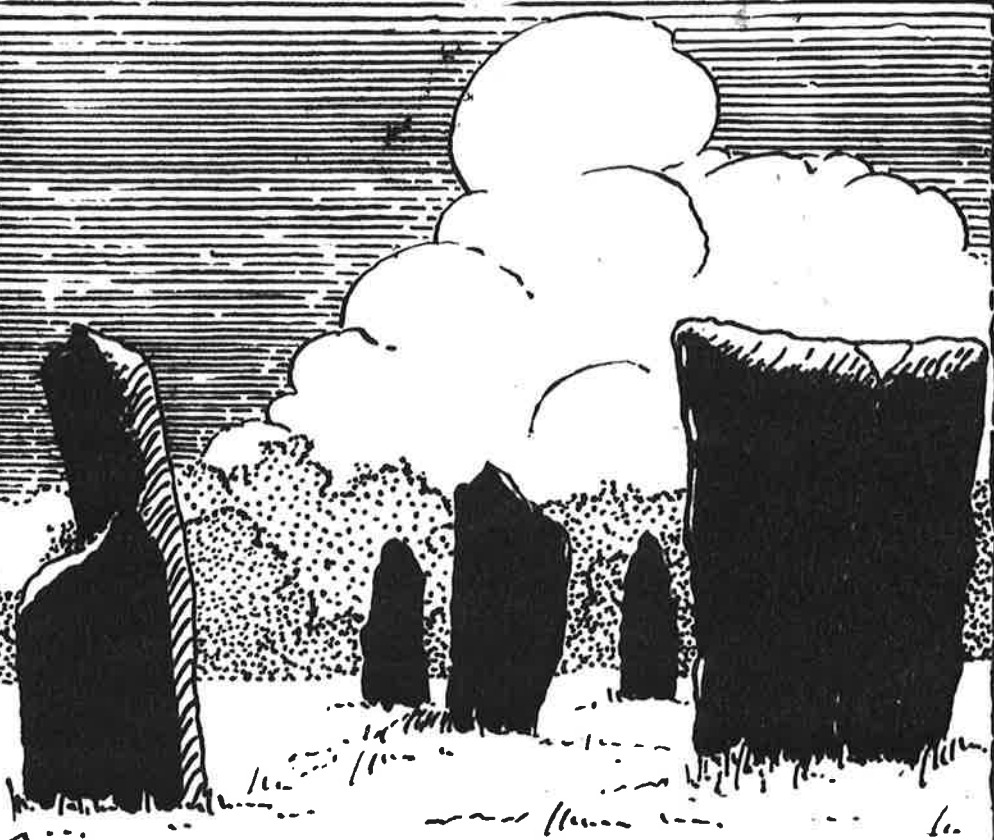


nether largie stanes :
: Kilmartin.

Edm.



The KIST : 8

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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EDITORIAL

In this issue of Kist the emphasis tends towards the archaeological, with the paper on the Nether Largie Stones by Professor Haddow and his associates, and the important, highly technical CI4 Jura datings in Mr Mercer's paper. This contribution is reprinted from ANTIQUITY by kind permission of Dr Glyn Daniel, the Editor, and the author himself. It was felt that it held particular interest for Mid-Argyll readers and our plea to be allowed to reprint it was most courteously agreed to and is gratefully acknowledged.

Miss Sandeman's charming contribution connects, if tenuously, her 20th century Jura tinker with his remote predecessors, Mr Mercer's early Jura toolmakers. Many will be delighted with our President's paper, and we have another selection from 'Old Kilberry's' diaries.

Two Natural History news items worth mentioning are the Editor's sighting of a Great Skua off Bagh Asgog, and the finding of a stranded Tuna near Newton on Upper Loch Fyne.

Our activities have proceeded along their normal path with the exception of the 'Tombstone Recording' which we must again and more strongly complain about. This undertaking to the Scottish Genealogy Society should have been fulfilled long ago, and the time has come when our Society must act or 'lose face'. So please get your allotted recordings finished without more delay.

We have the following Ancestor Enquiry:-

Mrs Toombes, 21 Hobbs St, Auchenflower 4066, Brisbane, Australia, writes to enquire if any readers can help in locating her Campbell ancestors. Gt-grandfather John Hannah Campbell emigrated in 1863 to Maryborough, Queensland on s.s.Montmorency. His youngest son called his property on Harvey Bay "Craignish", which seems to imply a Mid-Argyll origin.

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THE NETHER LARGIE STANDING STONES, KILMARTIN

A.J.Haddow, D.R.Hannay & D.Tait

The country round Kilmartin is well known for the profusion of megalithic monuments (many described by Craw, 1930) which still survive there. They form one of the greatest concentrations of standing-stones, sometimes in groups, and of early to middle bronze-age cairns to be found in Scotland. The reasons why this area was so attractive to the early hunter and agriculturist are obvious. There is abundant low, fertile alluvial land, which apparently was never forested, with easy access to freshwater lochs and to quiet sea lochs with excellent fishing and abundant shellfish, and also to a salmon river, the Add, not too wide or turbulent for primitive nets or fish traps. In his valuable short guide to the area, Scott (1966) has pointed out the importance of seal rookeries. There is not at present a large one near this part of the coast, though grey seals are again breeding in the Sound of Jura (Fraser Darling and Boyd, 1969) and in the past they probably bred on many of the islands, notably Lunga, though the wild seas of Corrieveckan and Bealach a'Choin Ghlais would be very hazardous for primitive craft, as has been emphasised by Thom (1971). Seabird colonies would also be numerous and it is important to remember that, apart from smoked fish and meat, really fatty foods such as seal pups, young gannets fulmars and puffins were one of the few things the early northerner could preserve for winter use. Add to this the presence of copper ore and easy access to the interior via Loch Awe and the Firth of Clyde and it will be seen why this was such a favoured part of the West of Scotland.

Having survived for thousands of years the Kilmartin monuments have suffered most grievous damage, much of it irretrievable, in the last century and a half. Some of this was deliberate, such as the destruction of cists, standing-stones and stone

circles by explosives, in the name of "agricultural improvement". Almost equally serious, however, were the well-intentioned but misguided activities of amateur clerical archaeologists, whose excavation methods would now be classed as sabotage rather than as scientific exploration. It is, however, to this group of writers that one must turn for an account of the area in the middle of the last century.

The group of stones with which this note is concerned is one of the most prominent, and also one which recently has attracted a good deal of attention. It has engaged the interest of one of us (A.J.H.) for a considerable number of years and as it would now seem to be yielding up some of its astronomical secrets, the time seems appropriate for a review of evidence which suggests that a major stone is missing, and also for a note on the alignments of the stones with other local monuments.

One of the most striking features of the area is the 'linear cemetery' of seven cairns which extends, almost in a straight line, from the middle of Crinan Moss to the flat land below Kilmartin village, a distance of almost three miles. It may originally have been longer and one cairn at least, still present in the last century, is known to have been destroyed completely. Scott (1966) gives a good small-scale figure of this cemetery and it is shown on the Ordnance Survey maps from 1 in/mile upward. (Kilmartin is one of the few areas in western Scotland for which both 6 in/mile and 25 in/mile maps are available.) The cemetery was obviously in use over a very extended period as the oldest cairn (Nether Largie South) is a neolithic gallery grave, though later used by bronze-age people, while others are as late as the middle bronze-age. The majority of cists in the area have a solstitial orientation (N.N.E. to N.E., perhaps varying with the altitude of the horizon). The orientation of the linear cemetery itself is also, perhaps fortuitously, approximately N.N.E., and the main axis of the Nether Largie group of

Fig. 1a

The area as a whole.

T - Temple Wood cist.

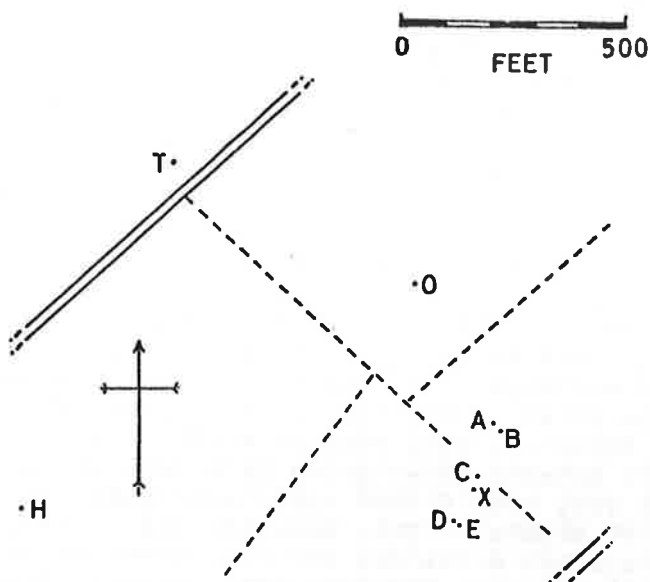
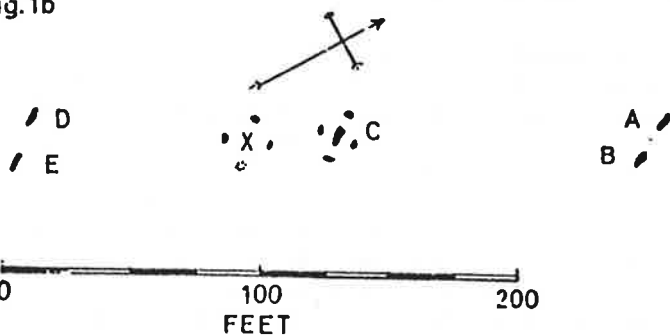


Fig. 1b



Sketch of the main group.

stones - which lies some 350 yards south of the Nether Largie South Cairn and about 120 yards east of the main alignment of the linear cemetery - is almost exactly N.N.E. The unusual disposition and orientation of the stones is best shown by diagramsbut for more distant features of the area Scott's book and the Ordnance Survey maps should be consulted - the 1-inch maps concerned are sheets 52 and 58 in the current series.

The individual megaliths, being of the local slaty stone, are very flat-sided and it is easy to take a sight along their surfaces. The northern pair (A & B in Fig.1a), both a little over 8 feet high are, allowing for the fact that one has obviously been tilted at some time in the past, in alignment with a much smaller outlier (O) about 350 feet away, to the north-west. The southern pair (D & E) are slightly taller and one of them has 3 cup markings. A line through these stones is not parallel to one through the first pair, but both lines are well west of north. Approximately midway between these pairs is a very large monolith (C), over 9 feet high, surrounded by 4 much smaller stones. This monolith has numerous cup markings and a few cup and ring markings on its southern face. The very flat northern face has a similar orientation to the axis D-E. A few feet to the southward, straddling the main axis of the Monument, is another group of small stones, three in number (X).

In the first detailed description of the Nether Largie monument, Romilly Allen(1882)mentions 5 large and 7 small stones - as described above - but oddly enough shows only 2 stones of group X in his figure. He also mentions that the axes of the two major pairs (A-B and D-E) lie north and south, whereas they lie far to the west of north, as does the axis of the central stone C. Romilly Allen's orientation of the monument, as shown in his figure, differs from all other published work known to the writers. Campbell and Sandeman(1961) mention "probable cist nearby",and this, as noted by Campbell (1970), refers to group X, but these

stones could equally easily be a group similar to that surrounding the great central megalith. It is important to note that Thom (1966,70,71) has given detailed diagrams of the Nether Largie group in each of which a fourth stone is shown at X (dotted line in diagram). This careful observer carries a bayonet to probe the soil at points where a stone seems to be missing and, though none has been visible in living memory at the point shown by him, it is presumably under the turf. If there is indeed a stone here the disposition of the small stones at C and X is obviously similar.

Thom (loc.cit.) has discussed the Nether Largie stones in terms of a lunar observatory. (He often refers to them as "Temple Wood", a term reserved by other workers and by the present writers for the stone circle surrounding a cist which lies just north of the road from Nether Largie to Poltalloch North Lodge.) In his discussion and figures he has drawn attention to major observational axes running through the north(A-B) and south(D-E) pairs of stones, through the central stone C and also, though no large stone exists there now, through group X. Evidence that another major stone may have been present in the Nether Largie group as recently as in the last century and that it may well have been the central feature of group X will now be discussed. The very recent discovery of another outlier (H) or the stump of one, under the turf about 1000 feet due west of the southern pair of stones by Gerald Hawkins has been briefly noted in the press (Robertson, 1973). This find, while of major interest, does not affect the following discussion as there seems to be no evidence in the literature that this stone was visible in the last century.

As noted above, Romilly Allen mentions five large stones and his figure shows that these are the five at present standing. He does not include the outlier O in his description. However earlier reports suggest that another large stone was present. It is a pity that neither the "Statistical Account"(Sinclair 1791-99)nor the "New Statistical

Account" (Blackwood, 1845) give any detailed information concerning the Kilmartin stones and unfortunately Christison's careful paper (1903) includes no account of the Nether Largie stones or of the important adjacent group at Ballymeanach as these, he notes, have already been described by earlier writers. Stuart (1867) whose beautiful illustrations would have been of great value had they included Nether Largie, figures Ballymeanach only. There seems, almost, to be a "conspiracy of silence" about Nether Largie, those who have discussed or figured the standing stones confining their main attention to the two with cup and ring markings.

The first clue is in the paper by Canon Greenwell (1866) in which he states "As I have said above, three series of standing-stones still remain in this district, and in each case the series consists of seven stones. One series upon Largie farm, about a mile south of Kilmartin, has upon two of the stones a great number of the small pits which are so often associated with concentric circles" (*italics ours*). Greenwell's statement seems perfectly explicit but before proceeding further the other two groups of seven which he mentions should be discussed briefly. About a mile S.S.E. of Nether Largie is the second major group of seven large stones, at Ballymeanach. This includes a row of four, an opposing row of two and an outlier - a stone with an artificial hole in it. Three of the stones, including the outlier, bear cup markings and all seven were standing in Greenwell's time. They are figured by Stuart (1867), Simpson (1867) and Romilly Allen (1882). The important outlier has now fallen, but the above shows that this has happened very recently and has no bearing on what follows. The third group, the most extended of all, lies further to the south, a little to the west of the Cairnbaan-Kilmartin road. At present only four of these stones remain standing. This monument is in three parts. The northernmost comprises three stones, but the central one has fallen (and is so shown on the 25 in/mile maps of the Survey of 1864).

The central group is composed of two stones, both still standing. The most southerly group is also of two very large stones, both of which had fallen before Greenwell's time (see again the map just quoted). Christison's account (1903) suggests that they have been down for a very considerable time. This last group has been noted in more detail than the general context might seem to warrant, mainly to show that Greenwell could recognise as an entity a group of stones, some of which had fallen, strung out over half a mile.

From this it could be deduced that at Nether Largie he could have been discussing a group which included a fallen stone, but this does not seem to be the case. Thus Simpson, of chloroform fame, who wrote a lengthy and beautifully illustrated paper (1867) on cup and ring marks, states "Along the low ground, from Kilmartin to the farm of Largie, runs a string or succession of large cairns or barrows, terminated by a group of six or seven tall monoliths, planted very irregularly - six of them in pairs." (*italics ours*). He confines his further discussion to the cup-marked stones. Clearly he refers to a group of seven stones of which one may consider either six or seven to be tall. The obvious stone calling for the "or" qualification is the outlier, which is a small stone, both in height and girth, when compared with the others. The important phrase is "six of them in pairs". At the moment there are only four in pairs. It is unlikely that another stone would be a pair with the outlier and the other obvious place is in the centre of group X. There is no other probable site for a major stone in the central group which could lead to the formation of a third pair. That Simpson really was thinking in terms of seven stones appears from his introduction to the next group he discusses (Ballymeanach) - "and about a mile beyond the Largie stones, we come upon another still more stately and imposing cluster of seven pillar stones" (*italics ours*).

It is unfortunate that the large-scale Ordnance Survey maps of the last century came just too

late to be of value. All show the large stones as they now are. The 6in/mile survey of the area was carried out between 1862 and 1877, and the 25in/mile maps date, so far as the writers can determine, from about 1865 - around the time of Simpson's visit. If there was another large stone, it would be about this time that it disappeared. Enquiries from old local people have revealed no story of another stone. Col. Malcolm of Poltalloch has also been consulted, but he has no old sketch or watercolour of the stones at Duntrune Castle. A wealth of such things was of course destroyed in the fire at Poltalloch many years ago.

Four roads surround the fields where the Nether Largie stones stand and it is impossible to drive round these without being struck by the manner in which they seem to change place, one with another, almost as in a country dance. The other thing that anyone interested in them soon notices is that in some cases pairs of stones give an alignment on some other megalithic monument. It is not proposed here to suggest reasons for this - whether, for example, a cairn might be a foresight or backsight in the context of Nether Largie as a lunar observatory. There do, however, seem to be too many such alignments to have occurred by pure chance and it is impossible to walk, for instance, to the top of the Rì Cruin Cairn (first described in detail by Mapleton, 1870), and to see stone B disappear neatly behind stone D, without feeling that this has been the deliberate intention of the cairn builders, yet most of the cairns would be built a very long time after the erection of the stones. Oddly enough, in an area which seems never to have been forested naturally, problems of inter-visibility arise in many cases on account of the present-day profusion of young and mature plantations. These form an obstacle to appraisal which could only be overcome by a sophisticated survey, calling for prolonged presence on the ground. Another problem is caused by the denudation of the cairns. At the moment the cairn at Dunchraigaig is screened from the stones by a small wood. Even

if this were removed, however, it would still be just 'hull down'. In its original state the top would most probably have been visible, as would any associated standing stone, as at Ri Cruin, (Mapleton, 1870) or Kintraw (Simpson, 1966).

When it was found, (by overlaying a tracing) that while the positions of roads, march-dykes, buildings, etc., as shown on the 25in/mile map of the mid-19th century agreed well with those shown on that published at the turn of the century but that the positions of the stones at Nether Largie (and also of those at Ballymeanach) did not, it seemed necessary to check their positions, as obviously they had not been plotted with such care as the cadastral features. The theodolite survey (carried out by D.T.) showed perfect agreement with the latter, which were used as a control, but did not agree where the stones were concerned. The differences were slight and could have been due, for example, to tilting over the years, except for the outlier O and stone A, where the position of both and consequently the direction of the axis AB differed substantially from the map. It had been expected that differences would occur here as direct observation shows A and B to be virtually in alignment with O, while in the published map a line BA passes something like 100 feet south of O.

A preliminary study of alignments was made, using the 2nd edition 25-in. Ordnance Survey maps of the area. The maps were firmly joined with tape on a large table, and the exact position of the stones as now plotted was indicated on a transparent overlay. Even at this scale the stones were too close together to extend a line between them with any great precision to distant surrounding features. Nevertheless, in fourteen to sixteen cases pairs or trios of stones appeared to be aligned on other remains of prehistoric interest. Put another way, quite a number of the surrounding cairns and standing stones seem to have been built in line with two or more of the Nether Largie stones, which would be there long before them.

It is to be remembered that the builders of

these cairns had to rely on the naked eye and that they had no way of overcoming perspective. Thus a stone at some distance, seeming from the map to be marginally out of line with a particular pair may, when one is standing 1-200 yards from the pair be completely hidden and so apparently in alignment. One may even move a trifle from side to side without bringing it into view. What is called for is theodolite work on the ground, taking for example a line from an accurately marked point on one of the surrounding roads through a pair of stones to obtain a bearing, and then to produce the line thus defined toward the distant object.

A few of the more obvious alignments may now be mentioned:

BA leads to the outlier O.

OAB almost certainly leads to Dunchraigaig Cairn, as does DE.

BD leads to Ri Cruin Cairn.

ED leads to the Temple Wood Circle. Were a seventh stone, parallel with C, present at X, a sight along it would also lead to this circle. Thom (1966) has pointed out that this line has importance in relation to lunar observation. A sight along the flat surface of C leads to a point a little north of the Temple Wood Circle, where recent clearing of bramble thicket and bracken has revealed partially buried slabs and accumulations of rolled stone - clearly there has been a megalithic feature, possibly a cairn with one or two cists, at this point.

EH leads to a partially opened cist projecting from the scarp of the raised beach behind Poltalloch North Lodge.

XC leads to Nether Largie North Cairn.

In addition, the Glebe Cairn, Nether Largie Mid Cairn and Ri Cruin Cairn are in almost perfect alignment. So also are Nether Largie South Cairn, the outlier O and the Ri Cruin Cairn, and Thom sus-

:pected a cairn at the point where the axis ED intersects this line, though no trace of it can be seen now.

These results are sufficiently suggestive to show the need for a more careful survey, and it should be noted that Thom (1966) has observed similar alignments at Ballymeanach. It is to be emphasised that study of apparently blank alignments could lead to the rediscovery of lost monuments. In any such survey it would be important to remember that in other parts of the country there is evidence of buildings - churches in particular - being built on the site of former megalithic monuments. Where churches are concerned, the obvious reason would be the suppression of an old religion.

Though nowadays screened from the stones by a small wood, some of the buildings in and around Kilmartin village would clearly call for investigation (particularly perhaps the ancient chapel behind the present church) and Kilmartin Castle, as quite obviously lines DA and EB pass through or very close to these buildings.

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THE BATTLEFIELD OF CARSE

A Knot of Knapdale Legends

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M. Campbell

Any collector of folklore knows the tantalising experience of clutching one strand of a lost tale, an episode or placename that hints at a whole long narrative unravelled out and gone for ever. It is quite rare to find oneself able to retwist the strands and to have (the Gaelic phrase) "both ends of the rope and leave to pull it". At Carse in South Knapdale a fistful of strands assemble themselves into a thick hawser that stretches backward into the mists of time.

Every 'carse' is a flood-plain, a wide level built up by glacial till and river-silt meeting the sea and often overlying ancient beaches. From the hill above Carse one looks down on arable fields marshland where the wild geese winter, the silvery river winding its way to the sands past the little white church, the burial-ground on the lip of a pool, and beyond it the ice-polished rocks. To eastward of the rocks the eye is caught and held by three tall shapes standing two-and-one in adjacent fields; in some lights one might almost think that three men walk through the corn. Look again as the sun strikes them with a glint of silver; these are no men, but tall stones.

All three face almost exactly east-and-west, a pair eight feet apart and the third 130 yards to the north-nor'west. The pair stand 10ft and 8ft high, the singleton nearly 8 ft. A chance visit close to the Vernal Equinox showed me the setting sun dipping into the hill over the singleton, viewed from between the pair; to a watcher at the singleton equinoctial sunrise should appear approximately between the pair (allowing for precession of the equinox and other changes in the earth's course since the erection of the stones, some four to five thousand years ago).

Inevitably the Carse stones were labelled

"Druidical" in the last century (is one ever to overcome this obsession with the priests of Gaul and Britain in the time of Julius Caesar?). Inevitably too, they and their surroundings have been woven into folk-tale; but that weaving may have preserved hints and echoes from a time not so long after their erection. Before we pass from observed fact to inspired fiction, let me note a few more facts. Firstly, there is a small outcrop of rock by the field-gate leading to the pair of stones, on which there lies a long stone half-buried in grass; this just might be another monolith, removed from the arable or fallen in situ, and if it had stood where it now lies, it might have provided a sight-line to the midwinter sunset across the face of the pair, thus providing three of the four essential observations for checking a calendar; I can offer no suggestion for a midsummer check, unless some apparatus existed for noting the shortest noonday shadow cast by one or more of the stones.

Secondly we have a record, distressingly incomplete, of an archaeological discovery nearby. At some date before 1864 drainers found "portions of thin Plates of Bronze, with embossed chevrony patterns, perforated", which were presented by Mrs Campbell of Carse to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland in that year. (Nat. Museum cat. of 1892, F 129). PSAS V expands the catalogue note "fragments of bronze plates found at the base of a standing stone at Carse. These show traces of small projecting embossed ornaments of Vandyke patterns, knobs etc." The descriptions call to mind the two bronze bracelets found about the same time in the Pass of Melfort, and I hunted for the box labelled F 129 with high hopes. It is my unhappy duty to record that the box now contains nothing but a smear of verdigris on its cotton-wool and that as far as I can discover no drawing was made of the finds.

By 1868 the Ordnance Survey recorders were noting that "about 40 years ago....workmen discovered a helmet curiously inlaid with gold, and

several ornamented swordhilts, all of which were sent to the Antiquaries Society in Edinburgh"; a fair example of the development in any 'buried treasure' story within a short time.

Thirdly, both Capt. White and his surveyors' notebooks report "a great number of skulls and bones" said to have been exposed near the north-east corner of the graveyard by a spate some years before. White takes this as evidence for his theory that the graveyard was the resting-place of warriors and the standing stones their War Memorial, linking both with the battle-legend to be given below. (If prehistoric graves were known, their area may well have been chosen for the parish graveyard, opened about 1720, since local feeling would oppose any other use for the ground. Similar locations are well-known in Argyll, e.g. Brackley in Kintyre.)

Finally the rocky outcrop overlooking the stones is Sron a'Mhionnain, (Cursing Nose), and below it stood Clach a'Bhreitheamh, (the Judge's Stone). Tradition claims that condemned criminals were hurled from the rock; the Judge's 'chair' was broken up about 1892 for road-metal, and only its stump remains near the road. A note in the Minute-book of Kilcalmonel and Kilberry Kirk Session gives a sketch of this 'chair', a large boulder with a natural seat and canopy; most fortunately it was drawn by the then Minister, the Revd. Mr John Cameron, and the last Minister of the united parishes, the late Revd. Mr MacNab, most kindly drew my attention to the note.

A legend-builder would find at Carse a whole range of useful materials ready to hand....Druids, treasure, bones and monoliths; while to seaward stretches the blue bay called Loch Stornoway, the "Steering Bay" where a wise Viking would keep way on his ship nor risk anchoring on its treacherous ground (bestrewn with warnings on modern charts). The legend itself, however, rejects all such ready-made materials and is fashioned out of quite another web - a web that stretches far beyond Carse.

It unfolds somewhere near Brenfield on Loch

Fyne, with a fatherless boy named McVicar herding his mother's cow on the brae. He sees, and hides from, cattle raiders driving off the spoils of a sortie into Glassary. (In one version the raiders are MacAllisters from Tarbert, in another they are MacNeills from the Isles). The MacIvers of Glassary are kinsmen of the boy's mother, and he guides the pursuit after the raiders. The MacIvers, whose by-name is "Shaggy Black Horses of Glassary", have left nothing undone to secure success against the enemy; they have brought with them their tribal witch, a Wise Woman whose magic can only be worked from horseback.

Up they go by Stronachullin, on the old drove-road that climbs the shoulder of Sliabh Gaoil and curves westward high above the headwaters of the Lergnahension river. Perhaps the raiders are indeed MacNeills, making back to the western sea, for they have worked downhill towards Carse, and here the avengers overtake them. (White's garbled version here introduces an incident from other tales, a night-scene in which a Campbell disguises himself as a harper and spies through the raiders' camp before a dawn attack.) Battle is joined on the plain around the Stones, and quickly degenerates into a scrum, the raiders trying to drag the Old Woman to the ground and the MacIvers yelling Cur a'Chailleach air a capull! (Get the Old One back on her Mare!).

This is far too undignified for any Wise Woman to tolerate. She and her mare speed away to the high notch on the western skyline, Creag a'Stars as we now call it (but perhaps it should be stairsneach, a step or threshold). The present-day road cuts close below the rock and a little ledge in the cliff-face is always full of pebbles, thrown up from the roadside by people trying for a wish (three shots are allowed, white pebbles are advised, and the wish is granted if one stone stays on the ledge). From the crag-top the two of them went into orbit, leaving not only the wishing-ledge but a powerful horse-haunt in the hollow to eastward of the rock, Slochd na Chapuill; the

carters of my youth dreaded what their staid Clydesdales might do as they passed, and it is honestly advisable to dismount and lead a pony through it. The next steep dip to the eastward is known as Glac na h'Iomarte, the Hollow of the Conflict, so perhaps the battle rolled thus far uphill.

However that might be, the MacIvers wavered and broke once the Old One had deserted them. A MacNab who had come to see the fun only saved himself by a desperate leap across a chasm upstream; one straggler died near Muilichin on the high ground, another was pulled down near Brenfield itself. (What kind of raiders were these who hunted their attackers so far back along the trail? One might well ask!). Local narrators add gleefully that MacNab's pursuers were four Campbells, who fell into the cleft one by one and were drowned, being too stupid to notice an easier crossing-place nearby. (Never mind which side the Campbells were on; there's nothing like drowning a few of them at every opportunity.)

But things are more serious down by the Stones. At least one head was ceremonially cut off and ritually washed in the deep pool Slochd na Cinn "the Pool of the Head", where the big fish leap at the upper falls of the river. And as for McVicar, his fate was a hard one; whether he had misled the MacIvers as to the strength of the opposition, or whether he fell under the Old One's wrath, we cannot tell. He became an outcast and turned to villany, making his home behind the earth-ramparts of the 'Robber's Den', that odd promontory-fort between two burns close to the Upper Glenfyne houses in Ardrishaig a place this Society has failed to visit so far. There he dwelt and preyed upon all the neighbourhood, until at last "they" got him - whoever "they" may have been - and speared him as he broke out through the burning thatch of his house.

Disgusting? Yes, but look at the synthesis. The clan-names are likely enough for some mediaeval feuding, perhaps before 1490 and the inter-

vention of the Campbells in local affairs; but McVicar's death has been lifted straight from Burnt Njal's Saga, that thirteenth-century epic novel from Iceland; the head-taking and head-washing belong to Celtic prehistory, and the Old Woman is none other than Epona herself, the Horse-goddess of Kintyre and of Roman Gaul; and the whole crisis takes place in the shadow of stones erected perhaps around 2000 or 1500 B.C.

Who spun all these threads into one skilful rope we cannot know. Here a bit, there a bit, a listener's name is good for a dram, a place-name helps the atmosphere - he went about his task much as Homer had done before him; but behind the embellishments and the flashes of inspiration we catch the steady beat of a tale too venerable to be greatly altered in the telling. Let a modern practitioner of the art lay a stone on the old master's cairn and salute his spirit.

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REFERENCES.

Archaeological Sketches in Scotland, II; Knapdale

Capt. T. P. White, R.E.; pub. Blackwood, 1875 (but written from field notes made during the Ordnance Survey of 1868-72. At this time my grandfather, the Diarist, was in India, and White collected many garbled traditions regarding Campbell family history and other local matters. His text, unlike his drawings, must be used with caution).

Ardrishaig and its Vicinity; Colin Leitch, MA.

Govan, 1904. (A wide-ranging collection, of varying authenticity, but containing much material otherwise unrecorded.)

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p. 345, note of recent acquisitions to Museum.

Tarbert in Picture and Story. D. Mitchell; Falkirk, 1908. (One might say the same for this as for Ardrishaig, above.)

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NEW CI4 DATES FROM THE ISLE OF JURA

John Mercer

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Radiocarbon dates from the Scottish Universities Research and Reactor Centre at East Kilbride have now confirmed the general industrial succession proposed during the last few years (Mercer 1970a). Ten sites have been excavated since 1967, yielding a working framework based on land-sea relationships, pollen, eight CI4 dates and over a quarter-million flint and quartz artefacts. The industrial sequence, at its most distinct in the evolution of the 8,000 backed blades - and of the trapeziforms in particular - has been divided up by reference to three main phases in land-sea relationships.

IA. A few pre-7,000 B.C. proto-trapeze tanged points, derived and rolled in marine gravel, overlapping in size with S.British specimens. The climatic amelioration from c.12,000 B.C. would have allowed Eskimo-type hunters to occupy the region, at first in the summer and then permanently.

IB. Trapezes (similar to those of Star Carr), blades and end-scrapers. At Lussa Wood I these lay within three continuous construction stone rings 13ft(4m) overall, with minute bone fragments, limpet shell, red ochre and burnt hazel-nut shell and wood; the latter, from one ring, gave CI4 years 8194 \pm 350bp (SRR-160), from the other two combined 7963 \pm 200bp (SRR-159), assumed to fall within 7,000-6,500 B.C. in calendar date. These cooking places, with the oldest Scottish CI4 datings, appear to be the country's earliest stone structures showing an awareness of symmetry. Towards the end of this phase sea-level was rising towards its maximum Post-Glacial stand.

IB-2. Evidence is thin for this transition, suggesting comparatively abrupt change on the island: there are only a few trapezes of intermediate size, shape and blunting. At N.Carn, stone setting charcoal below a typical Phase 2 floor gave CI4 years 7414 ± 80 bp (SRR-I6I), probably about 6,000 calendar date; the structure was associated both with a tool otherwise found once at a IB site and with a large Phase 2 trapeze.

2. Small narrow trapezes with the whole back blunted; degenerating blades and end-scrapers. So far no CI4 as charcoal rarely found, perhaps often washed away - phase dates to maximum sea-level. General age for latter, plus Jura pollen indications, centre this industrial phase on first half of Atlantic period.

3. Without evolutionary break. Phase I tools have disappeared, those of Phase 2 have degenerated. Three groupings which were scarce in Phase I and increasing in Phase 2 now attain maxima of one kind or another: the microlithic rod reaches a square section, the éclat écaillé becomes very common (perhaps more so than the microlith), milky quartz is overwhelmingly preferred to flint as raw material. A fourth diagnostic aspect is a quite new standardised double-notched hammer-anvil stone. At the typical site, Lussa River, CI4 ages of 4620 ± 140 bp (BM-556) and 4200 ± 100 bp (BM-555) suggest 3,450-2,940 B.C. lay within this final phase's span. Land recovery period.

In an outline such as this the 'Obanian' aspect can only be mentioned briefly. The peculiar hammer-anvil is the only distinctive tool in the Oronsay 'Obanina' stone industry, dominated by the éclat écaillé. Jura's acid soils have not conserved any organic tools nor have microliths been found on Oronsay. If one explains the latter absence as due to differing work (e.g. land-hunting on Jura, marine on Oronsay, one of Britain's main breeding grounds for seals), then it can be sugges-

:ted that Oronsay's - and probably all Argyll's - 'Obanian' sites were a product of the now-evidenced West Scottish final, post-glacial Palaeolithic people; more exactly of late Phase 2 and Phase 3, to judge by the Oronsay sites' geomorphology and CI4 dates and by the Jura dating of the common tools.

Finally it can be mentioned that the Jura excavations have produced evidence of six Neolithic (oak-elm decline, leaf and transverse points, polished axe chip) and three Early Metal Age ('dagger' and barbed-and-tanged points) occupations. Site associations suggest the Neolithic groups interacted with or followed closely on the Microlithic-making people, with the Early Metal Age occupations long after these.

Full reports of the excavations are appearing in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland. (Mercer, 1967, 1969, 1970b, 1971 and in preparation.

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(Editorial Note. Mr Mercer has been engaged for some years on a highly important series of excavations on Jura, with the object of defining prehistoric human activity in that area by a study of the flint and stone tools he is finding in such enormous quantities. His work at Lealt Bay and Lussa Bay continues, and his interim reports, in the Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, as detailed above, make not only intensely interesting reading but have already necessitated a drastic reassessment of dating to a period considerably earlier than had previously been postulated. Readers who have not already studied Mr Mercer's reports are most strongly urged to make every effort to repair the omission.)

WHEN THE YEARS WERE YOUNG

Mary Sandeman

A SEA TINKER

With the sea-thrift and shellasters came Mr MacAlastair, his blue clinker-built boat with her brown sails slipping down the bay from the north or appearing suddenly in the southern entrance, moving surely into Port nan Long and mooring close behind the steamer pier. In no time his brown hum-py tents, two half-tents separated by the fire, would be pitched on the grass between shellasters and thrift. There he would stay for weeks or months; all summer it seemed, but then summer ended for me with the Visitors who brought the dead-dog days of July and August which had to be got through before life began in earnest.

There would be a great hunting-out of things needing mending and put by "until MacAlastair comes"; pots and bowls, jugs and mugs that had lost a handle or sprung a leak. If you wanted a handle put on a syrup tin he'd do it. You may wonder why you would want a syrup tin with a handle? - well you might not now but lots of people did then. Few houses had water on tap and if you have ever tried to pour water from a full pail into a small kettle you will know that a dipper is a very handy thing and a syrup tin makes a very good one if it has a handle. Of course you could buy one of his own making but that would be several pennies more and the tin was there anyway.

Our world into which Mr MacAlastair sailed knew nothing of plastic and little even of enamelware, although it was about - blue pails and green pots. Mr MacAlastair brought most of our needs to our doors strung on strings over his shoulders, clinking and tinkling as he walked, great cascades of silver, (much more silvery than mother's best silver teapot), dippers and ladles, bowls and basins with or without handles in all sizes, sieves and strainers, cream-setting pans and milk pails anything made of tin he would have, or would make to

your requirements.

Mr MacAlastair was a friend of the family's from before the first world war, and just before the second he made a wee mug for my brother's little son, a gift as prized as any.

We used to bathe just beyond his tent; we would stop to pass the time of day with him and then he would withdraw into his tent and close the flap while we undressed and dressed again. On the way home we would stop once more while he and my father had a pipe together. A very dignified and much respected man was our friend Mr MacAlastair, and a very fine seaman.

He sailed his boat single-handed from Oban where he lived in the winter to all the Inner Islands. His boat was always very neat and trim, not a rope or an oar out of place. She had a bowsprit, which I thought very grand, and as far as I can remember she was gunter rigged with two jibs. I believe he was once dismasted but managed to land, cut down a tree and make a mast that lasted him the rest of the season. He dressed like a seaman and moved like a seaman.

He taught me to catch crabs with a head of thrift on a bent pin; the pin was'n't necessary, for once the crab had grasped the flower-head he would hold on long enough for you to yank him out of the water, but if you let him have it too long he would let go before you could do this. The crabs were very small, no bigger than a saucer, and we always put them back; but it was good sport.

From my bed as the quiet evening drew to dusk I'd watch a heron fishing by the watered-silk sea, paler than his breast feathers, and see the mast tip of Mr MacAlastair's boat swaying gently above the rocks that hid her hull, and listen to his tink tinkling as he beat his tinplate into all those shiny shapes - "If ifs and Ands were Pots and Pans there would be no need for Tinkers" - surely there would always be a need for Mr MacAlastair - tink, tink, tinkerty tink, tink, summer had come and winter was a long way off. There will always be a need for men like Mr MacAlastair.

EXTRACTS FROM 'OLD KILBERRY'S DIARIES

II. The Social Scene. (I)

1871. Aug. 22nd.

Very wet day. Left Kilberry at 10 a.m. and drove to Ardrishaig. From there went to Inveraray in the steamer Inveraray Castle to be present at the Home Coming of the Princess Louise and Marquis of Lorne. There were a great many county people on board the steamer which was crowded to excess with goods and passengers. The Stonefields (father, mother & 2 daughters) were in the Castle and also Poltalloch and his daughter. The other people were lodged in the Hotel (which the Duke had engaged for the purpose) or in private houses. I was in the Hotel which was very much crowded. Lord and Lady Archd. Campbell came to preside at the dinner in the Hotel.

Aug. 23rd.

Very wet day. The Princess and Lorne were to have arrived about 4 p.m. by carriage from Arrochar and we were all asked to be at the Castle to receive her. However they came about an hour too soon & many people had not time to get to the Castle. I was some distance from the door when she arrived and had a hard fight to get through the crowd to the Porch. Just as I arrived at the steps the Princess returned to them and stood there to receive addresses etc. I was standing alongside of her as I could not get farther into the Porch. Addresses were presented by the Provost on behalf of the town of Inveraray & by Stonefield (Convener) on account of the Commissioners of Supply of the County. Lord Lorne then inspected the Volunteers who were present in large numbers & recd. a gift of a claymore from the Artillery Volunteers. After this there was some delay while the Princess retired to rest & about 6 p.m. a large number of members of the Clan assembled in the Saloon to present her with a wedding present of the value of about £1500 which had been subscribed for by the

Clan all over the world. It consisted of a necklace of pearls & diamonds with a locket of the same & a pendant having the Galley of Lorne in sapphires on a diamond ground. A very handsome jewel.After dinner we all went to the Castle to see the fireworks which were very good. There are about 100 yachts in the bay, some of them very largeThe Princess Louise is very pretty & has a very charming manner. She made a little speech thanking us for the Clan present but was rather embarrassed & did not speak very well.

Aug. 24th.

Very wet day. In the afternoon it was blowing a regular gale and there was considerable damage among the yachts & steamers but nothing serious. The Glasgow Highland Volunteer Regt. of which Lorne is Colonel arrived in a steamer and were inspected in the Park. Eventually they all got drunk & kicked up an infernal row. One of them fell on a drawn bayonet & was killedAfter dinner went to a ball given by the Duchess in a large temporary wooden building. Very good ball. The floor was not good and the supper arrangements rather defective.

Aug. 25th.

.....There was to be a Regatta at 1 p.m.a lot of us went aboard the Columba (the Duke's yacht) and steamed down the loch to see the racesThe Yacht race turned out to be no race at all as through some mismanagement only two yachts entered and one of them was knocked out of the race by Mr Pender's steam yacht which ran foul of her and carried away her bowsprit.....at 6 o'clock. the Princess was presented with a Park Phaeton & a pair of ponies, the gift of the town of Inveraray.

1872. April 30th.

[at Inveraray] Meeting in the evening to talk over the affairs of the Argyllshire Gathering which is a society formed of gentlemen of Argyllshire for the purpose of having an annual ball and meeting.

Oct. 1st.

[at Oban for Argyllshire Gathering] Very good ball (the first ball of the Argyllshire Gathering) in the evening. About 200 people present, more than the room could conveniently hold. Began at 9.30 p.m. and lasted till 5 a.m.

1873. July 18th.

In the evening went (8 p.m.) to a big tea party at Kilmory. Very stupid & excessively hot & stuffy. We went away at 10.20 very much to Lady Orde's disgust but we could not stand the atmosphere any longer.

Sept. 4th.

The Argyllshire Gathering....ball was in a large tent. The floor was not very good and had been covered with chalk which rose in clouds of dust, at some times so thick that you could not see from one end of the tent to the other.

1876. April 24th.

[concert at Lochgilphead] In the interval between the parts Duncan Inverneil played the pipes devilish badly.

May 10th.

Maggie & I attended Her Majesty's Drawing Room at Buckingham Palace when we were presented to Her Majesty.....I wore the Highland Dress. Maggie wore a yellow brocaded silk with a black silk train & looked very well.....Princess Louise Marchioness of Lorne shook hands with Maggie in the Presence Chamber & bowed to me. She is inclined to be civil to Argyllshire people.

(TO BE RESUMED)