

I.

SOME SHETLAND BROCHS AND STANDING STONES (BEING THE CHALMERS-JERVISE PRIZE ESSAY¹ FOR THE YEAR 1911). BY ELIZABETH STOUT, HAMNAVOE, BURRA ISLE, SHETLAND.

There is no doubt that the Northern and Western Isles of Scotland present a rich and varied field in which the archæologist may mine, and that deeply. The successive peopling of these islands by different races, each of which has left traces more or less distinct, lends interest to the study of the objects of antiquity that confront one at almost every turning.

Shetland, lying as it does to the extreme north of Scotland, and out of the beaten track, has been, until within recent years, almost a *terra incognita* to Southrons. Vexed by storms one day, and smiled upon by the fitful sun the next, surrounded by turbulent seas which harass even our modern, well-equipped steamers, it remained for long shrouded in mystery, and the inhabitants pursued their way, and pulled down their Celtic castles to build their plain thatched huts, levelled their standing stones to incorporate them in dykes, and dug out their grave-mounds to provide dry storage for their winter supply of potatoes—partly, I presume, from a lack of education and of proper reverence, but mostly from dire necessity, for the weary fight

¹ The late Mr Andrew Jervise bequeathed a proportion of the residue of his estate to the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland, taking the Society bound to award the interest annually as a prize, to be called the Chalmers-Jervise Prize,—“To the writer (not a Fellow of the Society) of the best paper (illustrated) upon any object or objects of Prehistoric Antiquity in any part of Scotland; each county, island, or other notable district being taken up annually as the Society may be pleased to announce to intending competitors.” The fund was left to accumulate until it would enable the Society to announce a competition for a prize of ten pounds annually; and the first competition, duly advertised, took place in 1911, the area selected being the county of Orkney and Shetland. The competitors were four in number, and the prize was awarded to Miss Stout for the essay now published, illustrated by twenty drawings, mostly in water colour.

against cold and hunger forced the ancient islander to make the most of the scanty material then at hand. However, when the zeal of the antiquarian prompted him to examine these remote isles, he was met with evidence enough of the existence of objects of great historical interest to warrant their further preservation, and to recommend Shetland as one of the most fascinating fields open to the student of Celtic and early Norse civilisation.

The traveller in Shetland is everywhere met by two kinds of objects of antiquity—the broch or Celtic castle and the standing stone. If his is a keen eye, he may recognise the early ecclesiastical remains, the stone circles, or the burial mounds which are to be found here and there, but owing to the resemblance of the latter to the ordinary “knowe” this is a matter of some difficulty. The earth houses or mound dwellings may also defy detection for the same reason, and unless our traveller recognises the “thunder-bolt” which the crofter preserves in his dwelling to safeguard himself, his family, and his roof-tree from the effects of a thunderstorm, to be the stone axe of the Celt, his attention will probably be arrested in the way of antiquity in the islands by the brochs and the standing stones only. How they rear themselves in defiance of man and time, these hoary monuments of an unrecorded age! Here one may see a broch on the edge of a beetling cliff, frowning on the waves thrashing at its base, there in the midst of an old “tún” or township, or on an islet of the sea. Or a huge, lichen-covered monolith may seem to arise out of the midst of a valley, or may stand on the slope or on the crest of a hill, oblivious alike to the dawn and the sunset, the keen wind and the snow and ice, and to the tears and smiles of the men who come and go and live their little lives, leaving another generation to wonder as they have done at the silent sentinel. Whose hands reared these massive monuments and laid stone upon stone to form these marvels of construction—the brochs? Written records have we none to tell us to whom we may attribute either standing stone or broch,

and our inferences must be made from the few facts that research, with her patient, working hands, has brought to light.

Beyond the fact that Thule was "seen" when Agricola visited Orkney towards the end of the first century, we have no authentic information regarding it, except the scanty references made to it by monastic annalists who record the visits of certain missionary followers of Columba to its remote shores. Orkney is more favoured in this direction, owing probably to its being more easy of access from the contiguous shores of the North of Scotland, although the evidence supplied by the references to it is somewhat conflicting. We have it on the authority of Tacitus that Agricola "conquered" Orkney, thus inferring that the islands were inhabited; then a century and a half later Solinus describes the islands as uninhabited, and inaccurately as three in number—"Numero tres, vacante homine, non habent silvas tantum junceis herbis inhorrescunt, caetera earum nudae arenae et rupes tenent,"—which leads us to wonder how the original colonists could have been entirely wiped out. We have a later account of the rout by Theodosius of a tribe of Saxon pirates which occupied Orkney in A.D. 368. Claudian in referring to this says: "Maduerunt Saxone fuso Orcades incaluit Pictorum sanguine Thule." The Romans had evidently found that they must bestir themselves against these Saxon rovers who had built their nests for the time being in the Orkneys. The subsequent peopling of the islands by the Scandinavians, whose descendants occupy the land to this day, is well established by historical testimony, but, strange to say, these Scandinavians have left no record of inhabitants they found in the islands on their arrival. Were the islands again uninhabited, or did the Vikings kill out the unfortunate residents? We cannot say.

If we accept these accounts of Orkney, fragmentary as they are, to be true, we are naturally led to wonder if they apply to Shetland. Were the islands uninhabited when it was recorded, "Dispecta est et Thule"? Did Theodosius visit Shetland? Roman coins have been

dug up here and there, and the remains of a "Roman" fort are said (but on very doubtful evidence) to exist in Fetlar. These coins could either have been carried thither by Theodosius' soldiers or by the roving Vikings. Who can tell? If the Romans did cause Thule to run warm with the blood of Picts, were these Picts wholly exterminated, or did they exist to become the victims of the followers of Odin and Thor? Mr Jacobsen, to whom we are indebted for an illuminating exposition of the dialect and place names of Shetland, is decidedly of the opinion that the Norsemen did not extinguish the Picts in Shetland, as it was not their custom to kill those who did not oppose them sword in hand, and in any case the women would have been spared. All is uncertain and vague, and we turn almost with relief to the more sure evidences afforded by the relics that have come down to us out of the past.

We cannot say that the Palæolithic or early stone-age man was ever in existence in our country, as we find no remains to justify such an assertion. On the other hand, we find many antiquities which undoubtedly belong to the Neolithic or later stone age. Many people have contended that a Finnish race—the Laps and Finns who figure in Shetland lore—occupied the islands long before the advent of the Norsemen. These Finns were the original inhabitants of Norway and Sweden until ousted by the Norsemen, and now they occupy only the northern end of the Scandinavian peninsula. A place is claimed for these Finns only in the traditions of the people, for the earliest remains identified are similar to those found on the mainland of Scotland, and are undoubtedly Neolithic; therefore we can hardly entertain the Finnish theory until substantiated by something more definite.

We know that Irish monks penetrated to Shetland somewhere about the fifth or sixth centuries, and established themselves as the Papæ or priests, and that the Christian faith flourished and spread, as indicated by the remains of chapels dedicated to purely Celtic saints, by the frequent occurrence of the word Papa or Papal in the

place names, and most surely of all by the Ogham-inscribed stones of a distinctively Christian character which have been found in various parts of the islands. Further, we know that the Scandinavians invaded Orkney and Shetland and made permanent settlements in the islands in the ninth century, their descendants or the descendants of their union with Celts being the real Shetlanders of the present day; and before these warlike pagans the Papæ and their Christianity alike vanished, and the worship of the true God died out, until there was a resurrection of the dead faith brought about by King Olaf Trygvissón in the eleventh century. Considering all these things, we are forced to place the period of the Neolithic man in Shetland as prior to the establishment of the Papæ, although the use of some of the stone implements that are found may have continued during the first Christianisation of the islands. How far prior to this period it is idle to surmise, but the Neolithic man probably found his way to Shetland *via* the Orkneys some time after he had established himself in Scotland. To this Neolithic period we may ascribe most of the un-inscribed or unornamented standing stones, grave mounds and cists, and weapons of stone.

The race of people who have left other remains was undoubtedly Celtic, as similar antiquities are only to be found in purely Celtic areas. Old Welsh manuscripts have recorded that some time before the Christian era, the Celts overran the greater part of Europe, and, after settling in Britain, retired into Scotland, whence they resisted the Romans. These Celts have been described as Pichti or Fichti in Welsh records, which meant the "men of the open country," and it was owing to their habit of painting their bodies with woad that the Latin term Picti, which resembles the real Pichti, became suitably applied to them; and the term Pict became a generic one to describe any wild tribe of the North. We may assume, then, that some of these ancient stone remains and constructions were the work of the Picts, which is quite in accordance with tradition.

I have referred to the standing stones and to the brochs as being particularly noticeable to the stranger. I made it my duty, but it was a greater pleasure than a duty, to visit many of these interesting objects of antiquity, sketching some of them, and pondering over them all, trying to imagine how they looked when the ancient Celts erected them. The mode of life of these people must have been a strange and primæval one, and yet they have left monuments before which we, of the twentieth century, stand in bewilderment. I cannot help approaching these objects with a certain reverence, for I feel that were we placed in similar circumstances to these Celts, it would be a long time before we could attain to like manifestations of skill, energy, and a high intelligence.

I have not been able to arrive at any computation of the number of standing stones in Shetland. They, or the remains of them, are to be found in almost every parish. The majority of them are roughly fashioned into a sort of slab, although some of them exhibit no distinct formation of this kind. They are of varying heights up to 12 or 14 feet, although they must all have been considerably larger when one takes into account that they have been subjected to the weathering action of the atmosphere and the spoiling hand of man for so many centuries. There seems to be no common style of site connected with these monoliths, for they are to be found alike on the hill and in the valley, near the sea and farther inland; neither are they oriented in any particular direction. No trace of inscription or carving has been found on them, and it is very probable that none ever existed.

In considering the size of these standing stones, we must remember that there is a further portion of them embedded in the ground, and this portion is by no means small, or the stones could not have remained erect for so long a time. It is a question whether the leaning, which at least two of those I have seen exhibit, is caused by the stones having shifted for some reason or other, or whether they were intentionally set that way.

I visited two standing stones in the island of Unst—the stone of Clivocast and the stone of Succamires. The stone of Clivocast (fig. 1) has the more graceful outline, and stands, a landmark for miles around, in a commanding position on a height to the east of Uyeasound and

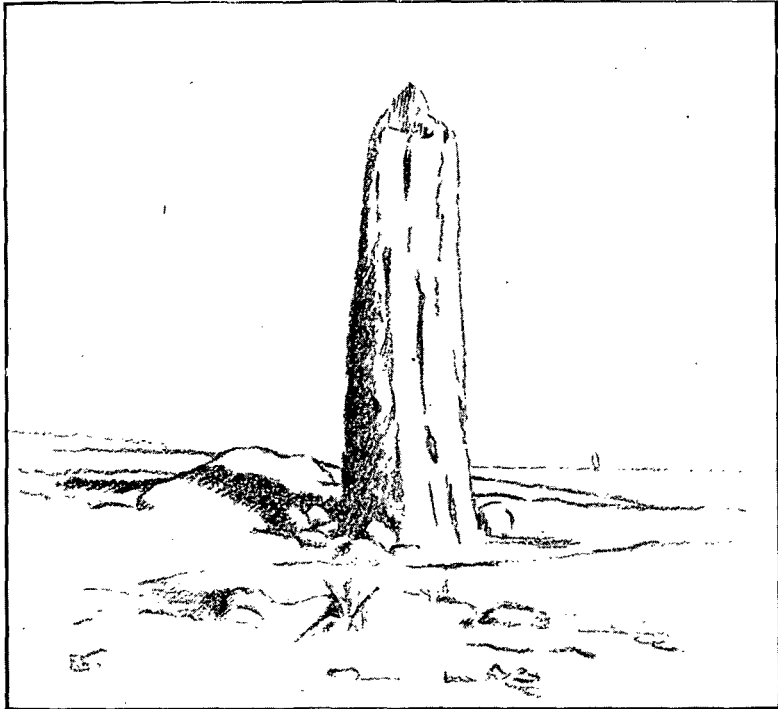


Fig. 1. The Standing Stone of Clivocast.

on the roadway to Muness. *En passant*, an interesting traditional derivation of the name Clivocast (which is more properly *Klivincast*) is preserved in the island. Two old witches lived, one in Fetlar, the other in Unst. One pair of tongs, anciently known as *klivin*, did duty for both their fires, and when Tryylla in Fetlar had made use of the

klivin, she "cast" them across the sound to Truylla in Unst, and they landed in this spot, which is conveniently near to Fetlar. The stone is composed of a soft grey slate, and seems to have been quarried near by, as there is abundance of that particular stone all around. It is about 10 feet high and $3\frac{1}{2}$ feet wide at the base, tapering towards the top, and leans slightly to the northward. This stone is one of those which is not a distinct slab. That of Succamires is a more massive and lumpish one, being 12 feet high and about 24 feet in girth at the widest part, and may weigh from twenty to thirty tons. The stone is known, I believe, as the Berg of the Venstric, but I have heard it spoken of locally as "Mam"—this endearing term being due to the fact that it can shelter the tender young sheep from every wind that may blow. Its situation is in a low-lying, rather marshy piece of ground near Lund in the Westing district.

At Gutcher, in Yell, there is a standing stone of the massive type placed on a hillside which slopes to the sea. The stone at Burra Isle (fig. 2), which is similarly situated, is also a massive one narrowing to the top. It is to be found a few yards to the south of the United Free Church and Manse. An effort was made to get material from this stone to help in the church building, but, fortunately, it resisted all attempts made to uproot it, and it stands to this day a monument saved by its inherent strength from the vandalism of man. The stone is 8 or 9 feet in height by about 4 feet wide at the base, and about a foot thick, being somewhat of the slab type.

The Bressay standing stone (fig. 3) is a very conspicuous landmark. Perched on the summit of a hill, and of a striking and graceful shape, its situation commands an extensive view in every direction. The height of the stone is about 12 feet, and it appears to be even higher, owing to its thickness being only 6 inches. It is about 4 feet wide at the base, narrowing to about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet near the top. The peculiar feature about this stone is that it leans to the south-

west when viewed from the side (see fig. 4). There appear to be few stones in the direct neighbourhood, and if this stone



Fig. 2. Standing Stone at Burra Isle.

was transported hither, the work must have been one of enormous difficulty.

The standing stones of Shetland are generally found singly, although the group form is not unknown. An interesting trio of stones is to be found near Lerwick, and which I shall designate the North Lerwick

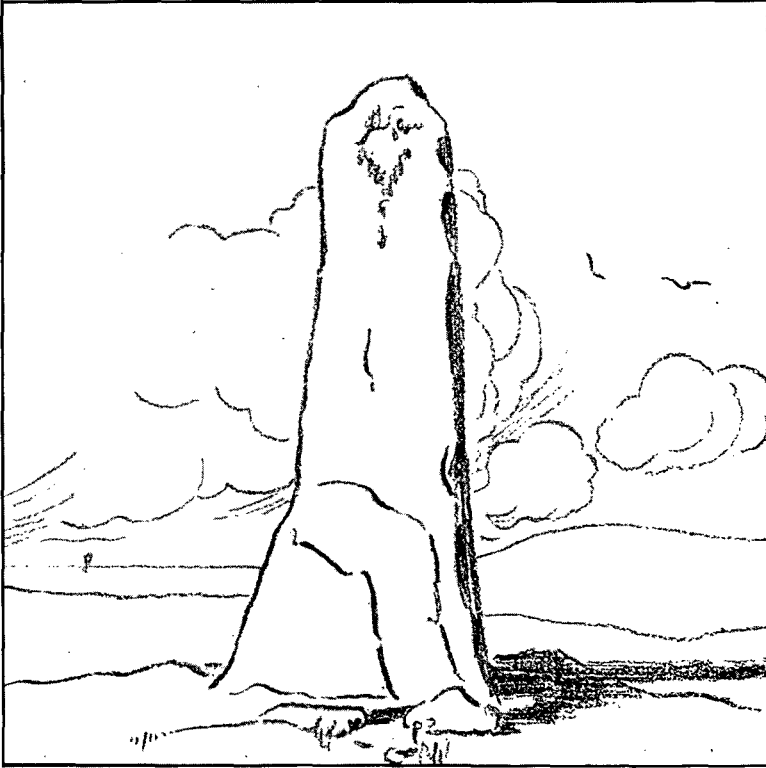


Fig. 3. The Bressay Standing Stone.

standing stones (fig. 5). They are about a mile from the town, and at the base of the Staney Hill. It is possible that they may have been a part of a circle of stones, as they are at about equal distances from one another, and placed as part of a curve might have been. Each is a

thin slab, like the Bressay stone, and they vary in height from about 8 to 5 feet, and in width from 3 to 4 feet. The central stone

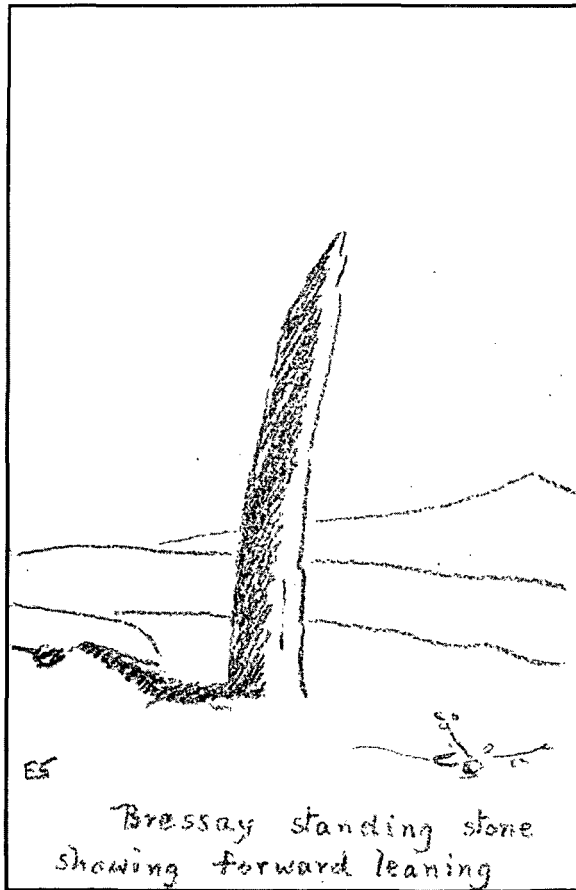


Fig. 4. Bressay Standing Stone, showing forward leaning.

has a smaller slab adjacent to it on the side next to the roadway, and this makes it rather chair-shaped, the smaller slab composing the

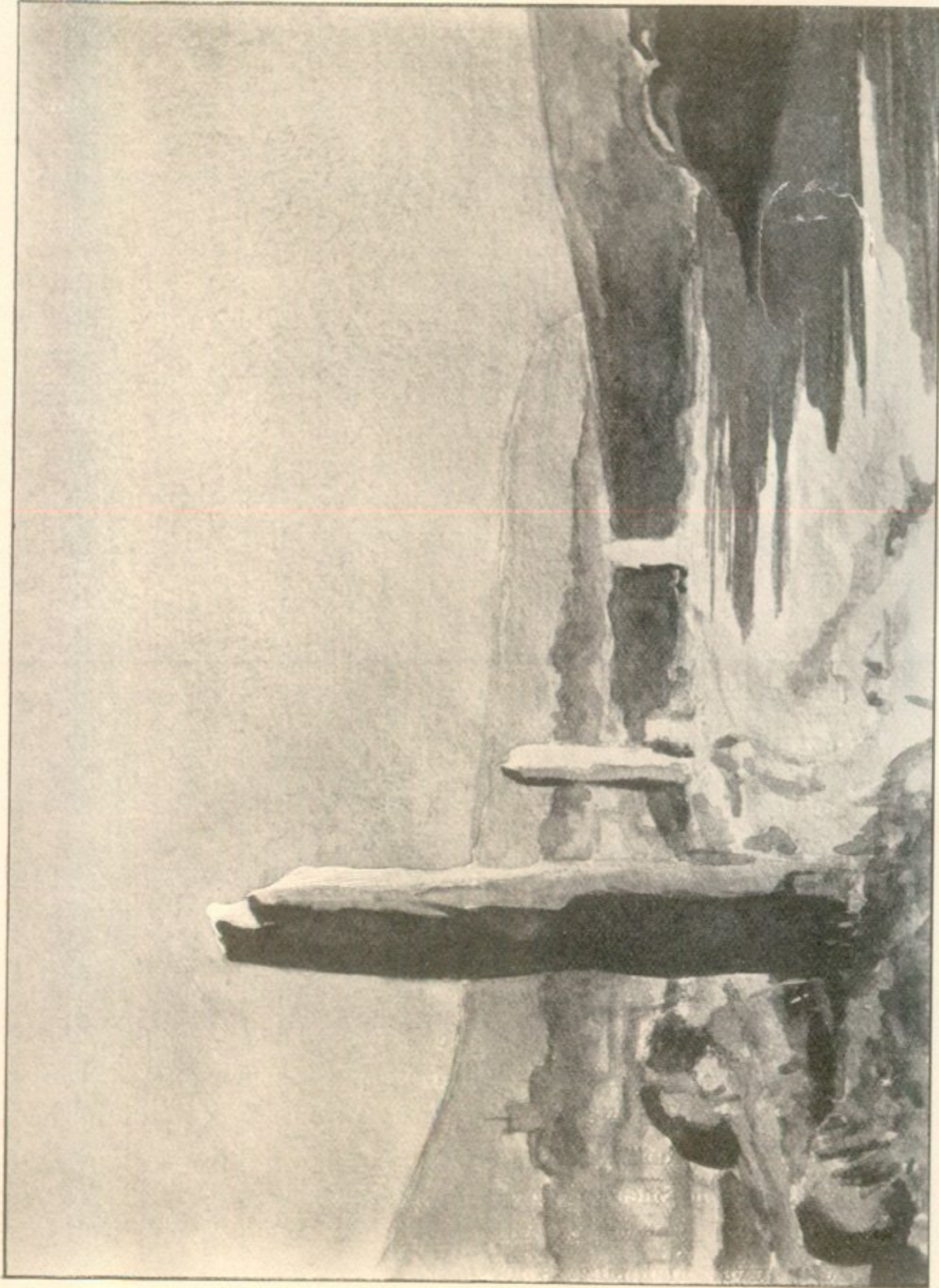


Fig. 5. The Standing Stones of North Lerwick.

seat and the tall one the back. This stone is locally known as "Da aald wives' restin' shair," as it was a convenient seat for an old woman to rest upon when toiling along the road to Lerwick laden with a "kishie" of peats from the hill.

No attempt, as far as I am aware, has been made to excavate the ground around any of the standing stones. Such an effort might be rewarded by the discovery of some object which might lead us to surmise the purpose of their erection. As yet we can only hazard wild guesses. Are they objects of worship like the unwrought stone at Hyttos, adored by the Greeks as Herakles? We know that they were used as meeting-places in Norse times, but the Norsemen found them there and did not erect them. Commemorative they probably are, but of what? We set an upright stone at the head of a grave to this day, and it is a simple and effective monument. Do these stones mark the last resting-place of some powerful chief, or do they record a battle fought and won? We are unable to say for what purpose they were erected, and æons may pass, and they may crumble away, before an answer to the riddle be found.

On the other hand the brochs, which may be coeval with the standing stones, speak to us across the gulf of the years with a voice more certain. We can form an idea of their utility and purpose as we examine them, for they are probably the expression of a need for safety and shelter. Much has been done by the Society of Antiquaries and by private individuals in the way of clearing out the brochs and bringing to light parts of these wonderful buildings which have lain covered with the sods of centuries, and many illuminating discoveries have been made which give us glimpses into the mode of life of the dwellers therein, while there yet remains hid much that patient investigation might lay bare.

The brochs in Shetland number about eighty. Dr Anderson's computation in 1871 was seventy-five, but others have been identified in the interval, and, since some difficulty was experienced in recog-

nising those which had almost disappeared, we may assume that there have been others, the evidences of which have for long been lost. There are at least three hundred brochs to be found scattered through Orkney and Shetland, Caithness, and Sutherlandshire, while a few are to be found in Ross, Inverness, and in the lowland counties of Scotland. Few of these have been systematically explored, and of the Shetland brochs only Mousa, Clickemin, Clumlie, and Levenwick, and that on the islet in the Loch of Brindister. For the excavation of the last-named three we are indebted to Mr Gilbert Goudie, F.S.A. Scot., whose zeal in the cause of matters relating to ancient history is well known and much appreciated.

The distribution of brochs over Shetland is given by Dr Anderson as follows:—Unst, seven; Whalsay, three; Yell, nine; Fetlar four; mainland and isles, fifty-one; Foula, one; total, seventy-five. Mr John Spence of Lerwick enumerates the brochs at a hundred, with the following distribution:—Unst, ten; Fetlar, three; Yell, ten; Delting, four; Northmavine, eight; Sandsting and Aithsting, nine; Whalsay, three; South Nesting, six; rest of mainland and isles, forty-seven. Mr Spence gives Balliasta (Unst) in his list of brochs. I am aware of a species of underground “Pict’s dwelling” there, which may have been included as a broch.

It is interesting to note how the number of brochs compares with the fertility of the district in which they are placed. It will generally be found that a broch was built near some spot easy of cultivation, and that the more barren the land, the fewer were the brochs. Dunrossness, for example, with its broad stretches of cultivation, can show at least nine besides the recently excavated remains at Jarlshof, Sumburgh, which are clearly those of a mound dwelling. I had the pleasure recently of seeing over this remarkable structure. The entrance is through a dark tunnel, and the chambers are of the typical beehive-roofed kind, the stones having been built in a conical fashion until one stone sufficed to close the opening at the top. Earth

was then heaped on the outside until, when grass grew over it, the appearance of the whole was that of a mound.

Nowhere, however, is the connection between the number of brochs and the productiveness of the soil better exemplified than in Unst. Unst, the fairest of the isles, the richest in associations with both the Celtic and the Scandinavian past, is a little world by itself, with its hills and its fertile valleys, its lochs and its burns, its brochs and standing stones, its stone circles and mounds, its cross-kirks and ruined chapels, its remains of baronial splendour and its honeysuckle-covered cottages, and everywhere the fresh green grass springing rankly up underfoot and the myriad wild flowers blowing in the sweet air of heaven. It makes me think of Dora Sigerson's *Ireland*—

“’Twas the dream of a God,
And the mould of His hand,
That you shook ’neath His stroke,
That you trembled and broke
To this beautiful land.

“There He loosed from His hand
A brown tumult of wings,
Till the wind on the sea
Bore the strange melody
Of an island that sings.

“He made you all fair,
You in purple and gold,
You in silver and green,
Till no eye that has seen
Without love can behold.”

The manifest beauty of Unst makes one wonder if the Celt loved a goodly place; his eye must have rested on the same outline of the hills against the sky, and on the blue and yesty sea all around. At any rate, Unst must have been a perfect stronghold of the Celts, if we consider that each broch has been the work—if not the common

property—of a large number of men. Within a distance of not more than five miles, from the Westing to Uyeasound, we find no less than five brochs—the Brough Holm, Underhool, Snabrough, Oganess, and Musselbrough, all of them of considerable size. If we accept Mr Spence's enumeration of ten brochs in the island, the Celtic population must have been very great.

A curious sidelight is thrown upon the subject by Dr Jacobsen's theory of the un-Scandinavian-like people, really Shetlanders, to be found in some districts. I was much struck in Unst by the great number of dark-haired, dark-eyed, and dark-skinned people to be found, and I have no doubt that these people are the descendants of the large Celtic population the island must have supported at one time.

I have referred to the broch having been the work of a large number of men, and it may not be out of place here to note its structure. The word itself is from the Norw. *berg*, a rock; and akin to A.S. *borg*, a security; Ger. *burg*, a castle; Dan. *borg*, a fortification; the Celtic name being *dun*, as Dun Carloway, a broch in the Lews. Dr Anderson describes the broch as a hollow, circular tower of dry-built masonry (without cement or mortar), about 60 feet in diameter and 50 feet high. The wall, 15 feet thick, is carried up solid for a distance of about 8 feet, except for two or three chambers with rudely vaulted roofs constructed in its thickness. Above a distance of 8 feet the wall is carried up hollow, the width of the space being 3 feet, every 5 feet or so being crossed horizontally by a roof of slabs, which forms the floor for the gallery above. These galleries run round the tower, and are crossed by a stair, so that each gallery opens in front of the steps, and its further end is closed by the back of the staircase on the same level. The only opening is the main entrance, a narrow, tunnel-like passage, 15 feet long, 5 feet 6 inches in height, and 3 feet wide, leading straight through the wall on the ground level, and often flanked on either side by guard chambers opening into it. This passage

gives access to the central tower, round the inner circumference of which are the entrances to the chambers on the ground floor and staircase leading to the galleries above. Often ranges of small window-like openings, rising perpendicularly over each other, admit light and air to the galleries. There was neither roof nor floor to the broch.

The above account is based upon the examination of several brochs, and while all show certain resemblances, no two are alike. In addition to the features already described, an inner wall is generally found within the central court, attached to the main wall, and carried up some 6 or 8 feet. The broch often shows a network of chambers outside the main building, which may have been useful when animals required to be stored, and generally has some means of defence and protection in the shape of a ditch, or walls, or earthen outworks, if such indeed is not supplied by its natural situation.

The Broch of Mousa, on the island of that name, which is a typical, if somewhat small example, has been sketched and planned with great care,¹ and is too well known to require much description here. It is the most perfect of the brochs now remaining, and is a conspicuous object as one sails to or from Sandwick. It still stands 40 feet high, and shows the inward batter, which may or may not be due to subsidence. This castle has twice been occupied, according to saga record; and in both cases did it serve as a honeymoon residence. The first occupation of it was by Bjorn Brynjulfson and Thora Roaldsdottir when on their way to Iceland, having eloped from Norway in the year 900. They were shipwrecked on the island, and spent part of the winter in the castle. The other occasion was when Erland Ungi and Margarét, Countess of Athole, went to Shetland together about the year 1155. The latter's son, Harald, Earl of Orkney, in an effort to capture his mother, besieged the pair, who had entrenched themselves in Moseyborgar or Mousa Broch. Harald found the castle difficult to take

¹ By Sir Henry Dryden in *Archæologia Scotica*, vol. v. p. 207.

by assault, as Erland had "made great preparations," thus showing its efficacy to withstand a siege.

The Broch of Mousa belongs to Sandwick parish, which is ecclesiastically united to Dunrossness, in which, by the way, are two of the other explored brochs—those of Clumlie and Levenwick. These brochs were excavated by Mr G. Goudie, and are described by him in his *Celtic and Scandinavian Antiquities of Shetland*. That of Clumlie, which is situated in a township of great antiquity, has an inside diameter of 33 or 34 feet, and an outside diameter of 70 feet, and is about 6 feet in height. A discovery of great importance was that of a cist about $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet above the floor level, showing that at the time of burial the broch was a ruin, thus giving strength to the theory of the great antiquity of the structure.

The Broch of Levenwick, which is more entire, shows a staircase and a portion of the first gallery, the wall height at the highest point being some 10 or 12 feet. A curious feature of this broch, of which there are merely indications in others, is the presence of five walls or pillars at irregular distances apart, which converge towards the centre of the open court. These walls are of a projected length of about 3 or 4 feet, and are attached to the inner scarcement which lines the main wall and rises to a height of 6 feet.

I was much impressed by the sight of another Dunrossness broch, that one near Boddam which bears the appropriate name of "The Brough." A croft was at one time worked in its vicinity, and the ruins of "Ole's hoose" are still standing. The broch ruins, now grass-covered, are on the brink of a precipitous cliff, and are of an exceedingly massive kind. A sort of raised pathway, also grass-grown, leads straight from the broch to the edge of the cliff, and tradition says that there was once a passage-way from the broch which opened out on the face of the cliff, as a means of exit to a boat when the fort was in danger of being taken.

Two interesting broch remains are to be seen on the way from

Dunrossness to Lerwick. These are the brochs of Brindister, one of which is on the summit of a high cliff, and the other on an islet in Brindister Loch, the distance between the two being about a mile. The former (fig. 6) is the more massive, and is a prominent landmark as it stands overlooking the sea. Its position is one of great security, as the entrance doorway is on the cliff face, and only a foot or two of level ground separates the doorway from the precipice. The main



Fig. 6. The Broch of Brindister.

wall is carried up a distance of some 12 feet or more, and the masonry is well seen about half the way round, the other portion of the wall being grass-grown.

I succeeded in satisfying my curiosity as to the interior of the broch, for upon penetrating the door passage, I found that it came to an end at a distance of some 15 feet inwards, the débris of the ruin having entirely blocked further progress. The inner door jambs, which are generally to be seen some 5 feet from the face of the broch, were entire. A guard chamber to the right within the entrance-way

attracted my attention, as it was filled with light, and the masonry of the interior plainly to be seen. I attempted to enter through the passage-way leading to the chamber, but it was impossible to crawl through. I retraced my steps, and found that by climbing on to the top of the broch I could see down into the guard chamber, as the roofing had disappeared. It was of the usual oblong shape, with rounded corners, and had a length of apparently 8 feet, and a width of about 3 feet. No other chambers or portions of the building beyond the mere outer contour of the wall are exposed to view, and it is a pity that this interesting broch cannot be cleared out. The exterior diameter of the broch has been given as 68 feet, and the wall of a thickness of 12 feet 6 inches. Naturally protected on three sides by precipitous cliffs, there only remains a possible way of assault by the neck of the promontory. Across this neck, therefore, have been placed fortifying walls, and there appear to be the remains of three of these walls, the one lying outside of the other.

The other broch in the district, that in the Loch of Brindister, is situated on an islet which in itself is little bigger than the broch which it bears. The ruin, which does not exceed 5 feet in height, has an outside diameter of 50 feet. Beyond the remains of a doorway, it exhibits no feature of importance, and its having been built of schist, which is badly weathered, leaves no wonder that it is now a mass of decay. Its chief interest lies in its impregnable position in the middle of the loch, and as the skin "curach" used for conveyance to the shore was probably kept moored to the broch, an enemy could only have reached the fort by swimming.

Five miles or so further north, and on the outskirts of Lerwick, is the Celtic castle of Clickemin (fig. 7). I have often visited this broch, and as a child roamed through it, climbing down these delightfully dangerous ways which seem to lose their fascination to the grown-up. The evening when I went to sketch it was one of those beautiful "simmer dims," when the wind only made a small waving in the grass,

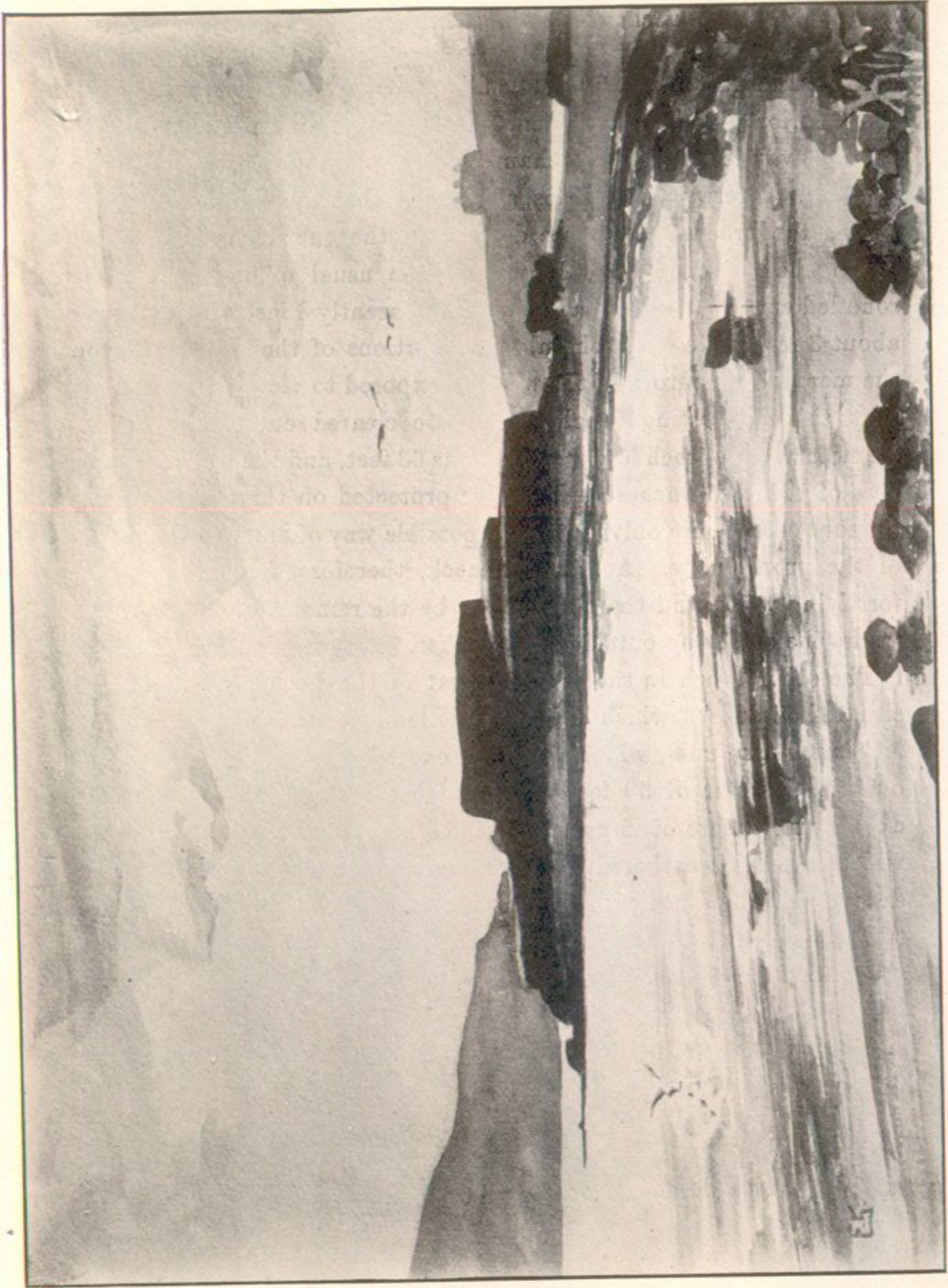


Fig. 7. The Broch of Clickemin.

and no noise disturbed the silence except the flap and cry of the "tirrik." The mass of building stood outlined purple against the sky, and in fancy I tried to reconstruct it, but the mystery of it all was too deep.

Intensely interesting is this ruin on account of its good preservation, and of the features it displays which are different from the typical broch. Sir Henry Dryden has measured and planned this ruin, and it is well known to most people, being cited along with Mousa as one of the best examples extant. The castle is situated on a small islet similar in many ways to that in the Loch of Brindister. Draining the loch has resulted in the island now becoming joined to the shore by a narrow strip of land, and the stepping-stones of the original inhabitants are now high and dry.

The exterior diameter of Clickemin—the *Klak-minn* broch—is given as 66 feet 4 inches, the interior diameter 26 feet, and the thickness of wall 20 feet 2 inches. There is a considerable portion of the wall standing, and the wonder is that so much of the building has remained intact, situated, as it is, so near to Lerwick, where buildings of all kinds were being constantly erected. It is now safe from future depredation, as it is one of the "protected" brochs.

The castle proper is surrounded by a well-built fortifying wall, inside of which at one side is a building in the form of a segment of a circle, containing guard chambers. This feature has not been noticed in any other broch, and may be of a later date than the main building.

The principal opening is not opposite the gateway in the surrounding wall, but altogether out of sight of that point. It leads into the central well or court, and exhibits the features typical to other brochs. A wall-chamber, almost exactly opposite this opening, gives access to the staircase from the ground floor. A window-like opening on the outside of the building, at a height of 6 feet or thereabouts, also gives access to this staircase; and if one climbs up on the outside and peers in he may see daylight through the flagged gallery floor

above. This aperture one may term the eastern opening. It has a massive lintel overhead in common with other doorways.

The third doorway or opening (fig. 8) is to the north, and is a well-built one of a height of 4 feet 4 inches by scarcely 3 feet

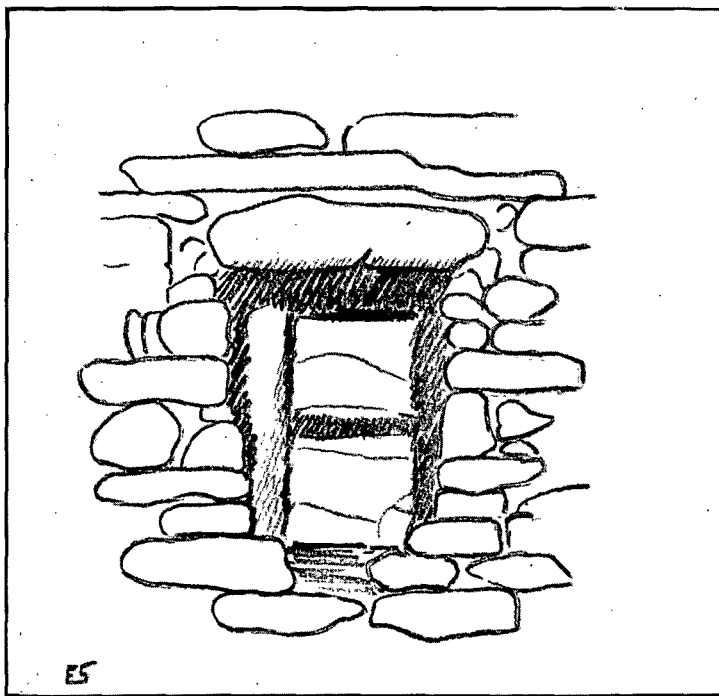


Fig. 8. Doorway to the north in Clickemin Broch.

broad. Immediately to the left is a staircase, which leads to the topmost gallery now standing. To the right is the closed end of the gallery immediately below the one before mentioned. In front is the inner wall, in which is an opening to correspond with the outer one; and a square-cut depression in the "scarcement" admits of an easy

jump into the centre court. Three openings such as I have described are quite unusual.

Immediately above the main doorway is a series of chambers open towards the centre court. Each is roofed with a single large slab, which forms the floor of the chamber above (fig. 9). These may have been sleeping chambers. Another wall-chamber is to the north of the main opening on the ground floor.

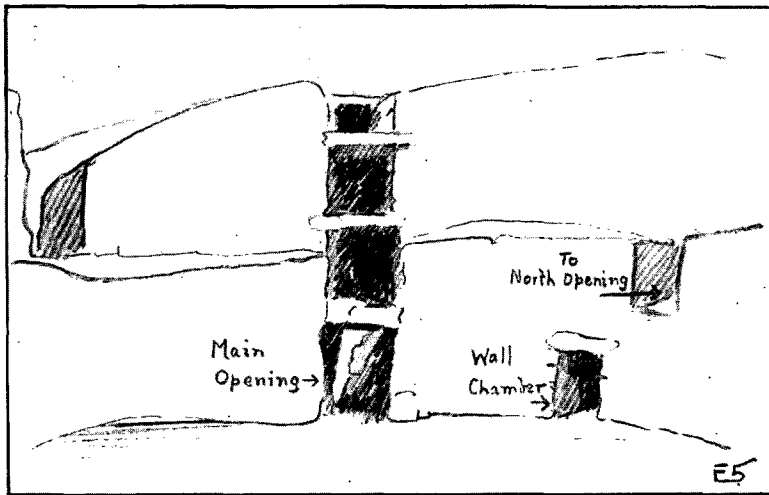


Fig. 9. Openings in Inner Wall, looking into the Court.

Clickemin Broch shows a feature in common with that of Lingrow in Orkney—the presence of numerous small chambers outside of the main building. Their number is very considerable, and as a consequence each is quite small. Numbers of door jambs sticking out among the nettles tell of intricate pathways that once existed. Could these chambers have been roofed in, and were they hiding-places or storage-places? In the floor of one of these chambers, quite close to the encircling fortifying wall, is a curious arrangement of flagstones

set on edge (fig. 10). The continuity of the stones is clearly disturbed, for the idea of an oblong is there, although some stones are missing at one end. The length of the arrangement is now about 5 feet 8 inches, and the breadth 2 feet. The earthy matter in the depression was soft and brown, and a walking-stick ran into it up to the handle. Mr G. Goudie found a somewhat similar arrangement of stones in the centre area of the Broch of Clumlie, and he supposes it to have been a fireplace. But would a fireplace have been placed entirely away from the broch, and close to an outwork? And if it has been a fireplace,

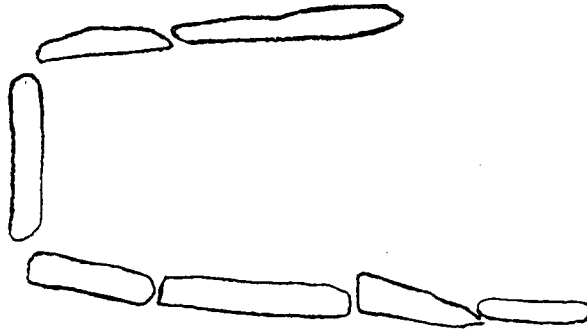


Fig. 10. Setting of Flagstones in one of the exterior outbuildings.

why was it made rectangular? If peats are piled up to form a fire they occupy a round or square space. It is quite probable that the Celtic fire was very much like the old Shetland fire, which occupied the middle of the floor; a type abolished in Norway in the year 1100, and of which I saw an example in this year of grace 1911 in the district of Quarff, where they still do things in an old-fashioned way. Could this oblong arrangement of stones have been a grave? Its shape suggests this.

Few wells have been found near the brochs, but in the case of Clieckemin the loch probably furnished the water supply. There appears

to have been a walled-in pathway leading from the main entrance to the margin of the loch (fig. 11).

The island of Bressay, which lies opposite to Lerwick, and protects the town and harbour from the fury of the east wind, is, like Unst, a field of interest to the archæologist. There in 1864 was discovered



Fig. 11. Walled Pathway from entrance to the loch at Clickemin Broch.

the famous Bressay stone, richly sculptured and bearing an Ogham inscription, a relic of Celtic Christianity. Several brochs are to be found there, but the remains of none of them exhibit much form save that of a large mound. I was much interested in that one at Noss Sound (fig. 12), opposite the island of Noss, about a mile south of Kolbeinsbrough. It has the appearance of a mound some 30 feet

in height, and through the grass peep large stones refusing to be hidden. A very narrow sound separates it from the island of Noss, and on the landing-place of the island, opposite to the broch, are the remains of a chapel. The walls of this chapel were mostly entire when Low wrote in 1770, and it may be possible that an early sanctuary of Celtic times existed there, the later chapel, the mere "steethe" of which is now to be seen, having been built on the traditionally sacred

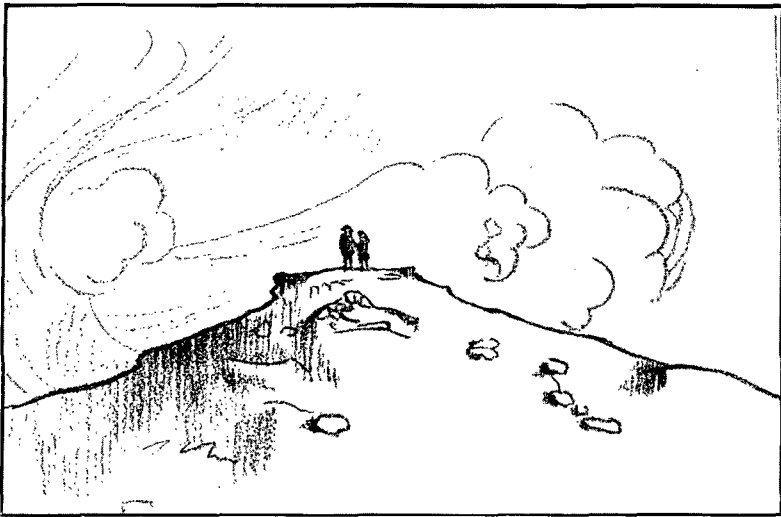


Fig. 12. Broch at Noss Sound.

spot. This idea came to me when I visited the chapel remains some time ago. I was interested in examining the extent of the churchyard, and surmised that at one time it must have extended farther out upon the promontory, for the sea, having encroached upon the land, now lays bare human bones at every storm. What led me to think that the place is one of great antiquity was the finding of a grave-stone with an exceedingly graceful Maltese cross incised upon it. The cross somewhat resembled that at the head of the Burra stone,

but was a mere outline, and lacked the interlacing and the stem. The stone was not large, being perhaps 4 feet in length by 1 foot in breadth. Further, a "geo" a short distance from the chapel bears the suggestive name of Papal Geo. May not the whole district have been a large Celtic stronghold? The Noss Sound broch speaks plainly of it, as does Kolbeinsbrough, which gave the sculptured stone.

On the west side of Bressay, and across from Lerwick, is the holm

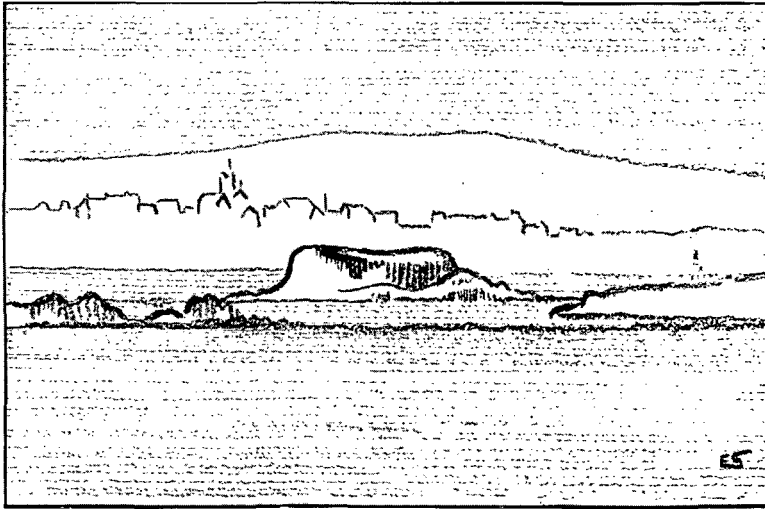


Fig. 13. Broch at Leiraness.

bearing the name of the "Brough of Leiraness" (fig. 13). It is typical of the usual form of broch, showing building stones in a rude heap; and although entirely in ruins leads one to suppose that here a Celtic castle once reared itself when "Lerwick was nane."

Broch remains are generally to be found where Bur, Burra, Burga, or Brough figures in the place name. This seems to imply that the Norsemen found these brochs on their arrival, and named the voes, promontories, or other geographical features accordingly; *e.g.*, Brough

Voe, the Brough Ness, and so on; the broch being a convenient landmark. Burravoe, in Yell, is an example of this nomenclature. A prominent feature is the broch (fig. 14), which rises from the top of an irregularly shaped holm or peninsula, and forms a short but sheltering arm to the voe. The building one sees on it is a somewhat small portion of a tower, and whether this is the original broch or not I am not prepared to say, not having had the privilege of viewing it

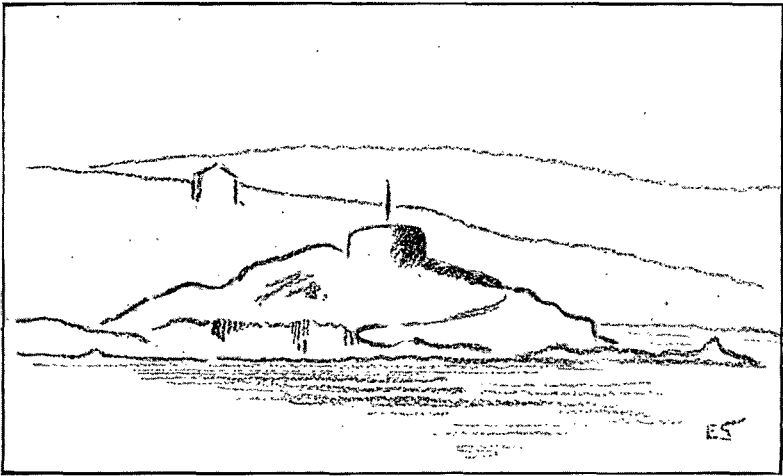


Fig. 14. Broch at Burravoe, Yell.

closely. Some enthusiastic person has planted a flagstaff in the centre of it.

Burra Ness, in North Yell, bears a good example of the broch (fig. 15). When I saw it it was bathed in sunlight, and it stood out whitely against the shadow-darkened hills. Its position is an isolated one, which fact must have tended towards its preservation. When Low visited the ruin the walls stood 20 feet high. The exterior diameter is 57 feet and the interior 27 feet, leaving a thickness of wall of 15 feet. In size the broch is larger than Mousa, but smaller than

Clickemin. The excavation of this broch would prove an interesting task, as it is one of the few left with much height of wall.

Within sight and easy distance of Burra Ness is Snabrough, Fetlar (fig. 16). I have not been able to elicit the meaning of *Sna* . . . Evidently the prefix is applicable to a broch, for we find it again in Snabrough, Unst. The formation of the broch remains is most peculiar. There seems to have been a central tower, surrounded or

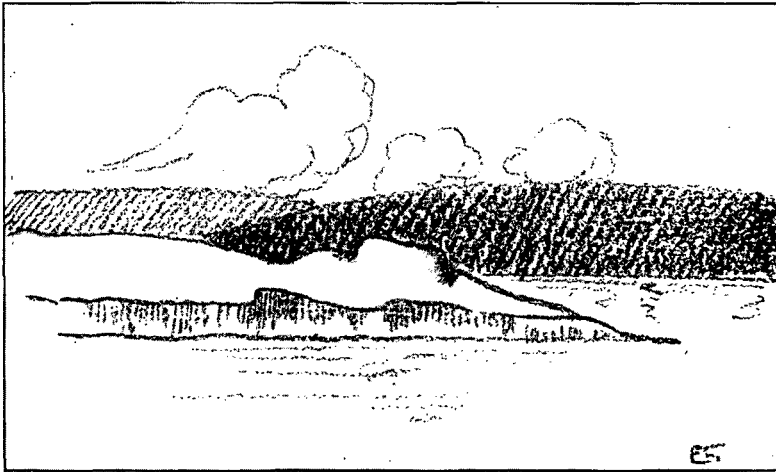


Fig. 15. Broch at Burra Ness, North Yell.

nearly surrounded by two concentric fortifying walls. The restless sea has encroached upon the land, and is eating into the heart of the broch, and some day the last trace of it will have vanished like so many more.

The sway of the Celt has left its deep imprint upon the Burra Isles—two long, narrow-shaped islands on the west side of Shetland. The name itself is a contraction of *borgar-ëy*, broch island, showing that at one time it was a fortified place of considerable importance. In West Burra there is a Papal, indicating a sanctuary of the Papæ or priests,

to whom I have referred before; and here was found, in 1877, the Burra stone, elaborately sculptured, which is of a nature similar to the Bressay stone. At Papal, too, probably on the site of the early Celtic church, stood one of the towered churches of the north, of which an example still remains in Egilsey, Orkney. The plain, barn-like edifice erected on the site of the towered church, and which has served for long as the Established Church of Scotland, is now falling into

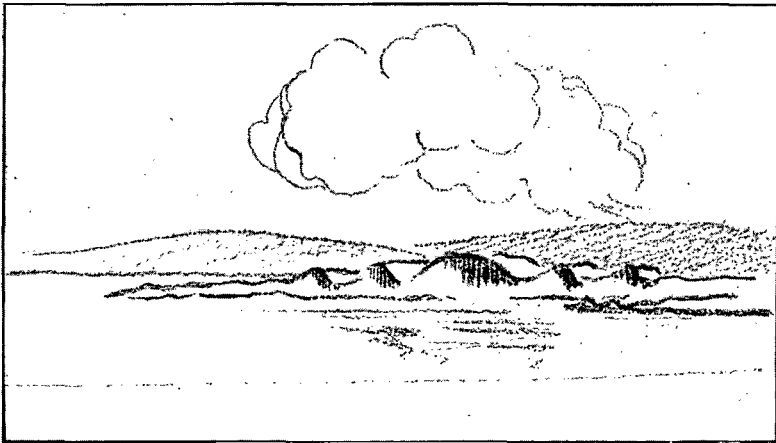


Fig. 16. Broch at Snabrough, Fetlar.

decay, and the voice of the preacher is only heard in it when a couple are being proclaimed in marriage. Near Burra, too, lies the island of Papa, indicating an adjoining settlement of the Papæ.

So far as my own investigations go, there seem to be three broch remains in the Burra Isles. The most self-evident and most conspicuous is that at Brough, near the north end of the West Isle or Kirk Isle. Its appearance is the usual one of a large heaped mound, with regularly laid stones appearing here and there, and sides sloping outwards from the apex. It occupies a commanding position, and from it one can look in every direction, and view the land or the sea

until it melts into the distance. I stood on the summit and looked eastwards. Through the valley of Quarff the giant blue cliffs of the Ord of Bressay hung like some fairy castle between sea and sky. Away to the north stretched undulating hills and winding voes, to the west lay the wide ocean and five-peaked Foula, dim and mysterious on the horizon, while the great shoulder of Fitful bounded the southern view. What more suitable place for a fortification? No enemy could have approached unobserved.

The stones which composed this broch were mostly of red granite, of which the nearest supply is almost a mile away, at Hamnavoe. Think of the enormous amount of labour required to raise this broch! It must have been a stupendous task.

The remains of an ancient civilisation are evident in the vicinity of the broch. Immediately at the base of the mound, "between the dykes" of the crofts of Brough and Suderhús, once stood a chapel; but by whom built and to whom dedicated no one can tell. Not a stone of the building is standing; all vestige of it has disappeared, except the faint trace of a straight wall, but the spot remains a traditionally sacred one in the eyes of the people. About three hundred paces to the south of Brough, and near the seashore, is a mound occupying about 90 square feet, with a depression in the centre, and plainly artificial, though now almost grass-grown. I was interested to know if there was any tradition concerning this, and inquired of the inhabitants of the adjoining croft. I was told that it bore the name of Gullvir or Gullfir knowe, one scarcely known to the rising generation; but beyond that, nothing further was known. It speaks for the antiquity of an archæological relic if no tradition survives as to the people to whose rude art it was due. A small part of the knowe was dug out for my benefit, and I could see that it was composed of small stones, stones which appeared to bear the trace of fire, built together and compacted with earth. Pieces of reddish pottery have been picked up here, and large flat stones have been come upon in

digging. Could the place have been a Celtic burying-ground? At Sandwick parish I was told of a somewhat similar place called Gulga. The prefix Gul . . . appears to be the same. Jacobsen defines Gulga as a survival of the old Norse *gálgi*, gallows; and holds that Gulga was a place of execution of criminals.

The other remains of brochs are not so well defined as those at Brough, but are, I think, quite evident. I visited the Hjoag, a hill on the east isle of Burra, and found on the top, and with the moor and heather all around, the ancient remains of some building. The giant stones, hoary and lichen-covered, stood out amid the desolation. A large "crub" or square dyked-in portion, where cabbage plants are grown, built entirely of similar stones, testified to the former presence of the building.

The remaining ruin is on a small island or holm between Brunaness, Burra, and Trondra, which is known as the Brough Holm. It has to me somewhat of the appearance of the Brindister Loch ruin, and, according to the testimony of those who have landed on it, consists of a "roog o' stanes."

Although the soil of Burra is fertile, owing to the presence of limestone, cultivation is only in patches, and a large part of the islands is bleak and barren. Evidently a large Celtic population has not been perpetuated in the place as in Unst, for the people exhibit a great preponderance of blue eyes and fair hair. Scandinavian blood came to the islands, and a more bountiful harvest was reaped from the sea than from the land. To-day we find that the old longing for the sea is still there, for every man is a seafarer; and are they not the most daring and skilled fishers in Shetland?

The island of Unst, to which I have just referred, is the most northerly piece of land over which the Picts once held sway; and the most northerly of the brochs is appropriately named the Broch of Burrafiord (fig. 17). Between high Hermaness and higher Saxavord lies this fiord, as lie the Norwegian fiords between the high hills, and near

the head of the fiord lies the broch. One side slopes steeply to the sea, while the other shows a more gradual decline, until the land begins to rise on the side of Hermaness. Grass covers the mound, save where some roughly hewn stones insist on appearing, as if to protest against the obliteration of all sign of a building having existed. Some slight trace remains of two fortifying walls which encircled the broch. Sheep now roam over the ruin of the castle which busy hands once

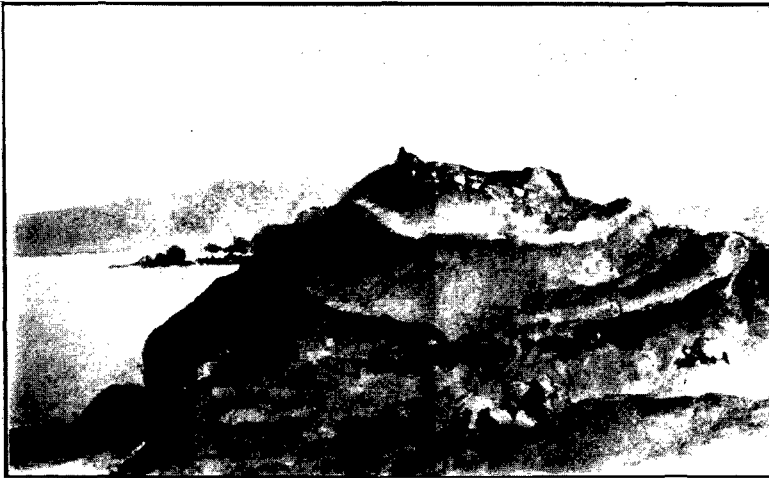


Fig. 17. Broch of Burrafiord, Unst.

raised, and a desolation seems to reign all around, accentuated by the presence of the roofless homesteads which are dotted here and there. People have vanished alike from broch and croft.

On the extreme east of Unst, the Broch of Balta Isle, and on the west, the Broch of Widwick are the two silent sentinels that have been flecked with the spume of the North Sea and of the Atlantic Ocean for so many centuries. To the south of Widwick, and in sight of it, is the Brough Holm of the Westing (fig. 18). The appearance presented by this ruin is that of an irregularly shaped mass of stones, over

which the grass is now growing. This broch must have been a very large and important one in its day, and its position is undeniably strong. Situated within easy reach of the shore, transport to and from the islet was an easy matter; and at the same time the fort would have been difficult to take by assault, as assailants' boats could have been sunk by stones thrown from the broch. A tradition holds that the stones



Fig. 18. Brough Holm of the Westing, Unst.

for this broch were quarried on the top of Valafjel, some two miles distant. A quarry is shown, one far from other house or building, from which stones have undoubtedly been taken. However, I cannot think that the Celts, who were intensely practical, would have undertaken such extra labour, especially when good building stone was near at hand. A booth was erected for fishermen on this holm in the days of the old "haaf" or deep-sea fishing, and hundreds of tons of the broch stones must have been carried away as ballast for the boats.

The booth is roofless now, and the stones are now left to weather, and get old and mossy, for the sea-gull is the Robinson Crusoe of this little Juan Fernandez.

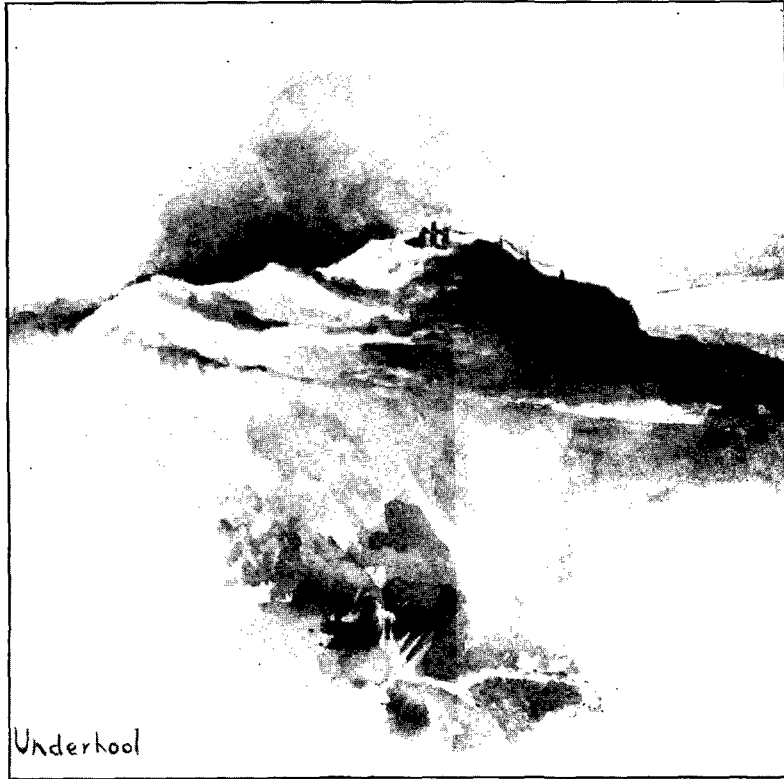


Fig. 19. Broch of Underhool, Unst.

Within a short distance of the Brough Holm is the Broch of Underhool (fig. 19). Although grass-grown, it exhibits the formation of broch and massive rampart with astonishing precision. Its exterior diameter has been given as 55 feet 9 inches, and its interior diameter

as 25 feet 9 inches, giving a thickness of wall of 15 feet. Curiously enough, the centre of the broch is a croft boundary, hence the appearance of a fence and posts in the sketch.

Grass-grown also is Snabrough, in the vicinity of Lund, and quite a short distance from Underhool. Its proportions are even more massive than those of Underhool Broch, having an exterior diameter

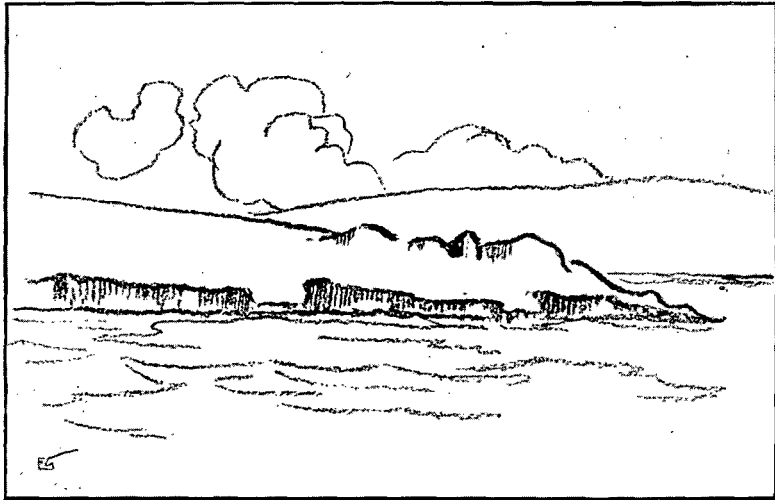


Fig. 20. Broch of Oganess, Unst.

of 63 feet 6 inches, and an interior diameter of 27 feet 6 inches, with a wall thickness of 18 feet. From these figures we gather that the broch almost equalled that of Clickemin in size.

Oganess Broch near Belmont (fig. 20) is about as far from Snabrough as the latter is from Underhool. It is impossible to do justice to it in a mere sketch, and its massive grandeur must be seen to be appreciated. The mound itself, grass-grown like the others, is situated on a sort of promontory near to the sea. A building of some kind, roofless now, has been erected close to the broch, which dwarfs it into insignificance.

A rampart stretches behind the broch to resist attack from the land side ; in fact, the broch is quite a typical one.

The similarity of construction of these brochs leads one to make inquiries into their purpose and utility. Were they used in times of peace or war ? Were they the " castles " of their chiefs ? Were they subsequent to the mound dwellings or coeval with them ? A dozen theories start bristling up, each clamouring for itself ; but we are reluctantly forced to acknowledge that we know very little that is definite about the matter.

We must certainly judge the brochs by the earliest relics we find therein. So few have been systematically examined that we can speak with no very certain voice on the subject. Very few implements of warfare have been found in brochs, and this inclines me to the theory that they were regularly inhabited, and not merely resorted to for defensive purposes. Bones of animals have been found converted into pins, needles, combs, buttons, and spindle whorls, and other domestic implements. Domestic and culinary articles of stone, such as hand millstones, grain rubbers—somewhat like mortars, with the rubbing-stone or pestle generally close by,—hammer stones, lamps, bowls, and so on, are commonly found. Fragments of pottery have been found, often fine in shape and ornamented. Spinning and weaving must have been largely practised, judging by the number of weaving combs and spindle whorls that have been come upon.

All this speaks of great intelligence, and the people who built the brochs, which are the highest expression of dry-stone masonry that we have, must have been skilful, wary, intelligent, and resourceful. Their domestic life must have been much like that of the Shetlanders before communication was set up with the south. They must have grown grain in their own primitive fashion, and ground their meal first in the mortar-like vessel, which was of a size to sit between the knees, and would have held about two pounds of grain, then later with the hand quern. Peats were cut and used for fires ; and fishing,

probably from rock or "craig," must have been resorted to. In short, there must have taken place the same constant warfare against cold and hunger that has ever gone on in Shetland since these far-off times.

Why were the brochs fortified? Did the clan system prevail, each clan being associated with a broch, and at war occasionally with the inhabitants of another broch? Or were the brochs fortified to withstand assault from the Viking, who were the terror of the North Sea long before they made permanent settlements in the islands? I feel inclined towards the latter theory, for the brochs are generally in a position to command a view of the likeliest harbours of refuge that would have been made for by the Vikings, and a warning beacon lit on Sumburgh could soon have flashed the news to Skaw of Unst that a raid was about to be made, each broch receiving the sign and passing on the warning, for the brochs are within sight of one another. Again, the majority of brochs are on the east side of Shetland, as if placed there to defy the tide of piracy that swept over from Scandinavia.

Before the advent of the Papæ, these Celts were clearly pagans. However, some dim idea of a future life must have struggled to express itself, for they buried their dead with care, and even deposited what to them were valuables in the graves. Sun worshippers they may have been, according to the testimony read into the circles of standing stones in Orkney—and we with our civilisation count the sun a commonplace; we have become deaf to the sound of his rising, and blind to the forms of the gods and the glory round his head which were the Celt's.

When shall we discover the truth about these things? We cannot tell. We can only work, and hope that light may some time dawn upon them. Time and research and excavation may reveal to us what we now grope dimly for, and confirm what we now pronounce with hesitating lips.