

II.

STANDING STONES AND OTHER ANTIQUITIES IN JURA. BY
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The main object of these notes is to provide a record of the present condition of the principal antiquities of the island.

All the sites marked on the one-inch to one-mile Ordnance Survey Maps of Jura, in Gothic letters as of antiquarian interest, have been roughly surveyed and photographed in the years 1930 and 1931. They may be classified as follows:—

Standing Stones: (a) Tarbert; (b) Corran House; (c) Sannaig; (d) Strone; (e) South of Cnoc Reamhor; (f) Carragh à Ghlinne.

Sites of Chapels: (g) Tarbert; (h) Cill Earnadill.

Sites of Forts or Settlements: (k) An Àros; (l) Dunàn; (m) Crannog near Craighouse.

Unfortunately the Ordnance Survey name books, so useful a source of information in England, have not proved helpful, as I am informed by the Director-General that the "name books concerned have been examined, but do not contain any information of a nature likely to be useful to an archaeologist." In the following notes the account of each site is preceded, in italics, by the description applied on the Ordnance Survey Maps.

(a) *Standing Stones*.—Near Tarbert, on the seaward side of the road from Lagg to Ardlussa, are marked both *Standing Stones* and *Chapel*. The most impressive of these stones stands in a clump of bracken on the roadside. It is firmly bedded in the soil on a slight eminence, with a group of smaller stones around the base. Its dimensions are, height 8 feet, width 2 feet tapering to 1 foot 9 inches, thickness 9 inches. It is roughly rectangular, shaped at the apex to a sharp peak. Apparently this is the stone mentioned by Martin, who says "Within a mile of the *Tarbat* there is a Stone erected about eight Foot heigh."¹

Another stone stands in the graveyard at Tarbert, to the east of the former, near the western boundary wall (fig. 1). The surface of the ground here is very rough, due to numerous excavations for graves and to thick matted tussocks of grass. Whether the stone does duty as a headstone is uncertain by reason of the crowded state of the graveyard. It appears to be about 7 feet high above the ground level, is about 2 feet wide, irregular in shape, and averages about 1 foot 6 inches thick. It is the only monolith on the island which is wider at the

¹ Martin, *Description of the Western Islands of Scotland*, 2nd ed., 1716, p. 231.

summit than at the base. In front of it, undoubtedly acting as a headstone, is a smaller pointed stone, projecting about 1 foot 6 inches above the turf. The larger stone bears on its eastern face an incised cross, discernible in the photograph. The incision is so weathered and lichen-encrusted that its dimensions cannot be determined with accuracy. (Photographed September 1930.)

(b) *Standing Stones*.—These are situated at the north end of Small Isles bay, and between Corran House and Knockrome. There are two, both comparatively small. The larger measures, above ground, height 5 feet 2 inches, width at base 3 feet 9 inches tapering gradually to 2 feet, whence it is bluntly pointed, and about 10 inches thick.

The smaller stone about 200 feet to the east measures 4 feet 5 inches in height, width 1 foot 2 inches, with a rounded top, and is about 9 inches thick. A well-marked vein of brighter quartzite runs from top to bottom of the main face of the stone.

Both stones are situated in a somewhat boggy area used at one time as a turbarry. Owing to their small size I had at first some little difficulty in locating them, and in seeking information from Mr and Mrs Darragh of Corran House, was informed that a lady who had visited the island some years before (between 1922 and 1928) had told them that the stones gave their name to the island, one being called "Ju" and the other "Ra." Which was which I could not find out. Now Martin states that

"The Natives say that *Jura* is so call'd from *Dih* and *Rah*, two Brethren, who are believ'd to have been *Danes*; the Names *Dih* and *Rah* signifying as much as without Grace or Prosperity. Tradition says, that these two Brethren fought and kill'd one another in the village *Knock-Cronm*, where there are two Stones erected of 7 Foot high each, and under them they say, there are Urns with the Ashes of the two Brothers: the Distance between them is about sixty yards."¹

Undoubtedly we are dealing with the same story, but it is truly an illuminating illustration of the pitfalls of folk-tales as a guide to local history, when a legend first ascribed to the "Natives" is forgotten by them and returns, somewhat garbled, from the mouth of a visitor. The stones appear to have lost some height, if Martin's account is accurate, as it is at Tarbert, but some of the discrepancy may be due

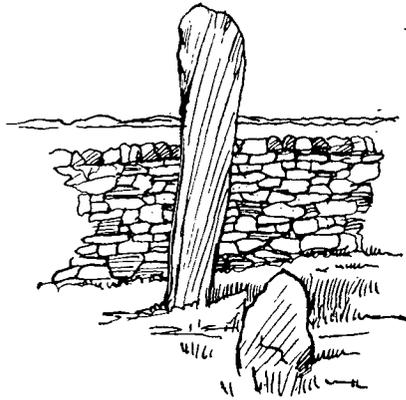


Fig. 1. Standing Stone in the Churchyard at Tarbert, Jura.

¹ Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 231.

either to a sinking of the stones in the bog, or to the growth of the peat since 1716, or to both. (Visited September 1930.)

(c) *Standing Stones*.—To the north-east of the abandoned farmhouse of Sannaig, and in a semi-cultivated enclosure, lies an interesting collection of stones. The monolith here is 7 feet 4 inches high, 1 foot 8 inches to 1 foot 6 inches wide, and of a thickness of 10 inches (fig. 2). Ten feet due south of the base of this stone is a collection of stones, suggesting very strongly the relics of a cist. Among a number of smaller stones

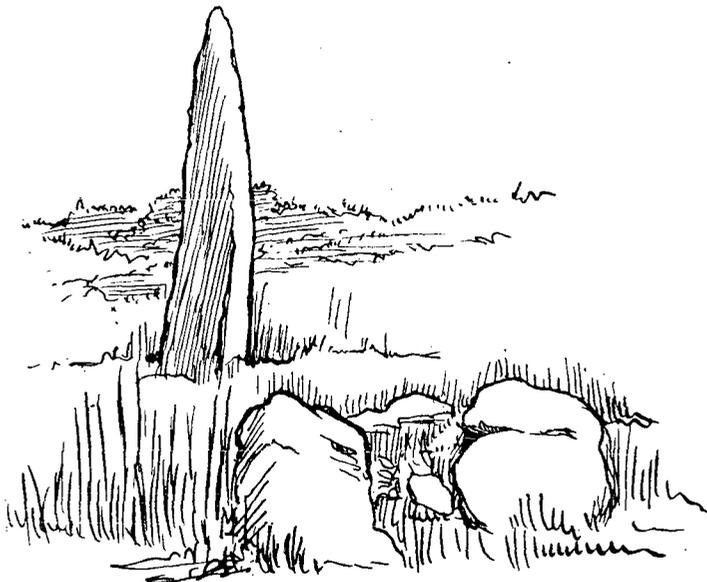


Fig. 2. Standing Stone at Sannaig, Jura, from south.

two are conspicuous, one 3 feet 10 inches long by 2 feet wide, and the other, which may either have been another monolith or part of the cist, measures 6 feet 4 inches long by 1 foot 3 inches wide. There are, however, many loose stones hereabouts, which may have been collected from the fields for dyke building, or may represent the residue from a cist. (Photographed August 1931.)

(d) *Standing Stone*.—At a distance of about one-third of a mile south of Strone farmhouse, and on the opposite side of the burn, is an isolated stone (fig. 3). It measures 9 feet 6 inches in height, 1 foot 10 inches to 1 foot 3 inches in width, tapering to a point above, and 9 inches to 10 inches in thickness. Six feet eight inches west-south-west of the base lies a flat stone embedded in the ground about 9 feet long and 2 feet wide. Whether this forms part of a cist or is a fallen monolith is uncertain.

There appears to be a slight depression in the soil along one side of its length, but this may be due to normal erosion. Probing failed to discover the existence of any stone-faced cavity. (Photographed September 1931.)

(e) A *Standing Stone* is marked in the wood running from the Craighouse-Feolin Ferry road, south of *Cnoc Reamhor*. A preliminary search in 1930 failed to discover it, and no opportunity for a further visit has been available.

(f) *Carragh à Ghlinne* (? The Stone of the Glen).—This, one of the most impressive of the standing stones of Jura, is situated in a narrow little valley which carries a stream from the eastern face of *Brat Bheinn* to the dam above the old distillery at Craighouse (fig. 4). Its measurements are, above ground, height, 7 feet 10 inches; width, 1 foot 10 inches to 2 feet, irregular; thickness, 1 foot. The lower part of the stone has been rubbed remarkably smooth, perhaps by cattle. Aligned with it on the opposite bank of the burn is a smaller shaped stone, 2 feet 8 inches high and 2 feet wide at base. The large monolith stands surrounded by bracken, on the flood plain, near the stream, and is conspicuous for some distance up or down the valley. To the north of this little flood plain, the ground slopes somewhat sharply to about 400 feet, above which lies hidden in the hills *Loch a Bhaile Mhargaidh*. On the south is a heather-clad ridge about 70 feet above the plain. Looking south-west over this small stone to the monolith, a small stone on the ridge beyond is strikingly obvious, but whether or not this alignment is accidental or intentional it is difficult to determine. Continuing in the same direction is the cairn on Crackaig Hill. (Photographed September 1930. Revisited September 1931.)

(g) *Chapel* (near Tarbert).—All that can be seen is a rectangular excavation in the turf of the graveyard lying approximately east and west, about 12 yards long by 6 yards wide, with indications of a doorway some 3 yards from the west end on the southern side. The boundaries

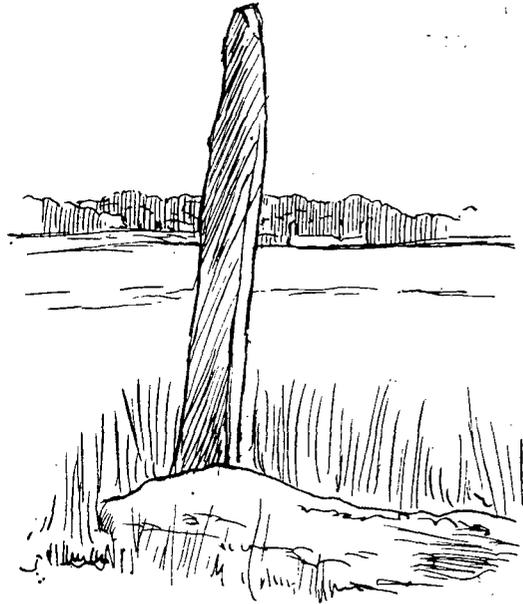


Fig. 3. Standing Stone at Strone, Jura, from west.

of the hollow are, however, so irregular, in common with the rest of the graveyard, that these dimensions are to be regarded as approximate only. No trace of stone work can be seen. Excavation might reveal the foundations. (Photographed September 1930.)

(h) *Cill Earnadill—Site of Chapel.*—Both these names occur a short distance north of Keills, a few hundred yards west along the burn from the Manse. Here is a remarkable site, a small flood plain at the bottom of a deep valley, with steep sides of glacial drift, now occupied by the graveyard for the southern portion of the parish. Presumably here

stood the church called *Killearn* of Martin;¹ perhaps even the village he mentions of the same name,² though it seems more probable that Keills occupies the site of the settlement of *Kilharnadull*, 1564,³ or *Killarnadill*, 1630.⁴ The site has been obviously so altered in recent times that documentary evidence would be required to establish anything with certainty.

Sites of Settlements, etc.—(k) It is recorded that—

“Several barrows and duns are to be found on the hills: and near Small Isles Harbour there are the remains of an ancient camp, with a triple line of defence.”⁵

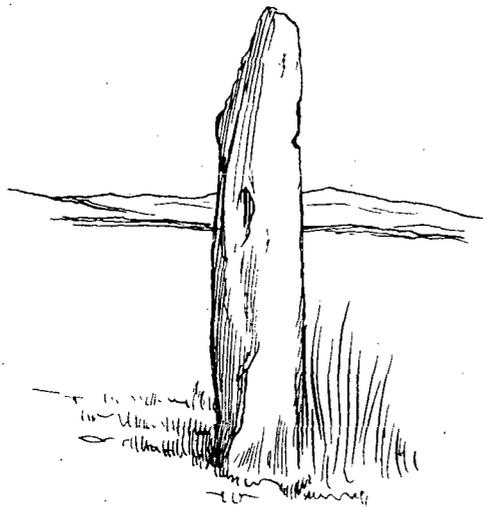


Fig. 4. Standing Stone, “Carragh à Ghlinne,” Jura, from south-west.

Unfortunately, of these “several” I

have only located two so far, though it is quite reasonable to suppose that others exist unmarked. The latter part of the above quotation I presume is derived from Anderson’s account, later paraphrased as—

“the remains of an encampment, consisting of three oval embanked hollows, defended on one side by deep ditches, and on the other by regular bastions.”⁶

The only site I can see which may possibly have filled this description is the crest of the hill to the seaward of Ardfernal, though so irregular is the surface I am unable to corroborate the details given.

More noteworthy, though again so seriously mutilated, presumably by the removal of stones to build the crofts below, is the site marked

¹ Martin, *op. cit.*, p. 239. ² *Ibid.*, p. 237.

³ *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, ii. p. 279 (Bannatyne Club, 1854). ⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 276.

⁵ *Ordnance Gazetteer Scotland*, art. Jura.

⁶ *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, p. 279.

An Àros, in Glengarrisdale, North Jura. Topographically the situation is excellent, a hillock, precipitous on the west, north, and east, commanding the landing-place and the approach along the glen from the east. Examination of the surface gives faint indications of two small enclosures of irregular shape perhaps about 30 feet across, but no details could be picked out with certainty in September 1931.¹

(l) Topographically one could hardly escape the situation of the hillock above *Dunan*, even were the name to suggest nothing. A settlement existed here, below the hill, until a few years ago, and it is reasonable to suppose that the undoubted earthworks on the hill above represent a defensive settlement. Only excavation can solve such problems. However, it is perhaps pertinent to draw attention to the site, commanding as it does a well-marked and presumably ancient drift way, which appears to have led from Craighouse to the seaward of Crackaig Hill, past Sannaig (Crakage and Sannok in 1545²), below *Dunan*, and so past Strone (Strowne in 1545³) towards Brosdale: the present Feolin-Craighouse road appearing to my eyes at least as of very modern construction.

(m) Finally, a last supposition, the "Crannog" may be entirely accidental or a natural phenomenon. It is so strikingly like a crannog; however, that if subsequent information should prove it to be of natural origin, its illustration may at least serve as a warning to future enthusiasts. It is situated near the southern edge of a small loch marked on the one-inch Ordnance Map, but there nameless, above the distillery at Craighouse. When inspected in August 1931, the level of the water in the loch, which when the distillery was in use might be controlled, was exceedingly low owing to the dry weather. Rarely, I understand, has the island been so dry. The structure is roughly oval in shape, measuring 27 feet along a north-south diameter, and 20 feet from east to west. Its base, then visible, consisted of a depth of 3 feet of peaty material, surmounted by a layer of vegetation and fresh peat about 1 foot thick. Eighteen inches from the base the ends of small tree trunks lying approximately horizontally were projecting slightly. Excavation of course is required to establish the authenticity of the structure.

¹ Under a stone near by is "preserved" a human skull and sundry bones, reputed to be those of raiders from Colonsay. A report on these relics has been made, so I was informed, but where published I cannot trace. If they are of any value a safer resting-place might be found for them, though they are as well treated, as the conditions permit, by Mr McKechnie who lives at Glengarrisdale.

² *Origines Parochiales Scotiae*, p. 279. ³ *Ibid.*