

An Account of the Magnetic Mountain, of Cannay.

By George Dempster of Dunnichen, Esq;

You will not be sorry to receive an account of the Magnetic Mountain of Cannay: But perhaps it is not unknown to you already, or you may at least have heard of similar ones in other places. Cannay is an island of ten or twelve miles in circumference, with an excellent harbour in its bosom. Near this harbour, on a hill of some height, called the *Compass Hill*, there is a little hole dug, about a foot or two in depth. A compass placed in this hole is instantly disturbed; and in a short time veers about to the eastward, till at last the north point settles itself in a due southerly direction, and remains there. At a very little distance from this hole, perhaps on the very edge of it, the needle recovers its usual position.

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This singular circumstance was known when Martin wrote his account of these islands, and is taken notice of by him. He indeed says, the compass then settled at due east, which is also curious. What increases the singularity of this alteration in the needle, is a discovery lately made by Hector M'Neil, Esq; tacksman of the island. He mentioned the circumstance to us; and Lord Bredalbane, Sir Adam Fergusson, Mr Isaac Hawkins Brown, and the rest of the company, went to examine the fact. The harbour, on the north side, is formed by a bold rock of Basalt, which may be about half a mile below, and to the southward of the Compass Hill, of which this rock is a continuation. We rowed under this rock; and when the boat reached its center, immediately under the rock, and almost touching it, the north point of our compass veered about, and settled at due south and remained there. This experiment was frequently repeated with the same success; but this effect was confined also to a very small part of the rock, which seemed to us directly south from the hole on Compass hill. At a little distance, on either side, the needle recovered its usual position. His Lordship then directed the boat to row with great quickness past the rock, when, upon our crossing the place which had before affected the needle, it was again affected during the passage, though very quick, and recovered soon after passing this point. We could hardly venture to assign any cause for these appearances, but by supposing something magnetical in the rock extending the whole distance from the Compass Hill to the head land at the mouth of the harbour. If this should prove to be the case, we had no scruple in pronouncing this to be the largest loadstone as yet discovered in the world.

A part of the rock was broken off, at the very spot where this affection of the needle was observed, and was applied to the compass when removed from the rock; but it seemed to produce no effect upon the needle whatsoever. Also, the compass was carried about the
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length of the boat from the rock, but in a line with Compass Hill; and it was also placed in the same line on the opposite side of the harbour, at about a quarter of a mile's distance; neither of these experiments produced any effect on the needle.

In this island there are many columnar appearances, not unlike to Staffa; and several, both straight and bent, and every way as regular, which seem also to have, like Staffa, escaped observation till very lately.