

Cross Slab at Rhudil



P.S.M.

SCALE. APP. 1:5.6

The KIST 20

T H E K I S T

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

President: Miss Campbell of Kilberry, FSA. FSAScot.

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CONTENTS

<u>The Early Crosses at Keills, Loch Sween</u>	
Miss Campbell of Kilberry, FSA. FSAScot	1
<u>Editorial Notes:</u> A Milestone Anomaly	8
A Long-finned Tunny	9
<u>The 'Watchman' Stone at Barbreck</u>	
Dr F.S.Mackenna, MA. FSA. FSAScot.	10
<u>Excavations at Kintraw, 1979</u>	
Mr Trevor Cowie, MA. FSAScot.	18
<u>Clapper Bridges: A Postscript</u>	
Mr Murdo MacDonald, MA. DAA. FSAScot	21
<u>Note on the Cover</u>	21
<u>Cnocan Uamhach Megalithic Chambered Cairn:</u>	
Preliminary Report	
Miss Campbell of Kilberry, FSA. FSAScot	22
<u>Extracts from 'Old Kilberry's' Diaries (2nd series.Pt.4)</u>	
By courtesy of Miss Campbell of Kilberry	26
<u>Review:</u> Prehistoric Rock Art of Galloway & I.O.M. ...	29
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THE EARLY CROSSES AT KEILLS, LOCH SWEEN

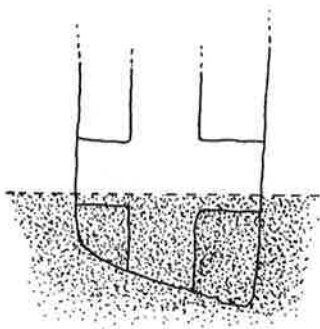
Marion Campbell

In the course of writing a Guidebook to Guardianship Monuments in Mid Argyll for HMSO, I have had a chance to study three crosses at Keills. Two of these were found within the chapel during excavation.(1) The third is the High Cross, now housed within the re-roofed chapel and to be replaced on its mound outside by an outline-replica.

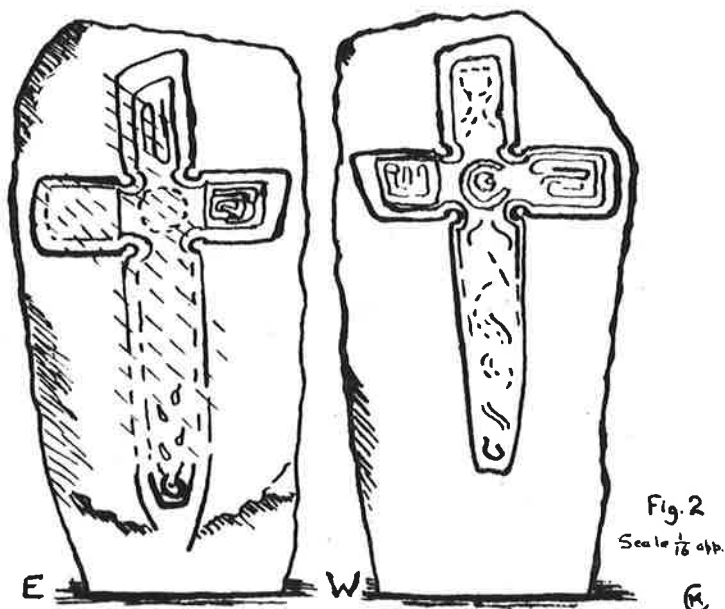
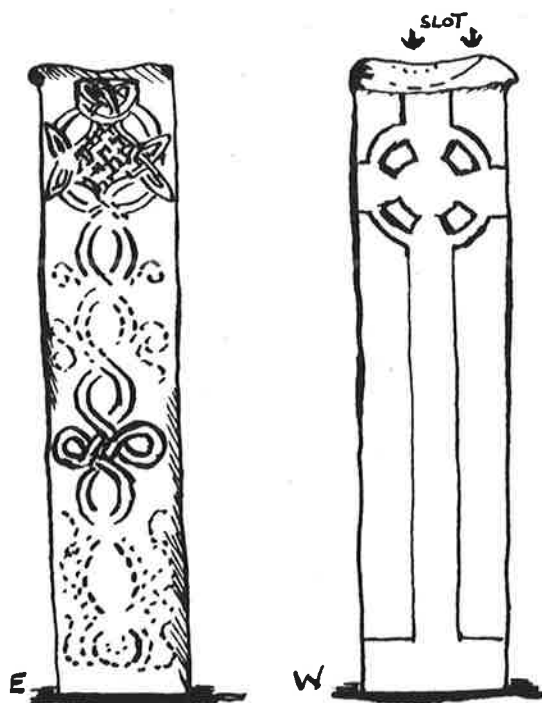
The newly-discovered crosses are of considerable interest. Both are carved on two faces, showing that before re-use as grave-covers they had stood upright, probably marking the limits of the consecrated graveyard; indeed, in the dyke dividing the site from the ancient trackway above it, there is a possible cross-socket.

One of the new crosses is a pillar 1.58m x .3m (5ft 2in x 1ft) as erected. I have failed to find a close parallel, though a thicker and clumsier stone at Kilmaha, Loch Awe, bears some resemblance to it (figured in RCAMS Lorn, no 261). (2) On one face the pillar bears a wheel-headed cross surmounted by a rolled moulding, on which are traces of two pendent arcs. Above these, in the top edge, is a narrow slot with traces of mortar; it would be highly

unusual for such a stone to have an upward extension (considerations of windage alone might seem to rule this out) but the arcs do suggest that something else must have existed. The shaft stands upon an apparent "groundline"; in fact the arms of another cross (now concealed by the concrete mounting). The stone extends downwards to a slanting end .1m to .18m below the concrete (4 to 7 in) and the shaft runs to the edge as shown here.



The stone is a fine-grained limestone, probably obtainable nearby, and like the High Cross itself, the pillar shows incipient cracks running vertically down its sides. Possibly, then, some sort of finial or capstone was found



to be necessary to prevent damage. The other face has been more elaborately worked and is, unfortunately, more damaged; as will be seen from the sketch (fig.1), a cross formed of curving interlace surmounts and connects with a "shaft" of coiling lines which form another cross-pattern lower down. Despite much help from the Editor of KIST it proved impossible to reconstruct the design of this side, but I suspect that we have lost a panel not unlike the lowest part of the High Cross itself. Above the crosshead, the stone is worn away so that no trace remains of the projecting moulding. It will be noticed that only two areas have escaped damage, each some 9in wide; is it too fanciful to suggest that these were protected by narrow benches, when the stone lay above a grave in the chapel? If so, we might have a fleeting insight into church furnishings in (presumably) post-mediaeval times. Lacking any firm comparisons, I can only suggest a date between the eighth and eleventh centuries for this stone.

The second cross (fig.2) measures at most 1.23m x .6m (4ft x 2ft) and is carved from a sheet of rough schistose rock. Both faces bear almost identical crosses; the east side (as now erected) is the more damaged, though a central disc can just be made out. Vertical lines dividing the arm-panels from the centre give the effect of a small "Maltese Cross" around the disc; the panels have contained geometric shapes, not obviously interlaced but rather interlocking. Three deep vertical lines are all that remain of the head's decoration, while at the base of the shaft there are hints of a broad interlace. The western side is better-preserved, though the arm- and head-panels are unintelligible; the central roundel is clear, filled by concentric shapes like C's, and the shaft has been filled by interlace. There is no sign that the roundel ever projected as a boss.

The whole composition recalls the far more sophisticated Pictish crosses of the 8th-9th century. Our example might fit into an early stage of the evolution of both Pictish and Scottish-Irish High Crosses, for from the flat roundel must have developed the carved boss. Perhaps the best clue for dating lies in the placing of the cross, displayed as if it lay on a painted page. By the start of the eighth century, if not sooner, carvers began to emphasise



Fig.3 The High Cross, Keills
(Crown Copyright: reproduced by permission
of the Scottish Development Department).

their crosses by cutting away the body of the stone, first to give stumpy projections (as in the oldest Kilmartin cross), then gradually 'liberating' the shape and leading to the concept of the free-standing High Cross. The depiction of a crucified figure was repugnant to Celtic thought, it seems, but in our example the slanting top of the head may prefigure the symbolism which set wheel-headed crosses slightly askew, as if to hint at a leaning head. A date in the later 7th century might be tenable for this stone.

Readers will notice the resemblance between fig.2 and the cover-drawing of this issue. The Rhudil stone is smaller and relatively thicker, but the overall impression is similar. Some authorities who have seen photographs of Rhudil have suggested a measure of Norse influence in the design and therefore a date in the 9th-11th centuries, but the point is debatable.

The High Cross of Keills itself (fig.3) marks a stage in the evolutionary process. The arms are short but deep, the head is high and narrow, the stone thicker than in later examples. There are semicircular channels at the intersection of the arms (as in fig.2) but no suggestion of a free-standing ring to link them. A theoretical chain of development might start with our fig.2, proceeding via the Kilmartin stone just mentioned and our High Cross to the damaged cross beside the chapel on Eilean Mór (2), on which parts of a ring can be seen, and thence to such triumphs as Kilnave and Kildalton in Islay and St John's Cross in Iona. The development was probably swift, pushed on by many craftsmen working in contact; the latest study of St John's Cross (3) concludes that "it seems reasonably certain that the Cross belongs at the latest to the close of the 8th century."

The decoration of the Keills High Cross merits consideration. One side only is carved. The head is filled by St Michael trampling on the dragon whose tail joins a coil of interlace. At the centre of the arms is a bird's nest containing three eggs, probably an emblem of the Trinity and seen also on Kildalton and St John's. Around the nest march four lions with entwined tails; the lower pair roar into, or lick, the ears of a seated ecclesiastic who holds a book in his left hand and raises his right in blessing. His feet turn sideways, a convention of 7th-

8th century Irish gospel books. A small animal (?) on his right and a bird or crouching human figure on his left, complete this panel.

The shaft is filled by three separate designs. First comes a panel of geometric patterning, then a thicket from which spring two goats, above a pair of front-facing cats; below these is an area of delicate C- and trumpet-curves closely matched at Kilnave and on St John's Cross. All these designs can be found in gospel-books and particularly in the great Book of Kells, begun in Iona and taken to Ireland around 815 AD under the threat of Viking raids.

The High Cross is cut from a grey limestone, very like the rocks on the hillside by the church, and the deep crack down one edge shows why it is now thought advisable to bring the cross indoors. However, when the stone lay flat before re-erection, I was able to inspect it closely, and I can report that there is no sign whatever of a tenon or mortice for a protective finial on the head.

None of the three stones here figured is worked from the excellent greenish chlorite-schist obtainable from just across the loch at Doide - although the quarry must have been known at the time the High Cross was carved. In 1956 R.B.K. Stevenson noted that the two main blocks of stone which make up St John's Cross probably came "from the mainland of Argyll, in the Kilmartin-Tayvallich area." (4) (Doide had not then been identified as the source of the stone). The two blocks, after carving, measured "11ft 6in x 1ft 10in x 12in, and 7ft 2 in x 5ft 3in x 12in respectively", and Mr Stevenson adds that "this argues better boats than currachs." By contrast, the finial of St John's Cross is of Iona schist and has weathered badly; it can be shown to have had on one face a pair of lions (not unlike our four) and on the other two wrestling figures which recall the wrestlers on the Eilean Mór Cross.

Might one venture to draw these facts together and hint that not only the stone, but also the carver, of St John's Cross came from Loch Sween; that he had already shown his worth by carving the Keills, possibly also the Kilnave Cross; and that he was at least familiar with a colleague's experiment in making a ring-headed cross for Eilean Mór, although that falls short of the quality of the others we have discussed? Or perhaps Eilean Mór was the work of his assistant after the return from Iona, for

Robertson (3) has detected the hand of a less skilled craftsman in parts of St John's. That cross, it will be recalled, had its ring added in separate sections morticed to the main blocks and helping to brace them; Eilean Mór broke across the base of the rings, at the weakest part of the shaft.

At least, during their stay on Iona, the Knapdale men would have every opportunity to study the designs being worked out on vellum for the great gospel-book; to discuss the technical problems of fitting apparently freehand curves into compass-drawn or rectangular spaces - problems whose solution lay in the inherited traditions of pre-Christian Celtic art; and to consider the effects to be achieved by the use of colour to emphasise shapes. (It has long been thought likely that the High Crosses had their patterns picked out in bright colours, as were later roof-bosses and capitals in mediaeval churches). They would see, too, the latest foreign designs - for instance the pairs of facing beasts on St Martin's Cross, a device then newly brought from Northumbria. Robertson (op.cit., p.118), goes so far as to propose that the same craftsman made another Iona cross, the broken "St Oran's" (the name is modern), as well as Kildalton, Kilnave, and Keills; though here I would enter a caveat, for Kildalton has many small figures, relating it to Irish High Crosses and suggesting a meeting of inspirations and techniques.

But consider, lastly, what a voyage that must have been, out of Loch Sween and up through the Dorus Mór, over to Mull and past the Torran Rocks and Erraid, in a deep-laden longa such as Adamnan had seen in use to bring timber home from the Morvern shore; or with a raft lurching among a cluster of labouring, cursing, weaving currachs; more than one boat's crew would come back to Knapdale with a tale for many a long winter evening. And there would be the makings of more than one sermon, too, about how the church "of the Son of the Race of Cormac" (as Keills is known) had sent gifts of stone and skill to the "Family of Columba" who had been Cormac the Seaman's friend.

References

1. See Kist 18
2. Survey of Argyll Monuments. vol.2, Lorn. Royal Comm.

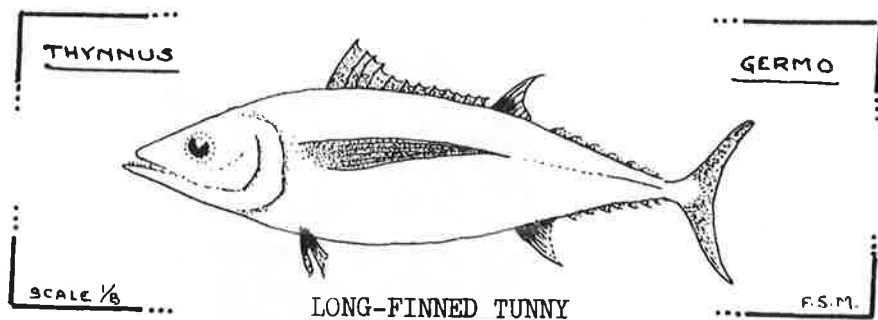
- on Ancient & Historical Mons. of Scot. HMSO 1975
3. Sculptured Stones of Knapdale. Capt. T.P.White, RE 1872. (Frontispiece (Keills Cross); pl XXIX, (Eil. Mór Cross.)
4. St John's Cross, Iona. W.N.Robertson, PSAS 106, 1977.
5. Chronology and Relationships of some Irish and Scottish Crosses. R.B.K.Stevenson. Journal of the Royal Society of Antiquaries of Ireland. 1956.

...oooOooo...

Editorial Note: A Milestone Anomaly

Our Committee member, Mr Colin Fergusson, has drawn the Editor's attention to a curious circumstance regarding the milestones on the road from Ardrishaig to Tarbert. They are correctly positioned at mile intervals throughout and adorned with the distance still to be traversed before Tarbert is gained. Thus: ---8, 7, 6, but not 5. Instead we find $5\frac{1}{2}$, $4\frac{1}{2}$, $3\frac{1}{2}$ etc. right down to $\frac{1}{2}$. It is difficult to see any reason for this change unless the same problem arose as we find in the matter of the Tarbert-Kilberry-Lochgilphead road. 'Old Kilberry' explains the position in his diary entry for 16th April 1891 (for full text see Kist 11, p.26)"the Road Surveyor of North and South Argyll District measured the road north of Kilberry. The Road Surveyor of Kintyre District measured the road from Tarbert to Kilberry....the total distance....was $3\frac{1}{4}$ miles and some yards. They agreed to divide the road....making [the point selected] $19\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Lochgilphead and $14\frac{1}{2}$ miles from Tarbert. Each distance is about 30 yards more than above."

But in that context there was the definite focal point of Kilberry to modify the proceedings; no comparable situation arose between Tarbert and Ardrishaig. There is no doubt that the Kilberry discrepancy is virtually unknown to travellers, but in the case of the Tarbert-Ardrishaig stones the confusion is plain for all to read and the overt declaration of the added half-mile invites speculation from all who are sufficiently alert, as Mr Fergusson was, to note it.



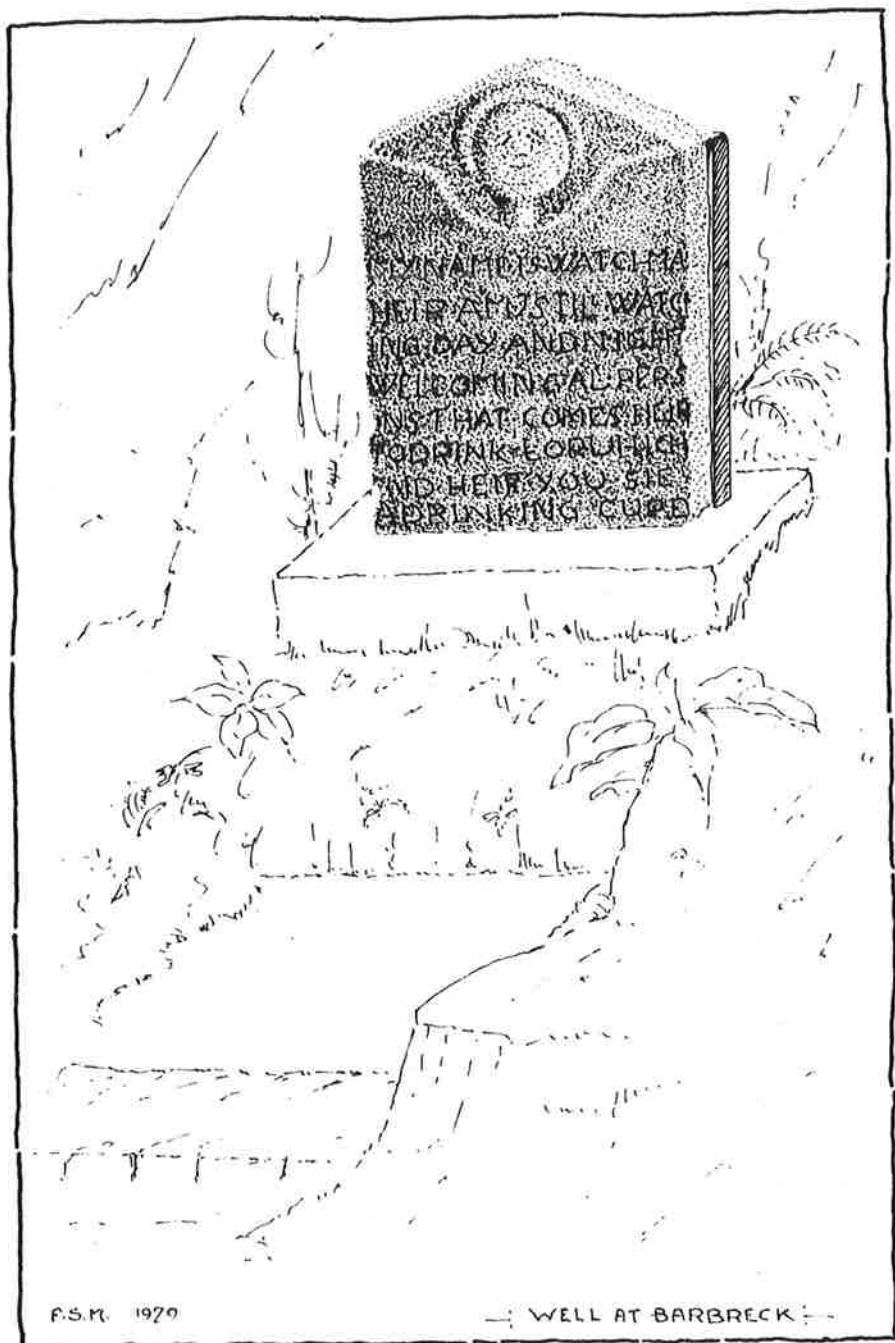
A very interesting and important fish was found by Mrs E.K.Dale near her home at the south point of Dunskeig Bay in Kintyre (749561 on sheet 62 of 1:50000 series map). This sandy bay is at the entrance to West Loch Tarbert. On 24th August 1979 there was a very low afternoon tide and the fish was noticed right at the water's edge. It had obviously just been washed up and was in a completely fresh condition and with no sign of injury. Mrs Dale at once saw that it was no ordinary creature, and she and her husband took the wise step of securing it and enquiring from Miss Campbell of Kilberry regarding the line to be taken with a view to obtaining an identification.

It proved to be a Long-finned Tunny, a species of the utmost rarity in Scottish waters.

The distinguishing feature is the excessively long pectoral fins, usually equalling one third of the total length. In this specimen they were $9\frac{1}{2}$ inches long. The weight was approximately 13 lbs. Total length 27", and its age calculated to be 5 years.

Although this tunny is common in Biscay and the Mediterranean, it has been recorded only thrice in western Scottish waters in the past 40 years, and only eight times in all for the United Kingdom. So Mrs Dale is to be congratulated on her acumen.

If any unusual sea-creature be captured or found it is essential that no time be lost in contacting the Fishery Officer in Aberdeen (574567) and none be wasted with intermediaries. Action will be taken at once by Aberdeen if the description warrants it. The Editor of Kist also would like to have a report.



THE 'WATCHMAN' STONE AT BARBRECK

F.S.Mackenna

Remarkably few people know where to find this stone, or indeed are aware of its existence. It stands guard over a well amongst trees on the right of the Lochgilphead - Oban road, just past the Ardfarn turning and mid-way between the 14th milestone from Lochgilphead and the house at the top of the winding hill. Its grid reference is NM824062. The ground falls steeply from the road to a small burn and at the bottom of this slope is a square stone-bounded trough overlooked by the carved stone which is the subject of this note. Some idea of the lay-out can be gained from the sketch opposite. The surrounding ground is now very boggy and the cistern itself is filled with leaves and debris. Indeed the whole scene, in the deep shade of the overhanging trees, is one of utter disuse and neglect.

The red sandstone monument measures $24\frac{1}{2}$ ins high by $17\frac{1}{4}$ ins wide, with a thickness of $4\frac{1}{4}$ ins, and is covered, front, back, top and one side, with a quaint inscription, the only space unoccupied by lettering being the area on the front which has an amusing be-wigged head in false relief. The circular head and 'hair-do', with the thin straight neck, reminds one irresistibly of a battledore. This apparition is intended to represent the 'Watchman' of the inscription.

The stone was firmly set in concrete many years ago, on its return from a period of wandering. Unfortunately this included placing an angle-iron up each of the two back corners, where the one to the left masks enough of the line of lettering there to make reading largely guess-work. The matter will be dealt with in its proper context when considering the actual wording of the carving.

The first-known transcript was made by William Dobie in 1833 (unpublished m.s. in the Library of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland - Fragments of Perambulations in Kintyre in the Summer of 1833, A beautifully written and illustrated narrative, containing much interesting and valuable information on the antiquities of Kintyre, particularly in regard to ecclesiastical remains, but interesting also from the point of social conditions then.)

The second was made when the stone was set up in its present position after having been moved to Kintyre and then returned.

Lastly, the present reading, the result of five separate days' careful study.

The Dobie version, which ought to be the best, in view of its early date, is incorrect in a number of points, mostly careless reading and a tendency towards rectifying eccentricities of spelling. The second transcription is quoted by Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Miss Sandeman in Mid-Argyll: an Archaeological Survey, P.S.A.S. 1961-2. It was supplied to them by a local contact and stated to have been made when the stone was being replaced in its present position. It is reasonably correct but by some mischance it was stated in the Survey that much of the inscription had become illegible. This is definitely not so, and there is only one small portion of lettering on the back which cannot with certainty be read; the top is more damaged, and the sides, as already stated, are impinged upon by the supports. Fortunately the concrete base seems to have obliterated only one line of text, back and front.

It would be tedious and unnecessary to give a rendering in parallel of the three readings, as the present one is confidently claimed to be definitive except for the one doubtful part on the back. After giving the text a line-by-line commentary will be provided.

FRONT.

MY·NAME·IS·WATCHMAI
HEIR·AMISTILL·WATCH
ING·DAY·ANDNIGHT
WELCOMING·AL·PERS
ONS·THAT·COMES·HEIR
TODRINK·TORUITCH
ND·HEIR·YOU·SIE
ADRINKING·CUPE

- Line 1. The final N has been worn away on the corner except for the first upright.
2. There are apparently no spacing dots between the 2nd, 3rd and 4th words. Half of the final H has gone.

3. Again no dot between the last two words. The final T has lost half of its top stroke.
5. Very little of the first letter O remains.

6. **TO·DRINK·L·ORU·HICH**

The second half of this line, here shown in facsimile, has caused trouble to decipherers, due to the first letter being read as L when in fact it is F upside-down - this oddity occurs several times on the back - and to compound the confusion it was not realised that the U is in fact a W, an excuse for this misreading lying in the remainder of the Ws (with one exception) being of normal shape. So the correct reading is FOR WHICH.

7. The difficulty over the previous line would have been less of an obstacle if it had been realised that the first letter, now represented only by a horizontal top stroke, was in fact E and not, as everyone assumed, A, making the true reading END, which ties up completely with the preceding TO·WHICH and makes sense of the whole passage.

Dobie read the now-lost last line as WAITING·B·ON·THE which, so far as the B goes, makes no sense, though there is a possibility that the rest of the line is continued in the TROUGH which has for the first time been read on the top left-hand part of the stone's edge.

Coming to the back, we have a much longer text:-

11110
 EFFIGIES·WHICH
 YOU·SIE·HEIR·ITS·BE
 HOLDING·AL·THATC
 MES·ITS·NEIR·TO·THIS
 NEU·L·OUND·SPRINC
 WHICH·HEIR·RUNS (
 UT·OE·A·ROCK·AND·A
 RE·WELCOME·TO·DF
 TO·DRINK·OF·IT·FOR
 NOUGHT·AT·LUNT
 AIN·Y·IIL·O·E·MARC
 H·1714·THIS·AL·BY

- Line 1. Dobie gives THIS, and with his help one can make out enough of the worn surface markings to agree, though prior to seeing his m.s. one had read it as HEIR, which makes no sense. In the second of the two previous readings no word is recorded here.
2. The plural seemed odd and misleading, but Miss Campbell states that such a usage, when speaking of a single 'effigy' was quite normal. This removes the difficulty. The plural is absolutely clear on the stone.
 4. The final O is partly masked by the angle-iron. This applies to several of the first and last letters on the back, but none are entirely lost.
 6. In the first word we have again U instead of W, and in the next word an inverted F. The final G is partly lost under the iron.
 7. The H and E of HEIR are conjoined, a device often encountered on gravestones. The final O is almost covered by the iron.
 8. The F of OF is inverted.
 9. The final TO·D with part of R showing, seems to indicate, in conjunction with the next line beginning TO·DRINK, a confusion on the part of the mason, finding he had run out of space and deciding to make a new start, though such considerations did not apply elsewhere in equally compelling circumstances!
 11. The F of FUNT is reversed.
 12. Here we come to the only puzzle now remaining; it concerns the portion between AIN and OF. To illustrate the difficulty a facsimile is given:-

AIN·HIL : OF·MARC

Dobie read it as HIE; the second interpretation gave 111RD, which certainly makes sense. Our own first reading was HIER, but subsequent long study rules this out. Unhappily there is a surface defect at this point which does nothing to help.

It will be noted that the punctuation dots are here, and here alone, inconsistent. After AIN

there is one quite correctly placed. But the next one comes almost on top of an upright stroke. The third is reasonably placed but the fourth comes in the middle of O while the fifth comes almost on the bottom line, a placing which does not occur elsewhere. Coming to the lettering, there are four upright strokes, the last of which has a definite basal line and no sign of any others - in fact it looks like L. The space between this and the O of OF has incisions as shown. It is here that the surface is slightly defective. The logical reading would be 111RD·OF·MARC(H), but Miss Campbell considers that this would be an anachronistic form of dating at that period. To effect such an interpretation it would be necessary to regard the almost superimposed dot as cancelling the first 1, to disregard the basal stroke of the last 1, and to presume that the fragmentary marks were D with a totally lost R before it. The AIN and OF are absolutely clear beyond question, and the only information which the intervening incisions are intended to convey must be a date. In view of the aberrant dots it seems most likely that here the mason got into real trouble and made a botch of extricating himself. No valid reason suggests itself for a later alteration at this point. Fortunately the exact reading of this portion is relatively unimportant, but it is vexatious to have to admit defeat. The final, lost, line is recorded in both the earlier readings as the one word BARBREC.

Coming in turn to the two sloping parts of the top, the only words still to be made out after most careful scrutiny and treatment are, on the left side TROUGH with MID·DAIE below it; and on the right FOR·GLORIE.

As noted earlier it seems possible that TROUGH connects with Dobie's CUPE·WAITING·B·ON·THE, though what the B can have meant eludes conjecture. It may well have been one of Dobie's misreadings. The second of the two earlier readings does not give this last line although the corresponding last line on the back was recorded.

So much for the stone itself; now comes its story. Here we have to rely considerably on tradition supported by fact, and including a measure of folk lore.

It is known that the stone, which presumably had been presiding over the well at Barbreck since its carving, was removed by the Campbell proprietors of the estate when they sold it and moved to Kintyre. There it was re-erected over a well near their new home, named by them Barbreck - there is still a Barbreck House and a Barbreck Cottage outside Campbelltown (information from Mrs Wotherspoon). This is where it was seen by Dobie in 1833.

"18th July [1833, on way up 'Ben Gullion']

Followed the usual path which is by Kilkerran burying ground Before commencing the ascent, turned aside a few paces to the left, and filled my flask from a strong pellucid spring, called Barbrec's well. The water issues in a strong current directly from the rock, and like every other spring in the neighbourhood of Campbelltown, is remarkable for cool sparkling limpidity and a taste peculiarly grateful to the palate. This fountain was formerly renowned above all others for its superior qualities, and in the good old times, preceding the present century, quantities of it were sent to Glasgow and elsewhere. Over the source is wedged a red sand:stone 2 feet 4 in length by 1 foot 5, which which [sic] formerly stood adjoining the well, and had an iron Cup attached to it (one person told me it was of silver and stolen) furnished by Barbrec for the accommodation of visitors. The stone is decorated with a rudely carved mask beneath which is cut the following quaint and puerile inscription.

[Here follows Dobie's reading of the text].

The other side of the stone, which I inspected by turning it over with some little difficulty, is likewise charged with words, comprising a whole to this effect"

[The text of the inscription is given].

Dobie knew nothing of its having been brought from Mid-Argyll.

When the Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland were preparing their Kintyre volume (published in 1971) they wrote :- "Barbreck's Well, Kilkerran (729191)there is now no trace of the early 18th century inscription recorded by Dobie in 1833."

This was not to be wondered at, for as Miss Campbell told them subsequently, it was back in its original position at Barbreck in Mid-Argyll.

Mrs Wotherspoon knows the Campbeltown site, and says that it is now spoken of as 'Charlie's Well'.

The story of the stone's travels can be quickly told. It was removed, as already related, when the estate was sold and re-erected over another well at Campbeltown. Apparently visitors to the original well had been beguiled by a 'mysterious voice', presumably Watchman's. The voice went south with the stone but began to raise such a clamour of objections that finally the worried family arranged for its restoration to the original site. This manoeuvre was both successful and the reverse. Successful in that the lamentations and recriminations ceased forthwith, but unfortunate in that the voice has never again been heard.

It is sometimes stated that there was a removal to England between the Campbeltown period and the eventual restoration, but this has not been verified personally. If true it might be thought fully to justify the objections of Watchman!

.....

EXCAVATIONS AT KINTRAW 1979

Trevor Cowie

(Central Excavation Unit, Scottish Development Department)

The site at Kintraw (NGR: NM 8305 0498) must be well known to all those who journey regularly between Lochgilphead and Oban. Even with the counter-attraction of a superb view, it is hard when descending the steep road from the Bealach Mór above Loch Craignish not to catch sight of the impressive stone cairn and even more prominent standing stone some 50 metres from the roadside. It was therefore with some surprise that Dr Mackenna noticed as he drove past one winter's morning in 1979 that the stone had disappeared from view! An on-the-spot inspection told the tale. The stone had toppled to the ground shortly before, the culmination no doubt, in a hard winter, of one severe frost too many, coupled with the loosening effect

of earlier disturbances in the past. Almost perceptible movement of the stone over the previous year had suggested its fall was due, and indeed it was no surprise to the many who must have wondered how it had managed to stay upright for so long with such a pronounced lean.

The fall of the stone was duly reported by Miss Campbell of Kilberry and Dr Euan MacKie to the Inspectorate of Ancient Monuments, now under the auspices of the Scottish Development Department. It was immediately decided that the stone should be re-erected. It was felt, however, that since this would involve the disturbance of the area immediately round the base of the stone, the opportunity should be taken to examine the stone-hole in which the monolith had been set.

When the site was investigated by Mr D.D.A. Simpson in 1959-1960 no excavation was undertaken around the stone itself. The work at that time was confined to two of the four known cairns situated on the level quartzite spur on which the sites lie, just above the '100 foot' raised beach. More recently the site has been interpreted as an observatory for the mid-winter solstice of c 1800 BC. Dr Euan MacKie has suggested that an artificial platform on the hill-slope east of the site above the Kintraw Burn, may have been the primary observation platform from which sightings would have been made to the Paps of Jura some 45km to the south-west. The standing stone would then have served the function of indicating the viewing direction. (Local tradition on the other hand would ascribe the erection of the stone to the commemoration of a Norse Prince, killed at the Battle of Sluggan, whence it has received the name 'Danish King's Grave'.)

With all these theories, and with the marked lack of finds and structural detail in the cairns which might aid interpretation, it was hoped therefore that the discovery of charcoal or other dateable deposits in the stone-hole might throw light on the site and provide a further opportunity to test these ideas.

The excavation was undertaken for the Scottish Development Department by the Central Excavation Unit, a small team working within the Ancient Monuments Branch. The brief of the Unit is to undertake rescue excavations all over Scotland on sites where conditions (e.g. the time factor) make it impossible for other bodies (such as Uni-

versities or Museums) to carry out the work. The small-scale and limited nature of our work at Kintraw made it a task for only 2 or 3 persons, but on larger sites the Unit is pleased to enlist the help of local volunteers. Visitors are always welcome.

The excavation started in rain on Monday 14th May. Following deturfing of the area around the stone it became clear that when the stone emerged from the ground it had severely damaged the stone-hole in which it had stood. Furthermore, the fact that the stone lay directly over the area in which we were most interested meant that we had to dig out a good deal of natural subsoil before we had sufficient space in which to work. The stone itself is 5.25m long overall, varying in width from 1.15m at the base to less than 0.60 at the tip. The estimated weight is in excess of 3 tons.

As the excavation proceeded, however, the features of the stone-hole became clearer. We could see that the stone had been set in an oval socket, some 1.20m by 0.80m and 1.00m deep at the base. Once in place, the stone would have been securely packed about with stones of varying sizes, some of them boulders up to 0.50 by 0.30m. Unfortunately no deliberate deposits of finds, cremated bone or charcoal had been placed in the hole to give us any clue as to its date or function. Thus, no further information was forthcoming to test the supposed astronomical significance of the site. Instead, we could only admire the engineering skill which had resulted in a stone up to 4.25m high above ground-level standing - eventually with a considerable lean - in a hole less than one-fifth of its height.

If the excavation started in rain it ended in sunshine. On Saturday 19 May, a tracked 'Hymac' excavator re-erected the stone, not without some difficulty, as nearly as possible into its original socket, but this time vertical and consolidated into concrete at its base. It seemed to us that the megalithic engineers of second millenium BC would have given a wry smile, wondering if the new stone-hole would last as long as its predecessor!

Acknowledgements

The excavation was carried out on behalf of the Scottish Development Department. Best thanks are due to Mr Hugh MacKay, Kintraw Farm for permission to excavate.

I am grateful to the volunteers who assisted on the excavation, and to the members of the Ancient Monuments Works Squad who saw to the re-erection of the stone.

Further Reading.

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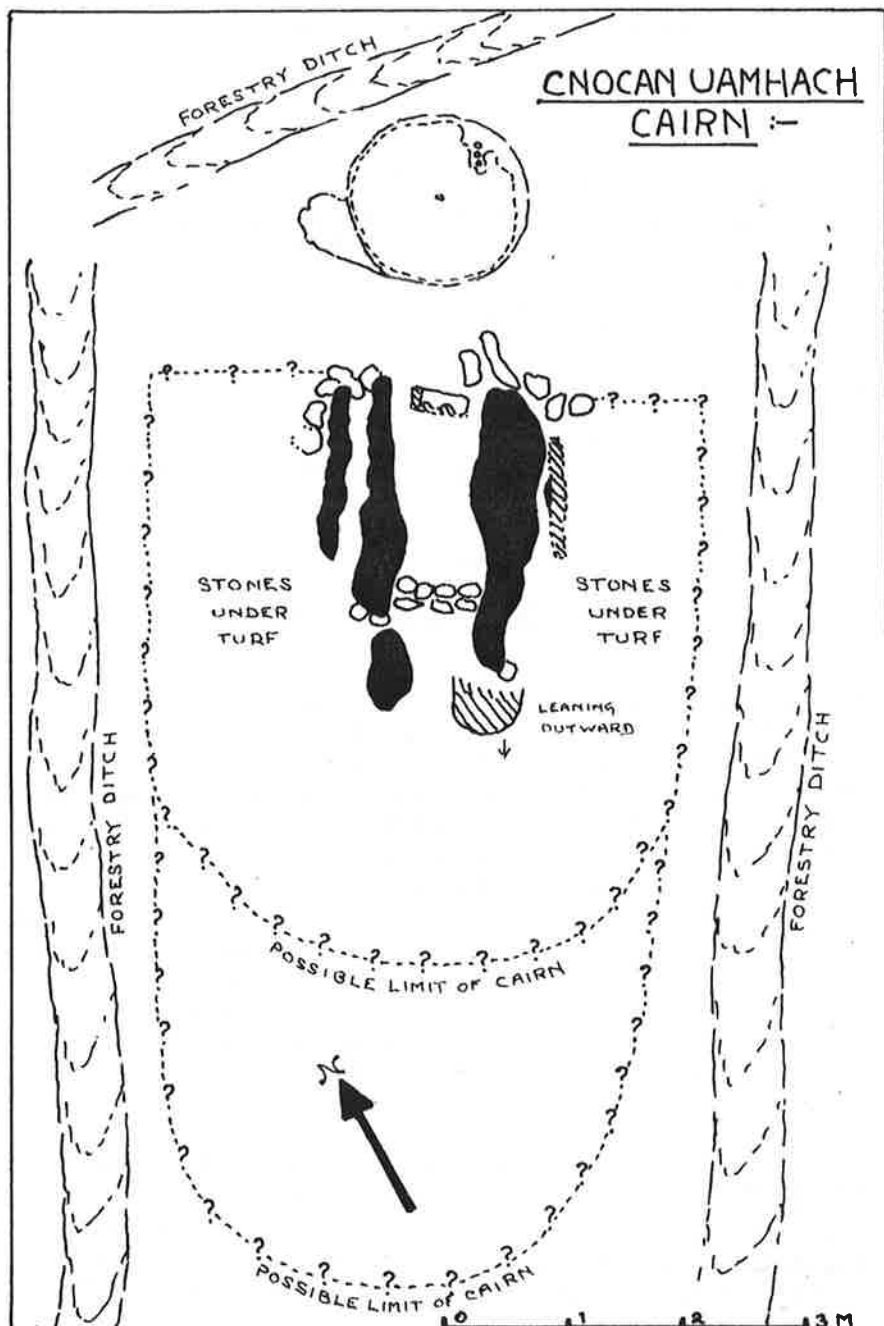
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CLAPPER BRIDGES: a Postscript

The following letter has been received from Mr Murdo MacDonald, MA, DAA, FSAScot, the Archivist:
"Your note on the Clapper Bridge at Achnamara (Kist 17) is intriguing. One begins to suspect that such bridges were once a feature of this area. Your readers may therefore be interested in two references to flag bridges that are found in the Poltalloch Papers in 1795.

The first is an account dated 30 March 1795 by two workmen "To Rebuilding the Flag bridge over the river of Killmartine (called Clach an Iosgan) and mending at both ends of it, £17". The second reference is in a note on the damage caused by a thunderstorm on 13 August 1795 when "the flag Bridge at Slockavulin was turned down and Buried under large stones and Rubbage".

Note on the Cover: Members who attended our outing to Rhudil Glen in May 1977 will recall this stone in the garden of Kilbride House (NR854965). It was found in recent years in a pigsty. It is of small size, the carved surface being 22" high by 12½" across, tapering to 8½". See also Miss Campbell's paper, p.5 ante.



PRELIMINARY REPORT: MEGALITHIC CHAMBER AND CAIRN

Marion Campbell

This recently-identified site is overlooked by a crag named Cnocan Uamhach ("cave-y crag") in Achaglachgach Forest (approximately NR797647).

The cairn was first noticed by Forestry ploughmen and was identified by our member, Mr Colin Fergusson.

I visited it for the first time, accompanied by several members of the Society, on 15th September 1979, and made a preliminary plan of the structure as it then appeared. A week later a second visit was made, this time to show it to Mr & Mrs J.G.Scott, who confirmed our interpretation.

Cnocan Uamhach is a small crag of schist and phyllite, with a rock-shelter on its eastern side. Below the crag the ground slopes gently NE among many morainic ridges.

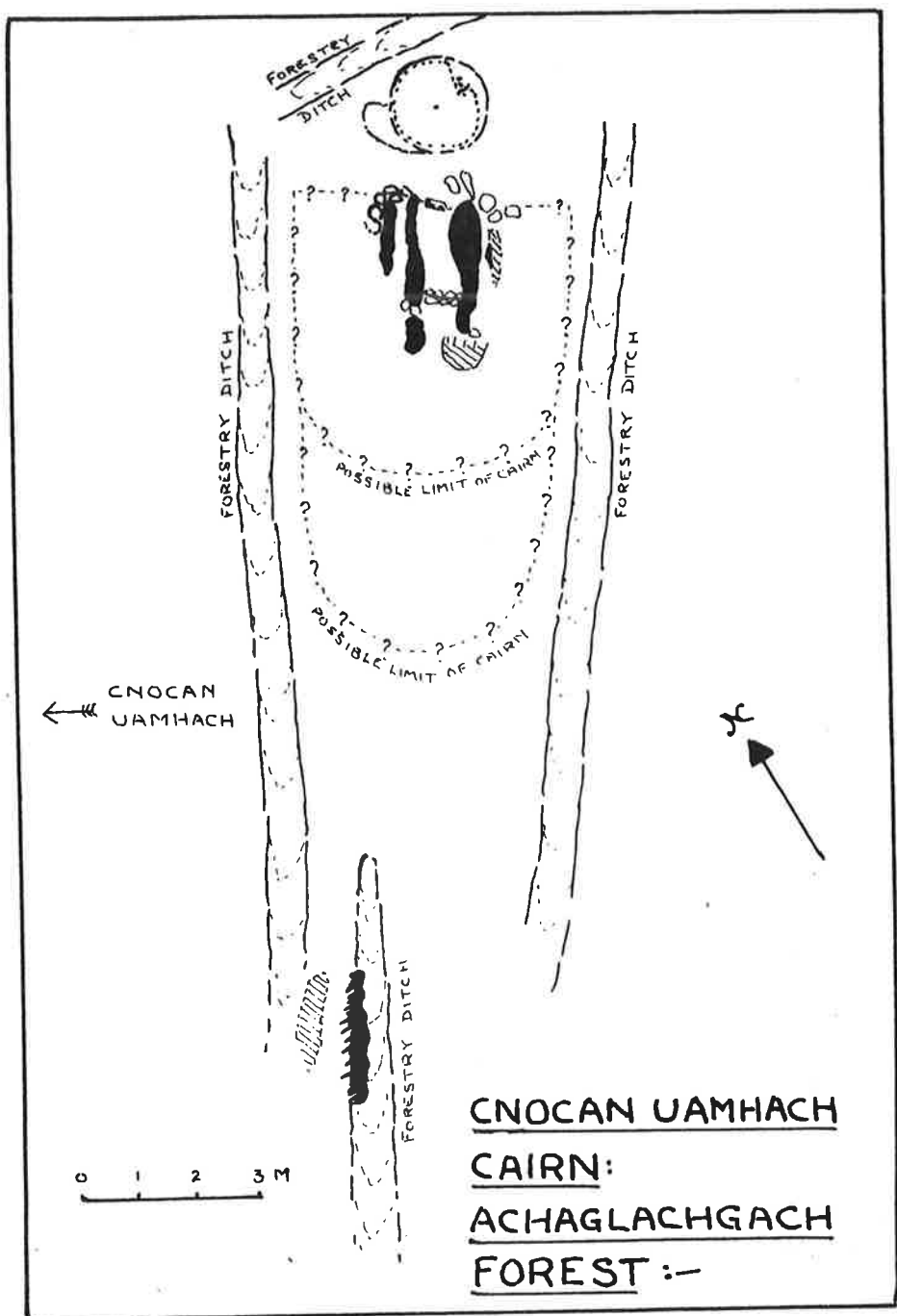
The site is an exposed megalithic chamber with the remains of a cairn. The chamber lies approximately NE/SW, with the presumed entrance at NE. In front of this lies a probable displaced capstone, 1.4m x 1.85m max., on the surface of which a ring of .65m radius has been scribed around a small central dot, clearly a failed attempt to carve a small millstone. The edge of the stone has fractured and within the break (and within the scribed ring) are three small drill-holes.

The chamber is formed of two slabs on edge, one 2.3m long and standing .89m above outside ground-level; its NW companion is 2m long and stands .79m high. Each of these main slabs has a smaller slab placed parallel to its outer face; the one to the NE is mainly buried but the one to NW is 1.3m long and stands free for .48m.

An earthfast transverse slab .4m x .2m almost blocks the "entrance"; its upper surface is curiously "waved", probably by natural folding. It, alone of the visible chamber material, is schistose.

At 1.75m to 2m from the "entrance" a line of earthfast stone can be seen (perhaps a single septal slab) which now carries a crosswall of small stones, inserted to form a lambing-pen. The present "floor" of the chamber is .14m below the outside ground-level.

Two smaller upright stones to the SW extend the probable length of the chamber to 3m from the entrance.



17m to the SW (measuring from the NE edge of the "capstone") a slab 1.93m long lies on edge, exposed by a Forestry ditch, and a second, concealed, stone, lying in a parallel position, was located by Mr Scott when probing.

Cairn material is traceable around and behind the chamber to a probable maximum of 7.3m from the "capstone" and the greatest lateral spread is about 5.5m, across the centre of the chamber.

All the major slabs, with the exception already noted, are of a fine-grained rock, probably igneous, in sharp contrast to the nearby crag. (Tertiary dykes and sills can be seen in nearby hillocks.)

Conclusions: It seems probable that the "capstone" was hauled off some hundreds of years ago for an attempt to cut out a small millstone, probably for a small Muilean Dubh, vertical-shaft mill, which would work on a small head of water. The attempt failed when the stone broke, and it would never have been a very good millstone if the makers had succeeded.

The bit of rough walling across the chamber was probably erected, maybe a hundred years ago, to make a lambing-pen. The earthfast stone (or stones) visible beneath this wall may be original - such burial chambers are often divided into compartments by low sills, which also serve to brace the bottom of the edge-set long side-slabs.

In the matter of the area covered originally by cairn material, the dotted lines on the plans are only suggestions. There is nothing showing in the flanking ditches, so it was never a huge cairn.

We do not of course yet know if the large edge-set slab uphill of the chamber, in another ditch, is part and parcel of the same cairn - sometimes there is a second burial chamber at the opposite end or set into the side of the cairn. The fact that it is the same type of stone as the side-slabs tends to suggest some connection.

As far as I know, it is the first cairn of this kind to be found in South Knapdale. The nearest recorded chambered cairns are at Glenreasdell in Kintyre and at Gartnagrenach in North Knapdale, so the new discovery fills a big gap.

EXTRACTS FROM 'OLD KILBERRY'S' DIARIES

Second Series. Pt.4

ESTATE VEXATIONS

1877. 19th March. Mr McGeoch came this morning & withdrew his offer for Tiretigan saying that he had heard from old George Hamilton that no sheep would live on the low ground but that they would all die of staggers or sturdy. This is a regular lie and I see that the old ruffian wants to drive away all intending offerers in order to try to secure the farm for his own family. It is a very great nuisance to me.

1888. 19th May. Sent two carts and four men to bring home some good trees which the Galbraiths have been cutting to make a fence along the burn above the road. Wrote as follows last night to John Galbraith on this subject:
"Mr John Galbraith, Craig. When I was going to Tarbert yesterday I saw several men coming down the burn above the road at Torinturk. One of them carried a big crosscut saw on his shoulder and like a fool he, as soon as he saw me, ran off about 20 yards behind a knowe where he left the saw and then walked down to the side of the burn and stood there as if he was looking at nothing. The rest of the party stopped dead and stood where they were. The fact of the man running away to hide the saw at once informed me that there was some mischief going on and so I had a good look at the place and found that a number of good Timber trees had been cut down and laid along the bank of the burn. This is utterly illegal and the proof that your gang knew that it was illegal lies in the fact of the man running away to hide the saw. I know the man as well as you do and also the rest of the gang and if it had not been for the regard which I have for your family I would have put the matter in the hands of the police.

I shall send over and remove all the trees that you have cut down and use them for my own purposes and I hereby give you notice for yourself and for your brother Donald (who is still I believe a minor) that I forbid you to cut any wood at all in future whether Timber, Wands or brush-wood for any purpose whatever without special leave grant-

ed by me in writing. I think that you have behaved most disgracefully in cutting down some of the best wood I own, without any authority from me.

I remain yours truly,

J.Campbell of Kilberry.

This letter is sent by post registered so that there may be no doubt about its delivery."

1889. 27th July. A colt belonging to Dr McMillan which I am grazing for him was bitten by a snake. I treated him with whisky and ammonia and at night he was better. Very late at night **** the vet came to see him. He was drunk and I heard what he had to say out of doors. He could not do any more than I had done. He was here yesterday looking at a filly foal but he was too drunk to do anything. Tarbert Fair has not agreed with him.

1891. 23rd June. The bull "Uisteach" went daft with heat and horseflies today in Sliab nan Cailleach and raced about till he made himself into a very exhausted condition. Put him into a house where after panting for an hour or two with his tongue hanging out he got better and was put on to the field again in the evening.

21st July. Started off a lot of Highland Cattle for Stirling where they are to be sold by auction on 28th. They go by s.s.Minard Castle to Bowling tomorrow and will walk to Stirling in three days arriving on Saturday. They looked very well and went away very quietly.

28th July. [at Stirling]...the sale was a miserable fiasco. They were not looking well and having been in the pens in Corson's sale yard since 6am were very empty. I could certainly have got £100 more by selling them at home. It was a great mistake to send them here and I have suffered for it. I have always maintained that a home market was best and I was very foolish to depart from my well founded conviction.

1897. 10th April. There has been a great deal of heather burning for the last ten days or so on Keppoch and Tiretigan and I think that far too much has been burnt. Yesterday I sent Archie to Duncan Black Keppoch who promised to burn no more, but this evening there was a strong fire on Keppoch. I wrote to Mrs Black Tiretigan asking

her to give orders that no more was to be burnt and she agreed to do so but there were fires on Tiretigan this afternoon. I sent Archie up to see John Black who was burning and he said that he would put out the fires and began to do so but after Archie came down the fires were kept going. These Tiretigan Blacks are very unsatisfactory. I have done everything that I could for them and have helped them in many ways and given them reductions of rent but they are not in the least bit grateful. Mrs Black admitted to me in writing the other day that she had given leave to a man who rented the farm house from her last summer and autumn to shoot rabbits, which she of course had no right to do.

PERSONAL VEXATIONS and ODDMENTS

1884. 16th October. On his way home from Tarbert last Monday Geekie coachman came to grief and the dogcart was capsized. The mares ran away with it for some distance and the result was that Geekie was insensible for hours, the trap was very much broken up and the best of the mares had to be shot. This is rather bad luck.

1897. 16th December. [shooting at Poltalloch] I had the misfortune to shoot a cock Reeves pheasant. There were four of them and I counted them all as they passed me and went out of the covert and then had no scruple in firing a few minutes afterwards through a fir tree at a pheasant which proved to be one of the Reeves. They all four had come back into the covert immediately as it turned out ...Wrote to Wingfield (Lord Malcolm) telling him that I had shot the Reeves. These brutes should all be shot. It is not fair to have them loafing about the coverts.

1898. 9th May. Dr McMillan came to see a woman at Keppoch, the wife of a ploughman, who went mad yesterday very suddenly. She is to be removed to Asylum tomorrow. Note. When in the Asylum this woman was under the impression that she was a herring, but eventually she recovered and returned to Keppoch.

1901. 22nd April. Mr Bruxner walked over from Ormsary to talk about getting some of his boxes stored here for a time. He was taking the tenency of Achaglachgach.

18th May. Mr Bruxner has a great deal of luggage of sorts stored away here and at Coulaghailtro. The Kilberry straw house is three quarters full of boxes of sorts, I should think 8 or 9 tons of them. A great deal is stored at Coulaghailtro including three men, 2 horses, 2 cows, a large number of dogs, some pigeons, fowls etc. A cat belonging to his butler is with her kittens in the house of McAlister the roadman. Maggie, Molly and Punch [terrier] went to see Mrs McAlister today and were viciously attacked by this cat. Punch was pretty badly scratched and bitten and one of the McAlister girls was bitten twice on the hand. Maggie went up and cauterised the bites with carbolic acid.

TO BE CONTINUED

"THE PREHISTORIC ROCK ART OF GALLOWAY & THE ISLE OF MAN"
by Ronald Morris. Reviewed by J.S.Andrews, FSAScot.

Ronald Morris will be familiar to those of "Kist's" readers who know his previous work on the Rock Art of Argyll. Once again he presents an uncomplicated layout, his concise style describing, illustrating, and showing how to locate 6 Manx sites and 112 in Galloway. Published by Blandford, with a Foreword by our own Member, Jack Scott, it is of immeasurable value to anyone interested in the enigma of 'Cup-and-Ring Marks'. Though listing some 100 assorted suggestions, the author deliberately avoids forcing his own theories upon the reader, leaving us the fun of puzzling out the true purpose of Britain's oldest, oddest inscriptions. One might quibble about certain diagrams not being orientated with accompanying photographs, but the work is a superb guide and may well hold the key which someday could unlock the real meaning of this ancient code - or whatever it is! Fascinating, and well worth £7-95. (Hardback £9-95)

Editorial Note: Mr & Mrs Andrews have now moved to Galloway and our much-deplored loss is a gain to the Dumfries & Galloway Archaeological and Natural History Society.