more examples of it in undisturbed places as it is remarkably hard to see when not in flower. The long pointed leaves grow up the 12-18" stem alternately and blend into the coarse long grass. It might be easier to find when it is in flower - normally in the first half of June. The flowers are white, quite large for an orchid, and grow in a loose terminal spike.

If you should be lucky enough to come across it, please do not pick it or disturb it. It is too rare, and it evidently does not flower or seed regularly. At Scotnish one had set seed and two had been eaten down by roe deer or rabbits. Of those seen in the Fairy Isles, only one third had flowered this year. I am glad to say that this latter site is very hard to find.

EXTRACTS from ANNUAL REPORTS of the Medical Officer of Health for Argyll

Contributed by Ruth Cammock

1892. On Islay.

"House with seven occupants, two apartments, kitchen and small bedroom. In the kitchen, which the family occupy, were five cows, a calf, as well as dogs and fowls; a child was in convulsions suffering from congestion of the lungs, and an aunt in the same apartment in the last stage of consumption."

1893. Bowmore, Islay.

A large part of the village depend on the distillery water entirely for domestic purposes. This water is brought ... a distance of 3 or 4 miles by gravitation. The aqueduct is uncovered in all its course and goes through a large number of fields where cows and horses have free access to it. In summer during hot weather these animals can be seen during a large part of the day standing in the water cooling and protecting themselves from flies. The condition of the water in consequence can easily be imagined, and, as if this was not enough, a drain (from a dwelling house) empties itself into the aqueduct when close to the village."

1894. Ardrishaig.

The sanitary condition of the village of Ardrishaig is not satisfactory, the houses along the main street being confined between the canal and the sea. Many of the houses are not provided with water-closets, privies or ashpits, so that all the refuse is thrown over the breast wall. The condition of the shore along the breast wall is constantly a subject of complaint. The windows of the houses along the shore have to be kept constantly closed in the summer months on account of the offensive odour arising from the refuse on the shore."

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Editorial Note: We hope to have more of these extracts from Dr Cammock in the future. They reveal a state of affairs more to be expected in a city slum at that period.