

IV.

ARCHÆOLOGICAL GLEANINGS FROM DARK-AGE RECORDS.

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I. INTRODUCTORY.

The Dark-Age texts that bear on the history of Scotland have passed through fine nets of criticism and annotation, but their exponents' main interests have often been in history, ecclesiology and language, with the result that archæological questions have received less attention than they properly deserve. Again, in respect of the Irish material, which may on occasion be important for the purposes of comparison, it has happened that some scholars have tended to slur distinctions between earlier and later periods, and consequently the "ancient" Ireland of which they present a picture is one of which certain features persisted right down to the seventeenth century. It is obvious that such matter can only be used with great caution if the intention is to illustrate, say, the Dalriada of a thousand years earlier. The notes that follow have accordingly been prepared with the

idea of isolating, as far as possible, matter which is truly relevant to Dark-Age archaeology in Scotland; and to achieve this end a range of early sources was selected for study which seemed likely to be relatively free from mediæval infiltrations. As a result of this limitation of the field many items of potential interest have had to be passed over on the chance of their having originated in later centuries;¹ but the balance can be regarded with correspondingly greater confidence for the particular purpose in hand. The material has proved too scanty to permit of chronological divisions being made within the period as a whole.

Before going further I desire to express my deep gratitude to Professor Myles Dillon, to the extent of whose help in connection with the Irish sources I could never do justice by means of piecemeal acknowledgments.

II. FORTS.

1. *Nomenclature*.—The structures that are known by the generic name of “forts” may conveniently be dealt with first. This word, as commonly used—*e.g.* by the Ordnance Survey—is recognised as covering a wide variety of remains which differ from one another in type, age and purpose. It will therefore be well, in the first place, to consider what words are used in the records to describe forts of one sort or another, and to ask whether differences in nomenclature reflect any structural differences in the buildings themselves.

An idea of the range of words that are used for fortified places, and how they are applied in typical cases, may be gained from the following list. A key to the abbreviated references will be found on p. 91.

ARX. Used of Alclyde,² of Dunollie,³ and of a hilltop fortification in North Wales,⁴ in which last case it is equated with *urbem munitam*.

CAIR. See *KAER*, *KAIR*.

CAISLEN. Equated with *castellum*.⁵ Anderson accepts the meaning of “fortress.”

CASTELLUM. Used of hilltop, or perhaps promontory, fortifications of stone or earth, as contrasted with *civitates*;⁶ also of a place bearing a “Rath” name.⁷

CASTRUM. Used of what Plummer suggests may have been the Roman marching-camp at Kirkbuddo,⁸ and of the same rath as is mentioned above under *CASTELLUM*.

¹ This applies especially to the Lives of the Irish saints, some of which undoubtedly contain early, and even primitive, matter (*V.S.H.*, i. pp. xxii, lxxxix f.). Archæological notes on some of the Lives, which do not however distinguish between earlier and later sources, will be found in *V.S.H.*, i. pp. xcv ff., and in Stokes, *Aneodota Oxoniensia: Lives of Saints from the Book of Lismore*, pp. xciii ff.

² *C.P.S.*, p. 15 (*S. and W. Additions*); *A.U.*, s.a. 869; *Annales Cambriæ*, quoted in *Sources*, i. 302.

³ *A.U.*, s.a. 733.

⁴ *Hist. Brit.*, p. 68.

⁵ *A.U.*, s.a. 727.

⁶ *Hist. Brit.*, p. 47.

⁷ *V.S.H.*, ii. p. 169.

⁸ *Ibid.*, i. p. 89.

CATHAIR. Used of a stronghold built by force within a monastic precinct; ¹ of a "city" built underground, in a context which smacks strongly of religious myth; ² of strongholds in general; ³ of Tara, as a chief city or principal fortress, in the form *primcathraig*; ⁴ and of monasteries.⁵ See also **KAER**.

CHESTER (*chestre*). Equated, though in a twelfth-century document, with *civitas* and *kaer*.⁶

CIVITAS. Used, with epithet *munitissima*, of Alclyde; ⁷ of Brechin, though in a passage the authenticity of which may be questioned; ⁸ of Scone, with epithet *regalis*; ⁹ of an unidentified place called Nrurim; ¹⁰ of Roman towns in Britain, e.g. Grantchester (*civitatula deserta*); ¹¹ of York; ¹² of Lugubalium; ¹³ of the Northumbrian capital, with the epithet *regia*; ¹⁴ of a city as opposed to a military camp; ¹⁵ and of a monastery or church.¹⁶ It is also equated with *chester* and *kaer* (*q.v.*).

DÚN. Commonly used of forts and fortified places of all ranks from Tara downwards, especially in place-names. Equated with *munitio* and *oppidum*. Both *dún* and *rigdún* are used of places bearing "Rath" names.¹⁷ *Dunard*, to judge from the context, may in two passages have possessed some tactical signification, as a field-position during warfare.¹⁸ "Churches, forts and farms" (*cealla, dúnne, treba*) are used as a comprehensive summing-up of the places plundered in a certain district.¹⁹

KAIR, KAER. Equated with *chester* and *civitas*.²⁰ Used in place-name Kair Eden, presumably Carriden, and if so no doubt in virtue of Roman ruins.²¹ The thirty-three *civitates* of Britain all had "Cair" names.²²

LONGPHORT. Apparently used of camps rather than of permanent forts, and sometimes these are evidently coastal stations belonging to Norse invaders ²³—perhaps comparable with the site excavated by Dr Bersu in the Isle of Man.²⁴ This word is fully discussed by Watson.²⁵

MUNITIO. This word is used frequently by Adamnan, but was not found in any of the other sources examined. Brude's stronghold is called a *munitio* in several passages,²⁶ and so also is a place which has been conjecturally identified with the Giant's Sconce, a hilltop fort in Ulster. Reeves suggests ²⁷ that *munitio* is simply a translation of *dún*.

¹ *C.P.S.*, p. 53 (*I. and P. Additions*).

² *Ibid.*, p. 56 (*I. and P. Additions*).

³ *Ibid.*, pp. 76, 148, 472.

⁴ *Ecl. Hist.*, i. 1.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ *Ecl. Hist.*, iv. 17.

⁷ *V.M.S.C.*, 45.

⁸ *Ecl. Hist.*, i. 20.

⁹ *Trip. Life*, pp. 218, 194.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, s.a. 836.

¹¹ Gildas, *De Excidio Britanniae*, quoted in *Sources*, i. 468.

¹² *Hist. Brit.*, p. 46.

¹³ *Antiquaries Journal*, Jan.-Apr. 1949, pp. 62 ff.

¹⁴ *Place-Names*, pp. 493 ff.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 55 (*I. and P. Additions*).

¹⁶ *Trip. Life*, p. 58.

¹⁷ *C.P.S.*, p. 154 (*Description*).

¹⁸ *C.P.S.*, p. 10 (*Pictish Chronicle*).

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *H.T.S.C.*, i.

²¹ *Ibid.*

²² *Tighernach in Sources*, i. 216; *A.U.*, s.a. 806.

²³ *A.U.*, s.a. 859, 916.

²⁴ *C.P.S.*, p. 154 (*Description*).

²⁵ *A.U.*, s.a. 840, 865, 916.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 267.

²⁶ *E.g. Adamnan*, i. 29.

OPPIDUM. The use of *Oppidum Fother* for Dunnottar¹ and of *Oppidum Eden* for Edinburgh (*i.e.* Dún Éideann)² suggests that this word was also a translation of *dún* in these cases. By contrast, Bede writes *in oppido municipio* of a town besieged in 634,³ an expression which evidently implies some kind of civic organisation.

RATH. The Royal Irish Academy's Dictionary gives "Ráith (ráth): an earthen rampart surrounding a chief's residence, a fort or rath. Sometimes by extension used of the enclosed dwellings also. The upper part or hill of Armagh, in which the church stood, was called the 'ráth'." Professor Dillon, to whom I am indebted for this quotation, points out that the meaning fluctuates, and this is certainly borne out by the usages found in this inquiry. Thus rath can be equated with *castrum*;⁴ St Patrick is given a site for a church in a strong rath;⁵ he marks out a rath in front of a church door;⁶ houses within raths are burned;⁷ a rath is a bishop's residence;⁸ and a place with a "Rath" name is described as a *rigdún*.⁹ Tara, elsewhere commonly a *dún*, is described as a *rigráth*.¹⁰

RIGTHECH. This word is used of Alclyde,¹¹ though no doubt in a descriptive sense only and not as a definition.

TOWER. *Twr* is used of Alclyde, though in a source which may be later than A.D. 1000,¹² while another MS. reads *kaer*. The "tower of Conung"¹³ Professor Dillon pronounces to be purely mythical, nor should too much be read into the eight towers in Tiree (*infra*, p. 74), although several broch-like structures have undoubtedly existed on that island.¹⁴ The Cambuskenneth charter of 1150 perpetuates what is no doubt an earlier name for Tor Wood, in *nemus de Keltor*, and it is tempting to associate this use of *tor* with the broch that stands in the wood in question notwithstanding the alternative derivation provided by the Æ *torr*.¹⁵ A similar derivation for Torwoodlee, where there is also a broch, is, however, less attractive, as no evidence is forthcoming as to the age of this name, and excavation has shown that Torwoodlee broch was demolished very soon after it was built,¹⁶ with the result that it could hardly have retained a tower-like appearance in later times. Watson suggests that the name Tor Echde, which occurs in *Aided Con Roi*, may refer to a broch in Kintyre;¹⁷ actually no brochs or probable remains of brochs are known in Kintyre, but it is possible that a fort of which the ruins still exist on the Mull of Kintyre, near the light-house, may once have shown a somewhat tower-like form. The place

¹ *C.P.S.*, p. 9 (*Pictish Chronicle*).

³ *Ecl. Hist.*, iii. 1.

⁷ *Trip. Life*, p. 229.

⁷ *A.U.*, s.a. 622, 911.

⁹ *Trip. Life*, p. 192.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 58 (*Duan Albanach*).

¹⁵ Ekwall, *The Concise Dictionary of English Place-Names*, s.v. *torr*, a rocky hill or peak.

¹⁶ *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxv, 103.

² *Ibid.*, p. 10 (*Pictish Chronicle*).

⁴ *V.S.H.*, ii. 169.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 467 (*Lebar Brecc Homily on St Patrick*).

⁸ *Old Irish Life in Celtic Scotland*, ii. 477.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 566.

¹² *C.P.S.*, p. 124 (*Bruts*).

¹⁴ Beveridge, *Coll and Tiree*, pp. 73 ff.

¹⁷ *Place-Names*, p. 24 n.

called Aberte in the *Annals of Ulster*,¹ if rightly identified with Dunaverty, would have been in this same neighbourhood, but what type of structure existed there is unknown. Bede uses *turres* of Roman coastal fortifications.²

URBS. Of the sources examined, only Nennius' *Historia Brittonum* and Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* contain this word, though a passage in the *Historia Norvegiæ*³ on the Orkney Picts contains the expression *in structuris urbium*, perhaps implying the existence of palisaded settlements.⁴ Nennius uses *urbs* of a place bearing a "Cair" name,⁵ and Bede of Alclyde,⁶ Giudi,⁷ Bamburgh⁸ and Coldingham.⁹ In respect of Alclyde it is thus equated with *arx*, *civitas* and *tur*.

Of the foregoing words, *urbs* and *munitio* may perhaps be regarded as in some degree exceptional, as each seems to be the favourite of one or two authors; *castén* may be ignored as a rarity, and *rigthech* for the reason already given; while *longphort* seems to possess a specialised meaning in connection with war-camps, beach-heads and the like. But when these exceptions are made, it will be seen that the remaining words frequently do duty for one another, with the result that no specific distinctions can be drawn between them. *Dun*, it is true, appears to be a word of wide application, embracing both earthworks and walled structures, while *ráth* does not seem to be used, in the works examined, of any stronghold known to have been walled with masonry. But this distinction, though in keeping with the definition of *ráth* quoted above on p. 67, may be more apparent than real. For example, forts constructed in the "lowland" regions of Ireland would naturally be of ditch-and-bank technique,¹⁰ in contrast to those in hilltop or coastal situations where stone would be more readily available. And if a modern place-name can properly be cited as evidence on such a point as this, it may be noted that Rahoy, in Morven, which Watson derives from *ráth thuath*, or "north rath,"¹¹ is in fact a vitrified fort¹²—*i.e.* originally of stone laced and bonded with timber—and not an earthwork at all. Only in the case of "tower" are we left with some slight possibility of specialised application—to brochs and tower-like duns.

2. *Surviving Examples*.—A second question which may well be asked is whether a study of the surviving remains of structures mentioned in the literature adds anything to our knowledge of Dark-Age forts in general, but here the paucity of the material is a serious drawback. Of the numerous Dark-Age sites that have been identified¹³ only Dunadd and Dundurn show

¹ *A.U.*, s.a. 711.

² *Ecl. Hist.*, i. 12.

³ Storm, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ*, p. 88.

⁴ Cf. Du Cange, *Glossarium Medicæ et Infimæ Latinitatis*, s.v. *structura*. This passage has been differently translated by Anderson (*Sources*, i. 331), but there seems to be no question of any allusion to brochs.

⁵ *Hist. Brit.*, p. 72 (*Cair guorthejern*).

⁶ *Ecl. Hist.*, i. 12.

⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸ *Ibid.*, iii. 6, 16.

⁹ *Ibid.*, iv. 17.

¹⁰ See also p. 71 *infra*.

¹¹ *Place-Names*, p. 147.

¹² *P.S.A.S.*, lxxii. 23 ff.

¹³ See O.S. Dark-Age Map of Britain, northern sheet.

significant structural remains; elsewhere later occupation has obscured the record—either wholly, as at Edinburgh Castle, or sufficiently to render it archæologically useless, as at Dumbarton. However, Mr R. B. K. Stevenson has lately drawn attention to a series of what he has named “nuclear” forts,¹ among which he classes both Dundurn and Dunadd; this series he attributes to the Dark Ages, and among other reasons for so doing he makes use of the recorded dates of these two structures in particular. To this extent, therefore, the literary record helps to elucidate an archæological problem, and further additions to the list of “nuclear” forts will no doubt be made in the future. At the same time, it must be remembered that not all Dark-Age structures necessarily conformed to this type; the Dark-Age rampart on Traprain Law,² for example, is entirely different from that of the “nuclear” forts. Again, in any given case a fort which appears in the records may already have been old on the occasion when mention of it is made. This would certainly have been true of Craig Phadrig if this place was really—as is suggested improbably by Reeves³—Brude’s stronghold at the time of St Columba’s visit, seeing that it is a vitrified fort and, as such, was presumably built centuries before, early in the prehistoric Iron Age.

3. *Materials, Dimensions, etc.*—When we come to look into the materials used in the building of forts, and their dimensions, arrangements and fittings, rather more facts emerge. In the first place, mention must be made of Bede’s distinction between a stone wall and a turf rampart, the latter possessing a quarry-ditch and a palisade and being used for the defence of camps. “A wall (*murus*),” he says,⁴ “is made of stones, but a rampart (*vallum*), with which camps are fortified to repel the enemy’s violence, is made of sods (*cœspitibus*). When these have been cut out all round the position, the rampart is built up high above the ground like a wall, so that the ditch from which the sods were taken is in front of it (*in ante*). Above this ditch, stakes (*sudes*) made of very strong logs are fixed in front (*præfiguntur*) [of the rampart].” The final words of this passage are not quite clear—as just translated, they would imply that the stakes were in front of the rampart though behind the ditch, probably forming a timber revetment for the rampart or possibly a free-standing palisade on a berm; but they could also be taken as meaning that the stakes were in front of the ditch itself, and in this case they would suggest a *chevaux-de-frise*.⁵ With Bede’s description, however, may be contrasted the post-Roman rampart on Traprain Law,⁶ which had a core of sods built “like a wall,” though faced with dry-stone masonry.

A second passage which should be quoted in this connection is the

¹ *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxiii. 186 ff.

² *Ibid.*, lxxiv. 48 ff.

³ Adamnan, p. 277.

⁴ *Eccl. Hist.*, i. 5.

⁵ Dr J. S. Richardson has suggested to me that the stone *chevaux-de-frise* at Dun Ængus may provide an analogy, also of Dark-Age date.

⁶ *P.S.A.S.*, lxxiv. 50.

description given in the *Crith Gablach*,¹ of the fort proper to the king of a territory or province. The passage is by no means lucid, but the writer evidently has in mind a circular *dún* measuring 140 feet in diameter and defended by a rampart and something called the *drécht giallnai*. Professor Dillon has explained to me that this expression means literally "corvée of service," and is here used of the fruits of the *corvée*, namely the defensive work round the *dún*. The literal meaning of the next lines he gives as follows: "Twelve feet is the width of its opening and its depth and its distance [in nominative case] towards the *dún*; thirty feet is its distance from outside;" and he accepts the following paraphrase as an allowable attempt to render them intelligible: "Twelve feet is the width of its opening and also its depth; [as for] its distance towards the *dún*, thirty feet is its distance from the outside [of the rampart]." In other words, the fort ditch measured 12 feet both in breadth and in depth and was separated from the rampart by a berm 30 feet wide.² The rampart is said to be 12 feet thick at its base and 7 feet thick at what was presumably the top, but certainty on this point is impossible as the crucial word occurs nowhere else and its meaning is unknown.³ The passage as a whole, thus interpreted, describes a system of defence of which a diagrammatic section is given in fig. 1. MacNeill, however, interprets the whole passage quite differently, making the *drécht giallnai* a rampart and not a ditch; on this showing the complete defences of the *dún* consisted of two ramparts, or a rampart and a stockade, without any ditch,⁴ an arrangement which is highly improbable as a piece of construction.

As regards the degree in which the foregoing description is likely to be true to life, Professor Dillon has further explained to me that the *Crith Gablach* is an idealised description of the Irish State, and is not supposed to correspond exactly with the realities of any particular time. It would however, in his opinion, have borne some relation to contemporary practice; and as its date, according to MacNeill, may be as early as the close of the seventh century,⁵ the method of fortification that has just been described may perhaps be attributed to about that period. However this may be, and even if kings in the lowland regions of Ireland did follow a set of legal or customary rules in the construction of their forts, such rules can hardly have held good for pioneers and colonists in Scotland, confronted with the exigencies of rocky and mountainous terrain and with the offensive tactics of strange enemies. The passage is of interest none the less for the light

¹ *P.R.I.A.*, xxxvi. 305. O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, iii. 508. See also p. 29.

² Professor I. A. Richmond informs me that the Romans regarded this as the effective range for a thrown spear.

³ "*vii traigid teiget a thalmatha.*" Professor Dillon points out that *thalmatha*, the ἀπαζ λεγόμενον, must have something to do with *talamh* (ground), and tentatively accepts the suggestion that it refers to the parapet-walk—this being "ground" in the sense that it is walked on. Sullivan translates it as "top" (*Manners and Customs*, iii. 508).

⁴ *P.R.I.A.*, xxxvi. 305.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 271.

that it throws on the standards proper to a kinglet, and as showing that a *dún* 140 feet in diameter could be the personal stronghold of a single grandee and his retainers. "Forts" of about this size are very common in the south of Scotland.¹

The actual building of a fort is mentioned in two passages in the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*,² but they resemble one another so closely that they probably both refer to the same episode—mythical or real. The place bore a "rath" name, Rath Bacain, and as it is described as a *rigdún* it was no doubt just such a local kinglet's establishment as has been discussed in the

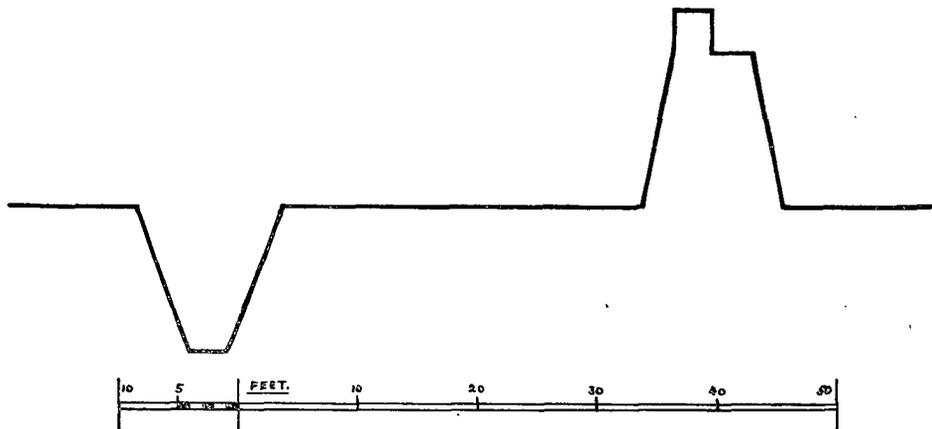


Fig. 1. Diagrammatic section of the defences of the king's fort, as described in the Críth Gablach. The breadth of the ditch-bottom has been assumed, and the height of the rampart calculated to accommodate the excavated material—allowance being made for the greater length of the ditch on the external circuit.

foregoing paragraphs. It was evidently an earthwork, as its construction entailed digging, and this, too, evidently by a large crowd of people, as the noise that they made—on a Sunday—brought down on their work an effective curse from the saint. With these passages may also be compared two others which occur in manuscripts later than A.D. 1000, but still deserve quotation. The first³ alludes to a professional digger of fortifications (*quidam cui ars erat fodere terram et muros civitatibus circumdare*) who built a triple wall (*triplicem murum*) round a fort (*arcem*) called Ráith Bailb; and the second similarly to *fossatores*, presumably professional, who dug round the site of a monastery.⁴ O'Curry likewise preserves a body of tradition regarding famous builders both of earthen raths and of stone cashels.⁵ These records possess much interest for the Scottish archæologist, as bearing,

¹ Numerous examples will be found, for example, in the R.C.A.M. *Inventories* of Dumfriesshire and Kirkcudbrightshire.

² Pp. 193, 223.

³ *V.S.H.*, i. 37, n. 13.

⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 40, n. 3, in text R.

⁵ *Manners and Customs*, iii. pp. 14 f.

if only by analogy, on the construction of the brochs—the technical standard of broch-masonry being so high as to enforce the conclusion that the work was done by professionals.

Another lesson about forts which emerges from the literature relates to the large quantity of wood that must evidently have gone into their construction—including, of course, that of their internal buildings. This point is rather difficult to realise when nothing is left but ditches and earthen banks, or a bare dry-stone wall. Evidence is provided, however, by Nennius' statement that Vortigern collected carpenters, as well as masons, to work on his hilltop stronghold in North Wales,¹ and even more forcefully by constant references to the destruction of forts by fire. Some examples of this are Alelyde,² Creie,³ an unnamed *dún*,⁴ Dunollie,⁵ Dun Ceithirn,⁶ Cair Guorthe-girn⁷ and Rath-Guali.⁸ Again, a hero is described in a poem as "a torch over fortresses."⁹ Most of the inflammable matter no doubt consisted of internal buildings such as the king's house in the *Críth Gablach* fort (*supra*); other similar examples are Brude's house (*domus*) inside his fort¹⁰ or the houses in the Rath of Armagh,¹¹ while the large garrison taken by the Norsemen at Alelyde in 870¹² was presumably installed in some kind of barracks or hutments.

Other information about the internal arrangements of forts, and of their fittings and equipment, is rather meagre;¹³ but it may be noted that Brude's fort had folding doors with bolts,¹⁴ elsewhere described in translation as "iron locks,"¹⁵ while reference is also made to the doors and door-keepers at Tara.¹⁶ Some of the domestic items discussed below, in connection with monasteries and houses, may well be applicable likewise to contemporary forts, *mutatis mutandis*.

4. *Ownership*.—As far as the bulk of the literary evidence goes, forts would appear to have belonged to kings and nobles. Instances of forts being built, owned and inhabited or disposed of by kings are too numerous for individual quotation, and the same point is made by the use of such words as *rigdún*, *rigráth*, *rigthech* when applied to Alelyde, or the place-name Ailech na Ríg. It was an Irish king who gave a royal *dún* to St Columba,¹⁷ and a Pictish one who gave a *castrum*, perhaps the Roman camp at Kirkbuddo, to St Boethius;¹⁸ while a "powerful lord" is mentioned as possessing another *castrum* called Ráith Eanaidh,¹⁹ and the *Críth Gablach* indicates that

¹ *Hist. Brit.*, p. 68.

² *A.U.*, s.a. 779.

³ *C.P.S.*, p. 75 (*Tighernach*).

⁴ *Old Irish Life*, in *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 482.

⁵ *A.U.*, s.a. 685.

⁶ *Trip. Life*, p. 519.

⁷ *Hist. Brit.*, p. 76.

⁸ *A.U.*, s.a. 622.

⁹ "*Breo dar dinna*," *ibid.*, s.a. 902.

¹⁰ Adamnan, ii. 36.

¹¹ *A.U.*, s.a. 911.

¹² *C.P.S.*, p. 405 (*Irish Annals*).

¹³ Apart, of course, from the description of Bricriu's feast (*Manners and Customs*, iii. 17 ff.); but this is passed over here by reason of doubt as to its full historical applicability.

¹⁴ "*Retro retrusis fortiter seris*," Adamnan, ii. 36.

¹⁵ *Old Irish Life*, tr. Hennessy, in *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 504.

¹⁶ *Trip. Life*, p. 129.

¹⁷ *Old Irish Life*, in *Celtic Scotland*, 482.

¹⁸ *V.S.H.*, i. 89.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, ii. 169. The source of this passage may be later than A.D. 1000

the *flaith bachald* as well as the king was entitled to possess a *dún*, though not to have it built at the public expense.¹ However, the impression thus created may be partly due to the fact that the writers of the records were concerned with the affairs of the great, and we need not hesitate to believe that many less important people also built strongholds when they could—particularly in disturbed regions and in time of war. There are, moreover, some passages which bear this out—for example, the account of a lawless individual who builds himself a *cathair* by force inside a monastery,² and allusions to heathen raiders with fortified coastal bases.³ Finally, the use of such language as “Herimon took the north . . . with its forts,”⁴ the inclusion of forts, estuaries and churches in the comprehensive blessing of a locality,⁵ and the rather similar combination of churches, forts and farms in a description of wholesale plundering,⁶ all imply that “forts” of one sort or another—and no doubt for the most part smallish individual strongholds—were a very common feature of the Irish countryside.

5. *Tactical Significance*.—Another matter on which information would be welcome concerns the methods of attacking and defending forts, and their tactical significance in general—the more so as their siting and the poverty of their water-supply sometimes suggests that the defenders had little in mind beyond immediate protection against a rush starting from close at hand. But here we are unlucky in the fact that our authors were not soldiers but churchmen, and as such were not interested in tactics. Their references to the details of warfare are of the briefest and vaguest, and it is only by implication that anything relevant comes out.

One point, however, which may be inferred with confidence is that the larger forts, at least, were capable of standing a siege, for a time at least. Of places which are known to have been large, or at any rate important, Tara was besieged for three days,⁷ Alclyde held out for four months in 870 and was ultimately reduced by lack of water,⁸ while sieges are also recorded at Etain—no doubt the Rock of Edinburgh—in 638,⁹ at Dunnottar in 681¹⁰ and perhaps again in 694,¹¹ and at Dunadd and Dundurn in 683.¹² Other places which stood siege were Aberte in 712,¹³ Dun-baitte in 680,¹⁴ Duindeaua in 692,¹⁵ and Ritha about 642 and again in 702;¹⁶ but beyond the guess that Aberte was Dunaverty these sites have not been identified, and no conjecture

¹ *Manners and Customs*, iii. 508. It was the *drécht giallnai* ditch, publicly built, that made the king what he was. For the *flaith bachald*, see *ibid.*, p. 577, s.v. Flath.

² *C.P.S.*, p. 53 (*I. and P. Additions*).

³ *A.U.*, s.a. 840.

⁴ *Co na n-dumib*; *C.P.S.*, p. 51 (*I. and P. Additions*).

⁵ *Trip. Life*, p. 151.

⁶ *A.U.*, s.a. 836.

⁷ Annals from the *Book of Leinster* in *Trip. Life*, p. 523.

⁸ *C.P.S.*, pp. 361, 405. Professor Dillon informs me that there is nothing in the Irish text to suggest, as Skene does in his translation, that the water was cut off by the besiegers; the words simply mean that it “ebbed,” no doubt as a result of excessive demands on the well.

⁹ *C.P.S.*, p. 70 (Tighernach).

¹⁰ *A.U.*, s.a. 680.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, s.a. 693.

¹² *Ibid.*, s.a. 682.

¹³ *Ibid.*, s.a. 711.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, s.a. 679.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, s.a. 691.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, s.a. 640, 702.

can be made as to the size or strength of the works. On the other hand small duns may well have been easy to reduce, as their remains hardly seem fit to withstand any kind of investment, and the legendary Labraid's plundering of eight towers in Tíree¹—which, though not historical, was probably intended to sound at least distantly possible—would suggest a positive *dégringolade des forteresses*.

Another fact which emerges with reasonable certainty is that fire was used as a weapon of offence against forts. Mention has already been made of the frequency with which forts went on fire, and it is not necessary to assume that all these fires—or even all the fires resulting from enemy action—were set after the forts had been taken by other means. This, no doubt, was what happened at Alclyde in 870, but in the case of Bamburgh in 651 Bede states clearly² that Penda had recourse to fire just because assault and siege had been unsuccessful. Other references to fires are ambiguous, *e.g.* the *combustio regum in Dun Ceithirn*,³ and could imply burning after capture as easily as burning in the actual course of an attack.

Otherwise there is little to be learned. Allusions to battles taking place at or near forts—*e.g.* Dunadd in 730,⁴ Dunnichen in 686,⁵ "Duinlocho" in 678⁶—only imply that the defending force gave battle near a convenient fortified base, and that such potential bases were natural objectives for the attacker. The possible use of coastal forts by foreigners, as beach-heads for invasion, has already been mentioned (p. 66), and likewise the hint of a field-fortification put up for the purposes of a battle (p. 66). Finally, attention may be drawn to the place-name Ailén-daingean,⁷ as suggesting an appreciation of the defensive value of an island; and this is, of course, well exemplified in the remains of many island forts in both Ireland and Scotland.⁸

III. HOUSES.

A good deal of the evidence about houses and their furniture and fittings comes from sources which actually refer to monasteries; but as monastic buildings are likely, *mutatis mutandis*, to have exemplified ordinary domestic fashions—and in fact Professor I. A. Richmond has pointed out⁹ how closely St Cuthbert's *mansio* on Farne Island compares with the remains of "homesteads" found in the Cheviots—it seems best to deal with "houses" of all sorts here rather than to split them up between this section and the next. The Northumbrian evidence, however, is naturally distinct from the rest in so far as it refers to buildings constructed *juxta morem Romanorum*.

¹ *Fursundud Find Fíled*, ed. K. Meyer, "Über die älteste irische Dichtung"; *Abh. der Preussischen Akad. der Wiss.*, 1913, phil.-hist. Kl., No. 6, p. 38. I am indebted for this reference to Professor Dillon.

² *Ecol. Hist.*, iii. 16.

³ *Trip. Life*, p. 519.

⁴ *A.U.*, s.a. 729.

⁵ *C.P.S.*, p. 72 (Tighernach).

⁶ *A.U.*, s.a. 678.

⁷ *Ibid.*, s.a. 702.

⁸ For the very numerous examples to be found in the Hebrides, see R.C.A.M. *Inventory of the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*.

⁹ *Antiquity*, xv. 88 f.

To deal with Northumbria first, one may mention, and dismiss as exceptional, Bede's *œdificia sublimiter erecta* at Coldingham,¹ as these were clearly monastic and in the "Roman" fashion. More typical buildings were probably the earl's house that contained a *cubiculum*,² and another in which an *atrium* was distinguished from the *interiora*³—both these were probably "long" houses with a public hall-kitchen at one end and private apartments behind,⁴ though the second may have been no more than a simple "but-and-ben." *Palacium*, which occurs in a rather late text,⁵ probably refers to a building of "long-house" type. Again, the words *de summo cacuminis ligni deorsum cadentem*⁶ shows pretty clearly that the building in question, though no more than a shepherd's cottage (*pastorale habitaculum*), possessed a roof-tree and was consequently not a round hut. On the other hand Bede also uses *casa*, *casula*, *tugurium* (of a summer shieling), and *tuguriunculum*, all of which suggest something small and probably hut-like; and with these may be compared Adamnan's *turguriolum* and *hospitiolum*, both of which words are used of St Columba's own dwelling on Iona.⁷ "Bothy" is used twice, in Skene's translation of the Old Irish Life of St Columba;⁸ while *mansio* appears both of a penitent's cell,⁹ no doubt a small hut, and also of St Cuthbert's establishment on Farne Island, which was a complex of several structures. The expression *in domo cence*,¹⁰ on the face of it suggests a separate building used for meals, as if in an agglomeration of single-chambered—*i.e.* hut-like—structures, but it appears to have been commonly used in mediæval Latin simply to mean an ordinary dining-room or refectory. Too much should not be made of the diminutive form *habitaculum* employed by Adamnan and Bede, as this may be largely due to contemporary linguistic usage.

For the West, where Irish influence was presumably strong, it is necessary to consider the Irish analogies—particularly on the question of whether the houses were round or rectangular. Evidence about Irish houses is forthcoming in the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* and the *Críth Gablach*. The former records,¹¹ in an establishment founded by the Saint, three buildings for each of which it quotes only one dimension—for the "great house" 27 feet (*secht traigid fichit isintig mor*), for the kitchen 17 feet and for the oratory 7 feet. It has been plausibly suggested that this single dimension is intended to represent the diameter of a round, hut-like structure; and on this showing the "great house" could be compared with many hundreds of surviving hut-circles of about the size stated, while even a round oratory

¹ *Ecc. Hist.*, iv. 23.

² *V.M.S.C.*, 49.

³ *Ecc. Hist.*, iii. 11.

⁴ It is true that Bede also uses *cubiculum* of what seems to have been a hut or small house built by St Aidan close to the church in the *villa regia* (*Ibid.*, iii. 17), but the meaning "bedroom" seems more natural in the present context.

⁵ *C.P.S.*, p. 8 (*Pictish Chronicle*).

⁶ *Cuthbert*, p. 39.

⁷ Adamnan, i. 19, 29; ii. 15.

⁸ *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 479 f.

⁹ *Ecc. Hist.*, v. 12.

¹⁰ *A.U.*, s.a. 738.

¹¹ P. 237.

only 7 feet in diameter would not be impossibly small if it were intended merely to provide shelter for an altar. Another monastic "great house" is mentioned by Adamnan¹ as being built at Durrow during St Columba's lifetime, and this was assumed by Reeves to be a round tower;² but there is no reason for making this assumption, as round towers belong to a later epoch and the word "round" does not in fact occur in the narrative at all. The text reads ". . . *alicui ex fratribus de summo culmine magnæ domus lapso,*" and it is only in the chapter heading that the structure is described as round (*de monasterii culmine rotundi*)—and even this expression would be fully applicable to a round, hut-like building, the idea of a tower being quite unnecessary to the sense.

The same method of expressing the size of a building by means of a single dimension is used in the *Crith Gablach*, and O'Curry likewise infers that these buildings were round³ though MacNeill leaves the question open.⁴ So far this interpretation is attractive enough; none of the eleven houses for which sizes are given—each house being appropriate to a man of a different social rank—is too large to compare with known examples of round "huts," as their supposed diameters range between 17 feet and 30 feet with the king's house itself not exceeding 37 feet. But there is another side to the question, as Professor I. A. Richmond has put up a convincing case⁵ for the view that the *Crith Gablach* houses were in fact rectangular. It is true that his principal argument was based on the interpretation of the word *cleithe*, which was believed at the time when he wrote to mean a "ridge-pole," and this no longer appears necessarily to hold good as the word is now regarded as having a more general meaning of "summit," *e.g.* of a mountain.⁶ But notwithstanding this fact the rest of his evidence remains extremely strong, particularly as his theory provides a logical function for the *airchae*—*i.e.* as a hall or living-room at the "but" end of the house—and also gives adequate space, when the ground plans of the houses are worked out, for the *immdai* if these are regarded as small cubicles or private apartments. On the basis of a circular plan the *immdai*, even if they are regarded simply as beds, become very difficult to fit in in the requisite numbers—*e.g.* eight "with their furniture" in the 27-foot house of an Aire Desa—while the *airchae*, too, has in this case to be explained as a completely separate out-house of some kind. Further, O'Curry quotes in translation a passage from a commentary, probably of eleventh-century date, on an ancient law⁷ which uses a single dimension with the evident intention that it shall represent a length, while a corresponding breadth is understood which is less

¹ i, 23; iii, 16.

² Adamnan, p. 291.

³ *Manners and Customs*, i. pp. ccxcvii f.

⁴ *P.R.I.A.*, xxxvi. 288, n. 1.

⁵ *J.R.S.*, xxii. 96 ff.

⁶ Information from Professor Dillon, who quotes an opinion given by Dr Binchy.

⁷ Trinity College MS., H 3. 17, which has been edited by Petrie, *Round Towers*, 2nd ed., pp. 364 ff. I am indebted to Professor Dillon for this reference.

than the length by one-third.¹ Considerable doubt is thus thrown on the interpretation of the *Tripartite Life* passage as referring to circular buildings, and the bearing of the Irish evidence must consequently remain uncertain until more Irish house-sites have been explored. However, it seems certain that round buildings were made use of to some extent,² and it is probable that houses of small size and primitive type were commoner in the Scottish "frontier" region than in the comparatively civilised Ireland that is reflected in the *Críth Gablach*. For some notes on square churches see pp. 82ff.

Whatever their plan, houses³ were universally of wood eked out with wattling; stone is only mentioned in the case of churches (*infra*), and the examples quoted seem to be largely in Northumbria. The earthen walls of St Cuthbert's buildings on Farne were no doubt abnormal in contemporary civilised society (*cf.* p. 80). A further hint about wood-construction is implied, as in the case of the forts (*supra*), by the evident liability of the houses to go on fire—both Adamnan⁴ and Bede⁵ describe the burning of villages. A house in a Northumbrian village, as described by Bede,⁶ had a wall (*paries*) with posts (*postæ*) in or against it and a wattled roof (*virgis contextum*) covered with grass thatch; this last characteristically caught fire from sparks rising from a central hearth, and no mention is made of any chimney. Incendiary material collected in the suburbs of Bamburgh for the attempt to burn the fortress⁷ included wooden house-walls (*parietes*), beams (*trabes, tigna*), rods or withies (*virgei*) and roofs of thatch (*tecti fenei*). The wooden uprights of a house-wall, apparently set in pairs (*binales sudes*), are mentioned by Adamnan,⁸ and something similar is probably implied by the statement that St Cuthbert tied his horse to the wall (*alligavit ad parietem*) of a shepherd's hut.⁹ Stokes suggests¹⁰ that when St Patrick "set a stake," and said that his foundation would be a "city for seven bishops," stake-and-wattle construction was implied. The walls of St Cuthbert's oratory were made of boards caulked with hay and clay, and covered outside with a skin.¹¹ St Columba's *tuguriolum* at Iona seems to have been founded on planks.¹² Allusions to the use of wattling and withies in building are fairly common, in connection with both houses and churches, the *Críth Gablach* in particular giving detailed though not, perhaps, fully intelligible directions for the building of a wattled house—the *Tigh Incis*.¹³

¹ O'Curry's literal translation runs ". . . an oratory, of fifteen feet, or less than that, that is fifteen feet in its length and ten in its breadth . . ."; and in order to make sense of this Professor Dillon informs me, with Dr Binchy's concurrence, that it could be paraphrased ". . . an oratory of fifteen feet or less, and by 'fifteen feet' is meant 'fifteen feet long by ten feet broad' . . ."

² For an example, see *Manners and Customs*, iii. 33.

³ Like that of Colgu's sister (Adamnan, ii. 7).

⁶ *Ecl. Hist.*, iii. 10.

⁹ *V.M.S.C.*, 9.

⁴ i. 28; ii. 7.

⁵ *V.M.S.C.*, 20 and 21.

⁷ *Ibid.*, iii. 16.

⁸ ii. 7.

¹⁰ *Trip. Life*, p. 149.

¹¹ *V.M.S.C.*, 77.

¹² Adamnan, i. 19. For the expression *tabulis suffulto*, compare Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, lxxii. col. 782, "*aliquis nulla suffultus scientia*," and *ibid.*, col. 779, "*fundamentum ligneum quo allare fulciatur*." Reeve's translation "made of planks" is certainly inaccurate.

¹³ *Manners and Customs*, iii. 480. See also *ibid.*, pp. 31 ff.

The universality of wattling is brought out by Plummer's note that the Welsh word for "to build" is *adeiladu*, which is related etymologically to a word meaning "to weave."¹ Roofs were normally thatched, and poor as grass² is for thatching it seems to have been generally used—just as it is said to have been used in Ireland right down to the present day.³ Bede also writes⁴ of a place where the houses were covered with reeds (*palustri harundine*); while rush thatch is mentioned in Ireland,⁵ and is probably implied by a reference to rush-cutting at Iona.⁶ St Cuthbert's living-hut on Farne was roofed with rough logs and thatched with grass.⁷ Logs, no doubt for building, were floated down the Tyne to a monastery near its mouth,⁸ and Adamnan also alludes to heavy building-timber.⁹

Little is on record about doors, but locks with keys are mentioned not only at Brude's fort¹⁰ but also in the case of a house and of a church;¹¹ the door of the church was a double one (*valvæ*), and the use of the plural (*clavium foramina*) shows that there was a keyhole, and consequently some lock-mechanism, in each half. The same point arises in connection with the church door at Terryglass, which had bolts (*pessuli*) worked from outside by keys.¹² The use of the plural here (*claves*, not *clavem*) indicates that there was a separate key for either bolt. A window which could be closed is mentioned in St Cuthbert's *mansio* on Farne.¹³ A central hearth has already been noted as occurring in a Northumbrian house (p. 77), and the *Old Irish Life* refers, in translation, to "the border of the fireplace."¹⁴

The list of furniture and domestic equipment that could be compiled from Bede, Adamnan and the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* would be too meagre to merit quotation, especially by comparison with the mass of detailed information about the internal appointments of early Irish houses that is given by O'Curry.¹⁵ But the following items are of some archæological interest: a silver dish, broken up by King Oswald to give away to the poor,¹⁶ which inevitably calls to mind the great dishes from Sutton Hoo; a number of cauldrons,¹⁷ including the two brass ones for which St Patrick was sold; a movable table for the use of monastery guests,¹⁸ no doubt of the trestle type that was still in use in the Middle Ages; what are described by the editor of the *Tripartite Life* as "washing stones" for a bath,¹⁹ but in fact very probably stones used in the heating of the water;²⁰ a beaker of glass in use

¹ *V.S.H.*, i. p. xcic, n. 2.

² Or hay; the word is *fenum*.

³ Evans, *Irish Heritage*, p. 64.

⁴ *Ecl. Hist.*, i. 19.

⁵ *Trip. Life*, p. 157.

⁶ Adamnan, ii. 40.

⁷ *V.M.S.C.*, 30.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6.

⁹ ii. 46.

¹⁰ Adamnan, ii. 35.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, iii. 22 and 19.

¹² *Ibid.*, ii. 37.

¹³ *V.M.S.C.*, 30.

¹⁴ *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 501.

¹⁵ E.g. *Manners and Customs*, iii. pp. 26 ff., 480 ff. This material is not dealt with here as its applicability to the Scotland of this period cannot be safely assumed.

¹⁶ *Ecl. Hist.*, iii. 6.

¹⁷ Notes on Fiacc's Hymn in *Trip. Life*, p. 417; *ibid.*, p. 231; *V.M.S.C.*, 57.

¹⁸ *V.M.S.C.*, 12.

¹⁹ *Trip. Life*, p. cxlviii.

²⁰ On the doubt attaching to this interpretation, see Joyce, *Social History of Ancient Ireland*, ii. p. 168.

in Brude's fort; ¹ a bronze water-pot; ² and "domestic furniture" in general (*domus suppellectilem*) belonging to a *plebeius* who lived near Loch Creran, in Argyll.³

IV. MONASTERIES.

Although much of the evidence about houses given in the preceding section was derived from passages dealing with monastic buildings, a good deal still remains to be said about the components of a monastery as such.

The first feature to be considered is the precinct wall. The *Rule of St Columba* lays down "Let a fast place, with one door, enclose thee," ⁴ and references to the enclosing wall are fairly common. Its function was no doubt to symbolise the monks' separation from the world, as well as to contribute to their security. Clonmacnoise had a *vallum*,⁵ and an unnamed monastery a *uail*,⁶ while the mention of the monastery gate at Old Melrose ⁷ necessarily implies a wall. St Patrick marked out a "strong rath," 140 feet in diameter, for one of his establishments,⁸ and it is noted that he always founded cloisters in the manner described in this passage. In another passage he marks out a cashel,⁹ and yet another, which may however be later than A.D. 1000, records the digging of a deep ditch round ground given for a monastery.¹⁰ Bede, again, records the building of a monastery inside a fort,¹¹ the defences of which no doubt served as a ready-made cashel; and this may well have been the idea behind the gifts of forts or raths that were sometimes made to saints. Examples are to be seen in the gift of a royal *dún* to St Columba; ¹² of the site for a church in a strong rath to St Patrick; ¹³ or of a *castrum* to St Boetius by Nechtan Morbet.¹⁴ The wall of St Cuthbert's *mansio* on Farne was no doubt analogous with a monastic precinct-wall, though the *mansio* itself was evidently regarded as unique, and it is interesting to read Bede's detailed description of its structure—"the wall itself was higher outside than a man standing upright; but he greatly increased its height inside by excavating the living rock. . . . He made this wall not with dressed stone, nor with bricks and mortar, but with completely rough stones and turf, which he had obtained from the interior by digging."¹⁵ This language clearly implies that, in the Northumbria of 676, the wall might have been expected to be built of dressed stone or bricks.

In any monastery the church or oratory was naturally the most important building, but, as in the case of houses (*supra*), it will be better to

¹ Adamnan, ii. 34.

² *Ibid.*, i. 35.

³ *Ibid.*

⁴ In translation, *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 508.

⁵ Adamnan, i. 3.

⁶ *C.P.S.*, p. 53 (*Irish and Pictish Additions*).

⁷ *V.M.S.C.*, 10.

⁸ *Trip. Life*, p. 237.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 141.

¹⁰ *V.S.H.*, ii. 265.

¹¹ *Ecl. Hist.*, iii. 19.

¹² *Old Irish Life*, quoted in translation in *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 482.

¹³ *Trip. Life*, p. 229.

¹⁴ *V.H.S.*, i. 89; see also p. 72 *supra*.

¹⁵ *Murus ipse deforis altior longitudine stantis hominis; nam intrinsecus vivam cædendo rupem multo illum fecit altiorem. . . . Quem videlicet murum, non secto lapide, vel latere et cæmento, sed impolitis prorsus lapidibus et cæspite, quem de medio loci fodiendo tulerat, composuit.*

consider all churches in a separate section—the more so as, in a society in which the parochial system had not yet been adopted, the question of a distinction between monastic and other churches can hardly be said to arise. It will be enough to point out that the magnificence of Benedict Biscop's church at Wearmouth¹ was evidently exceptional, and must have far outrun anything that might have been found even at Old Melrose or Iona.

The arrangement of a monastery is suggested by the description of St Brendan's establishment in Tiree,² with which may be compared the plan of the buildings at the Broch of Deerness, in Orkney;³ these latter, though themselves no doubt mediæval, may well perpetuate a considerably earlier arrangement. Reasons for believing that the conventual buildings were smallish and hut-like in character have been given above (pp. 75ff), and the following passages may be quoted as throwing further light on internal arrangements. At Old Melrose individual monks seem to have occupied separate huts or cells set here and there within the precinct—one, for example, being housed in a *secreta mansio* while another lived close beside him.⁴ A rather similar arrangement obtained in St Cuthbert's *mansio*, which had its oratory and dwelling-hut inside the enclosure-wall and a larger guest-house by the landing-place;⁵ and this compares with St Patrick's establishment of which mention has been made above (p. 75), which had its "great house," kitchen and oratory—all separate buildings.⁶ Conventual buildings, besides the church and the abbot's dwelling, might include a guest-house,⁷ a refectory,⁸ a kitchen,⁹ a bakery,¹⁰ a wine-store (if this and not "kiln" is the true meaning of *canaba*),¹¹ and a mill.¹² At Iona each monk, including St Columba, ground his own ration of corn. Iona possessed a *plateola*, no doubt some kind of central open space.¹³ The high buildings at Coldingham, as has been said, no doubt reflect "Roman" influence, and arrangements there may have differed materially from those at Iona or Old Melrose; a difference in Northumbrian practice is in fact suggested by Bede's references to dormitories at Lindisfarne and Wearmouth.¹⁴

An important piece of ecclesiastical equipment was evidently the bell. Monastery bells are mentioned at Iona and Lindisfarne,¹⁵ but most of the numerous references in the *Tripartite Life* are probably to hand-bells. The Iona and Irish bells were evidently tongueless, as they had to be "struck" (*cloccam pulsa, ben do chlocc*); Bede, however, uses the more general word *insonuit*. Mention is made of the noise of the bell in the great cathair of

¹ Bede, *Abbots*, 5 and 6.

² *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 77, n. 76.

³ R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Orkney*, No. 621 and fig. 328.

⁴ *Ecl. Hist.*, v. 12. *In vicinia cellæ illius*. However, another *secreta mansio* at Old Melrose, which was used as a retreat cell by the Abbot, was on the riverbank (*ibid.*) and may thus have been outside the precinct wall.

⁵ *V.M.S.C.*, 30.

⁶ *Trip. Life*, p. 237.

⁷ Adamnan, i. 4 and 25.

⁸ *Ibid.*, ii. 12.

⁹ *Trip. Life*, p. 237; Bede, *Abbots*, 8.

¹⁰ *Ibid.* (at Wearmouth).

¹¹ Adamnan, i. 35.

¹² *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 504.

¹³ Adamnan, iii. 7.

¹⁴ *Cuthbert*, xvi; *Abbots*, 8.

¹⁵ Adamnan, i. 7 and 24; *V.M.S.C.*, 75.

Mungret.¹ The belfry (*cloitthech*) of Slane, which was burned in 950,² was presumably a round tower, and Stokes translates *benchopuir ili*³ "many conical caps (for belfries)," as if this passage also contained an allusion to round towers; but this appears to be the only occurrence of *benchopuir*, and Professor Dillon informs me that its true meaning is doubtful.

Monasteries having been, at this time, the only centres of learning, and one of the monks' main tasks having been the copying of books, a note may be added on this side of monastic life. The importance currently accorded to the new learning is made clear by Bede's story of King Aldfrid, who succeeded in 684, and who "previously applied himself to reading for a long time in the land of the Scots, suffering a self-imposed exile for the love of knowledge."⁴ St Columba himself copied books,⁵ and was occupied in copying the Psalter at the time of his death.⁶ Benedict Biscop's library at Wearmouth was *nobilissima* and *copiosissima*, but was no doubt exceptional, as he is recorded to have brought back from Rome many books of divine wisdom which he had either bought or had given him.⁷ His *archicantor*, too, not only taught *viva voce*, to ecclesiastical students, what he had learned in Rome, "but also left a great deal of matter in writing which is still preserved in the library of the same monastery."⁸ At Iona the work of copying was evidently done with great care, the copyist getting another monk to check over his work with him when complete.⁹ The instruction to copyists that stands at the end of Adamnan's own work is still valid to-day: "I beseech those who wish to transcribe these books—nay, rather, I adjure them by Christ, the eternal Judge—after they have diligently transcribed, to compare their copies most carefully with the originals from which they have taken them, and also to add this adjuration here."¹⁰ Stokes, in his introduction to the *Tripartite Life*,¹¹ lists pen, style, ink writing-board, and tablets as items of the writer's equipment; Adamnan mentions an ink-horn¹² and the making of a note on a *tabula* which was kept for reference.¹³ Very little is said about the finished books, but St Boisil possessed a copy of St John's Gospel, in the form of a volume containing seven sections of four folios each,¹⁴ and a copy of the Gospels adorned with gold and jewels, presumably brought from Lindisfarne, was lost at sea in

¹ *Trip. Life*, p. 204.

² *A.U.*, s.a. 949.

³ *Trip. Life*, p. 35.

⁴ *V.M.S.C.*, 42. *Non paucis antea temporibus in regionibus Scottorum lectioni operam dabat, ipse ob amorem sapientiæ spontaneum passus exilium.*

⁵ Adamnan, ii. 30.

⁶ *Ibid.*, iii. 24.

⁷ Bede, *Abbots*, 11 and 4.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 6. "*Sed et non pauca etiam literis mandata reliquit, quæ hactenus in ejusdem monasterii bibliotheca . . . servantur.*"

⁹ Adamnan, i. 17.

¹⁰ Adamnan, iii. 24. "*Obsecro eos quicumque voluerint hos describere libellos, immo potius adjuro per Christum, judicem sæculorum, ut postquam diligenter descripserint, conferant, et emendent cum omni diligentia, ad exemplar unde caraverunt, et hanc quoque adjurationem hoc in loco subscribant.*"

¹¹ P. cliii.

¹² i. 19; *corniculum atramenti.*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

¹⁴ *V.M.S.C.*, 14. *Codex habens quaterniones septem.*

875.¹ Square book-covers were made by St Patrick's coppersmith, presumably out of copper or bronze.² On journeys books were carried in skin wallets,³ such as are represented on the Bressay and Papil stones in Shetland,⁴ and these on occasion could be decorated—as with gold or “white bronze.”⁵

A somewhat mysterious matter is the writing of alphabets, frequently recorded in the *Tripartite Life* but not convincingly explained by the editor. The writing of an alphabet “for” a man seems to have been part of the process of his consecration as a priest,⁶ but the reason for this is not clear. It has been suggested that the “alphabet” may have been, in fact, a set of basic scriptural texts, or alternatively that, if really an alphabet, it may have been intended as a memorandum or copy for an imperfectly literate person. It even seems possible that the act of writing the alphabet may have been regarded as possessing some kind of intrinsic virtue, such as is thought to be implied, in the case of the much later runic inscriptions, by the simple formula “So-and-so wrote these runes.”⁷

V. CHURCHES.

The main archæological point brought out by the passages that deal with churches is the distinction between stone on the one hand, and wood and wattling on the other, as the material for construction. It might almost be said that the process whereby the latter was replaced by the former was epitomised by the action of King Edwin, who in 627 enclosed in a stone church the wooden one that had been hastily built for his baptism.⁸ Stone was used by St Ninian for his church at Whithorn—presumably the earliest Christian church in Scotland, though on which side of the turn of the fourth and fifth centuries its date is to be set seems still to be a matter of controversy⁹—and this style of construction was characterised by Bede as unfamiliar to the Britons.¹⁰ No evidence, however, exists as to whether this initiative had any lasting result, while even the *Tripartite Life*, dealing with a country in which surviving stone oratories are sometimes accorded a very high antiquity, hardly alludes to anything but wood, stakes and wattling. It is true that a *domus lapidum* is mentioned,¹¹ but the four-cornered churches (*ecaiksi cetharchairi*) established by St Patrick,¹² and the

¹ *H.T.S.C.*, 7.

² *Trip. Life*, p. 97.

³ Adamnan, ii. 8 and 9.

⁴ Allen, *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pt. iii. p. 7 (figs. 4 and 4A); p. 11 (fig. 6); p. 12 (fig. 7). An actual specimen is preserved in University College, Dublin.

⁵ *Trip. Life*, p. 75.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 191. “He is tonsured. He is baptised. An alphabet is written for him.” Tirechan's *Collections*, *ibid.*, p. 327; “*et scripserunt elementa illi et Muirethaco episcopo.*”

⁷ Some twelfth-century examples of this formula, as used in Orkney, will be found in the *Proceedings of the Orkney Antiquarian Society*, viii. pp. 27 ff. See also R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Orkney*, figs. 387-9.

⁸ *Ecl. Hist.*, ii. 14.

⁹ *Transactions of the Dumfriesshire and Galloway Natural History and Antiquarian Society*, 1948-49 3rd series, xxvii. *passim*.

¹⁰ *Ecl. Hist.*, iii. 4; *insolito Brittonibus more.*

¹¹ *Trip. Life*, p. 318.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 111.

others (*æcellias quadratas*) mentioned in Tirechan's *Collections*,¹ may well have been of earthen rather than of stone construction in view of an allusion made to a square church built of earth.² Thus saving the possibility of the native dry-stone builders of the West Coast and Islands having built some churches earlier in their own tradition, the true introduction into Scotland of church-building in stone would seem to date only from 710, when King Nechtan, writing to Ceolfrid, "asked for master-masons to be sent to him, to build a stone church in his country in the Roman manner."³ The material used for the *templum* built at Iona a century later (completed 814) is not stated, but may well have been stone; and a stone church (*domliac*) is specifically mentioned at Kells in 919.⁴ That stone construction was not acclimatised quickly even in Northumbria is suggested by the fact that, fifty years after the building of Edwin's stone church at York (*supra*), Benedict Biscop still had to go to Gaul for masons "to build him a stone church in the Roman manner."⁵

Wooden churches seem to have been in use everywhere, in conformity with the wooden houses (*supra*). For example, it is specifically stated that St Patrick's square "earthen" church (*supra*) was only made of earth because no trees were available,⁶ while Bede alludes to a church of hewn oak as being "in the manner of the Scots."⁷ With these may be compared some passages which may have originated later than A.D. 1000—an oratory of smoothed timbers;⁸ St Machar's church "of fair trees";⁹ and a church of oak recorded as having been built at Urquhart in 722.¹⁰ If the pagan temples that St Gregory authorised Mellitus to take over as churches were like the one whose destruction and burning is described by Bede,¹¹ such churches would also have been wooden. A church built of wattles, and the cutting of wattles for a church, are mentioned in the *Old Irish Life of St Columba*;¹² an *ecclesiola* was made of wattles at Durham in 995 to receive St Cuthbert's body,¹³ though this was no doubt in the nature of an emergency measure like the building of a temporary church out of branches or twigs (*frondibus contexta*) that is mentioned by Bede;¹⁴ and in what may be a later document St Coemgenus "made himself a small oratory out of rods" (*ex virgis*).¹⁵

¹ *Trip. Life*, p. 321.

² *Ibid.*, p. 327.

³ *Ecl. Hist.*, v. 21. *Architectos sibi multi petiit, qui iuxta morem Romanorum ecclesiam de lapide in gente ipsius facerent.*

⁴ *A.U.*, s.a. 919.

⁵ Bede, *Abbots*, 5. *Qui lapideam sibi ecclesiam iuxta Romanorum . . . morem facerent.*

⁶ Tirechan's *Collections*, in *Trip. Life*, p. 327. *Quia non prope erat silva.*

⁷ *Ecl. Hist.*, iii, 25. *Quam tamen more Scottorum non de lapide, sed de robore secto totam composuit, atque harundine texit.*

⁸ *V.S.H.*, ii, 254; *oratorium de lignis levigatis construere volens.*

⁹ *Scots Life of St Machar*, quoted in *Sources*, i, p. 41.

¹⁰ *Aberdeen Breviary*, pars estiva, S. Malrubii Martyris, Aug., fol. xc.

¹¹ *Ecl. Hist.*, ii, 13. *Destruere ac succendere fanum cum omnibus septis suis.*

¹² *Celtic Scotland*, ii, p. 483. ¹³ *H.T.S.C.*, 20. ¹⁴ *Ecl. Hist.*, i, 20. ¹⁵ *V.H.S.*, i, pp. 243 f.

For evidence regarding the size of an early Irish church only one passage can be quoted from the sources under review, and as this gives only a single dimension for the building it is subject to the same element of doubt as was discussed above (p. 75) in the similar case of houses. The dimension given in this passage¹ is 60 feet, a very reasonable length for a church, while in this case any likelihood of the plan's having been round, with a diameter of 60 feet, can of course be safely ignored. On the other hand, it might possibly be argued that the measurement applied not to the actual church but to the ecclesiastical establishment as a whole—*i.e.* that what the author had in mind was a very small cashel, containing no more than a fifth of the area of the one mentioned on p. 79 but comparing closely with an example (68 feet by 50 feet) still surviving at Loch Chaluum-Chille in Skye.² This would have been large enough to hold a priest's hut and an oratory comparable with the chancel of North Rona Church (11½ feet by 7 feet),³ originally a separate building, and it will be recalled that the oratory mentioned on p. 75 measured 7 feet only, whether in length or diameter. The true meaning of this passage must consequently remain uncertain.

It may perhaps be remarked here that *oratorium* and *ecclesia* might both be used of the same building,⁴ and thus cannot be held to signify respectively a smaller and a larger structure.

Finally, a word may be said about the use of the church as a refuge. Adamnan alludes⁵ to the population of a district near a church flying to it for refuge on the occasion of a hostile raid; but as animals were also brought in, "church" in this case may well mean the *termon* area, which was inviolable. On occasion, no doubt, the cashel wall could provide physical protection, and presumably the church founded by St Columba at a fort⁶ was another example of a dun or rath being used as a ready-made cashel. (*Cf.* also p. 79.)

VI. TOWNS, VILLAGES AND FARMS.

In approaching the subject of towns it is necessary to beware of anachronism. In a region to which Roman municipal organisation never penetrated, and at a period before the development of the mediæval burgh, the larger centres of population, where these existed, must evidently have differed in important respects from towns as commonly thought of. The contemporary literary evidence must therefore be approached without preconceptions either classical, mediæval or modern.

As has already been pointed out, the word *civitas* can be used in a wide

¹ *Trip. Life*, p. 71.

² R.C.A.M., *Inventory of the Outer Hebrides, Skye and the Small Isles*, No. 339.

³ *Ibid.*, No. 9.

⁴ Adamnan, i. 7.

⁵ *Ibid.*, i. 14.

⁶ *Old Irish Life*, quoted in *Celtic Scotland*, ii. p. 482.

variety of senses—for example of Alclyde, a citadel of hill-fort type; of Bamburgh, the fortified capital of an organised kingdom; of a town in contradistinction to a military camp; or even of a monastic settlement. It is also equated with *kaer* and *chester*. *Urbs*, too, though less common than *civitas*, shows a similarly wide range of application. The general inference consequently appears to be that dependent communities of larger or smaller size might grow up in the vicinity of strongholds or of other important centres and that the word *civitas* or *urbs* could be applied loosely to the whole complex. This explanation would certainly suit the case of Bamburgh, with its *viculi*; and in fact, when the *Rule of St Columba*¹ lays down the injunction “Be alone in a separate place near a chief city,” it may be giving us a hint of the process of aggregation. Whatever may have been the situation in southern Britain, or in regions where Viking raiders eventually founded their colonies, there is no evidence to suggest that any organised “town,” in the proper meaning of the word, existed in what is now Scotland.

Viculus, used as above of a suburb or small group of houses attached to a royal capital, and *vicus*, which Bede also uses² of a small town or hamlet, may be compared with *viculus* and *villa* as applied by the same author³ to the distant and barbarous settlements in which St Cuthbert preached, or with the *viculus* found among abandoned fields (*in desertis agellis*) somewhere “beyond Drumalban.”⁴ This last, as it had just been successfully burned by an incendiary, is unlikely to have been of any size, while the villages visited by St Cuthbert are pretty certainly identifiable with one or another of the types of unfortified settlement that abound in the Border districts.⁵ Something rather larger than these, however, should perhaps be understood where the *villula* possessed an oratory,⁶ unless this merely indicates the presence of a hermit. In another passage *viculus* and *villa* are both used simply in the sense of human habitations, without reference to size or form.⁷ *Villa*, however, does not necessarily imply a “village,” as in the forms *villa regia* and *villa regalis*, which occur several times, it seems to be treading hard on the heels of *civitas* (*supra*).

The communities dwelling in these farms, villages and “castletons” must evidently have lived mainly by farming and stock-raising, but no definite picture of these activities can be put together from the evidence of the sources studied. Adamnan, it is true, gives some glimpses of monastic farming—“harvest work,”⁸ winnowed grain in a barn,⁹ “little fields” (*agelluli*)—perhaps simply “fields”—outside the precinct at Clonmacnoise,¹⁰ what is probably a threshing-floor (*fossula excussori*),¹¹ an enclosure for cattle (*maceria*),¹² a byre (*bocetum*)¹³ from which the milk-pails were carried

¹ *Celtic Scotland*, ii. p. 508 (translation).

³ *Ibid.*, iv. 25; *V.M.S.C.*, 15 and 52.

⁵ For an example see *P.S.A.S.*, lxxxi. pp. 138 ff.

⁷ *V.M.S.C.*, 8.

¹¹ ii. 21.

⁸ Adamnan, i. 29.

¹² i. 30.

² *Eccl. Hist.*, iii. 16.

⁴ Adamnan, i. 28.

⁶ *Eccl. Hist.*, v. 12.

⁹ iii. 24.

¹³ iii. 24.

¹⁰ i. 3.

to the monastery by a horse, a waggon (*plaustrum*),¹ and a milk-container carried on a man's back² which had a lid (*operculum*) secured by a bolt (*gergenna*) passing through two holes (*bina foramina*). Sheep were kept at Iona as well as cows.³ However, the scale and standards of an important monastic establishment must certainly have been far in advance of those of the backward native communities, and any comparison here is rather with the substantial Irish farmers mentioned in the *Crith Gablach*⁴ than with the semi-savage homestead-dwellers known to St Cuthbert—the latter being, no doubt, largely pastoralists. On arable farming Bede adds little of importance. The allusions that he makes are to ploughing, in a general way; to winnowing and grinding—the latter apparently being classed as an operation of the farm⁵ and not as a domestic one, as it was at Iona;⁶ to agricultural implements, specified as being of iron (*ferramenta ruralia*);⁷ to a reaping-hook, the term for which (*falx fœnaria*)⁸ seems to refer to grass-cutting rather than to the mowing of a grain-crop; and to barley as succeeding on Farnie when wheat had failed.⁹ But on stock-raising, for which the Northumbrian and Border hills are particularly well suited, he gives some more interesting evidence. Thus ewes as well as cows were milked—the ewes, in fact, being mentioned before the cows,¹⁰ for what that point may be worth; a monastery's flocks might be sufficiently large to require a number of shepherds;¹¹ and transhumance was known and practised.¹²

In this last connection it may be pointed out that a careful reading of the relative passages in Bede does not wholly bear out the traditional view of St Cuthbert—*i.e.* as having been by origin a simple shepherd-boy who pastured the communal flock of his native village.¹³ For example, he habitually went about on horseback, and when he presented himself at Old Melrose to enter the monastery he was not only mounted but was also attended by a servant and carried a spear.¹⁴ These points suggest that Bede thought of him as a man of some wealth and standing; and in this case it may not have been an accident that the Abbot, St Boisil, was standing at the gate of the precinct when he arrived.¹⁵ Again, the passages on which the traditional view is based—"It happened that he was caring for the beasts that had been committed to him among distant mountains," and "Immediately handing over the beasts that he was pasturing to their owners"¹⁶—seem to imply a largeness in scale and also a degree of formality which hardly fit in with the notion of a village herd-boy. The language rather suggests a

¹ Adamnan, ii. 29.

² ii. 15.

³ i. 33.

⁴ *P.R.I.A.*, xxxvi. pp. 290 f., or O'Curry, *Manners and Customs*, iii. pp. 484 ff.

⁵ Bede, *Abbots*, 8.

⁶ *Old Irish Life*, in *Celtic Scotland*, ii. pp. 480, 504.

⁷ *Ecd. Hist.*, iv. 26.

⁸ *H.T.S.C.*, 33.

⁹ *V.M.S.C.*, 33.

¹⁰ Bede, *Abbots*, 8; *oves vitulasque mulgere*.

¹¹ *V.M.S.C.*, 54; *quidam de pastoribus*.

¹² *Ibid.*, 7 and 9.

¹³ On this see Colgrave, *Two Lives of St Cuthbert*, p. 344.

¹⁴ *V.M.S.C.*, 10.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁶ *Contigit eum remotis in montibus commissorum sibi pecorum agere custodiam and Statim commendans suis pecora, quæ pascibat, dominis; ibid.*, 7.

substantial contractor, who undertook the transference of stock to a distant and little-known region and looked after it there during the season of summer pasturage. On this showing, in fact, St Cuthbert would have combined functions resembling those, on the one hand, of an eighteenth-century drover and, on the other, of a Lowland farmer who "winters" consignments of sheep from Highland districts.

VII. MISCELLANEOUS.

There remain a few subjects on which short notes only can be given.

1. *Burials, Cairns, etc.*—Three passages on burials may be quoted, for general interest, from the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*: (i) "It was the custom of the heathen to be buried in their armour, face to face, even to the Day of Judgment."¹ (ii) Loegaire "was buried with shield and spear in the outer south-easterly dyke of Loegaire's royal stronghold in Tara."² (iii) For the newly converted daughters of a king "they made a round cavity like a grave (*fossam rotundam in similitudinem fertæ*), for this was the custom of the Scots and the heathen."³ Prehistoric chambered cairns appear to be mentioned in at least two passages: in the first St Patrick raises a man, long dead, out of a "sepulchre" 120 feet in length,⁴ and in the second the "Cave of Cnoghbha" is plundered by a Norseman.⁵ This "cave" is said by Hennessy⁶ to have been the Mound of Knowth, Co. Meath, and the exploit may be compared with similar ones recorded in the runic inscriptions in Maes Howe.⁷ Cairns could also be used for Christian burial;⁸ and St Columba's relics were buried "in a hollowed barrow, under a thick layer of turf,"⁹ to save them from the Norse raiders—a proceeding somewhat reminiscent of the burial of the bell of Birsay in what seems to have been the manner appropriate to a human corpse.¹⁰

2. *Crosses and Sculpture.*—References to the erection of crosses are fairly frequent, but it is not always clear whether these were free-standing monuments, or carvings made on a surface, or whether, in the former case, the crosses were of wood or of stone. The cross that was fixed in the millstone at Iona¹¹ must evidently have been free-standing and was presumably wooden; and so also, no doubt, were the two set up at the places where St Columba and St Ernan were standing when the latter fell down dead.¹²

¹ *Trip. Life*, p. 75.

² *Loegaire's Conversion and Death*, quoted *ibid.*, p. 567.

³ Tirechan's *Collections*, quoted *ibid.*, p. 317.

⁴ *Trip. Life*, pp. 123 and 324.

⁵ *A.U.*, s.a. 934.

⁶ *Ibid.* Cf. also *P.R.I.A.*, xlix. p. 131.

⁷ R.C.A.M., *Inventory of Orkney*, p. 309.

⁸ Adamnan, i. 27; Tirechan's *Collections*, in *Trip. Life*, p. 322.

⁹ Walafridus Strabus, *Life of St Blathmac*, quoted in translation by Pinkerton, *Vite Antiquæ*, pp. 461 ff.

¹⁰ Anderson, *Scotland in Early Christian Times*, 1st ser., pp. 168 ff.

¹¹ Adamnan, iii. 24.

¹² *Ibid.*, i. 35. This, at least, seems to be the natural meaning of the words *unde in eodem loco . . . crux infixæ est, et allera ubi Sanctus restitit, illo expirante, similiter crux infixæ stat.*

Another was probably the one which St Patrick removed from a heathen grave, where it had been put by mistake.¹ On the other hand, the cross that St Patrick made in a stone at the great church of Upper Moy was evidently incised on a slab;² and the same meaning is probably to be read into a passage worded *elevavit ibi lapidem in signaculum crucis Christi*.³ This interpretation at least fits in with the pillars or blocks of stone, bearing rudely incised crosses, which occur here and there in the West Highlands as well as, pretty commonly, in Ireland. On another occasion St Patrick carved the words IESUS, SOTER and SALVATOR each on a stone.⁴ The statement that St Machar turned a boar to stone⁵ looks rather as if he had been credited with the carving of a "Pictish" boar;⁶ but if so the story is unlikely to be more than an ætiological myth. The idols frequently mentioned by Bede and in the *Tripartite Life* clearly imply some sort of sculpture in the round, however rude, as being practised in pre-Christian times, and this on occasion probably in stone as well as wood;⁷ an Irish example of such work is perhaps to be seen in the well-known two-headed monument at Kilnaboy.⁸

3. *Standing-stones*.—Besides the cross-inscribed upright stones and blocks to which reference has been made above (p. 87), what seem to have been ordinary standing-stones are occasionally mentioned—perhaps already old at the times of the events recorded. Thus a very large stone which fell down in 998 is described⁹ simply as the "principal monument" (*primh dingnai*) of Magh Ailbhe, Co. Meath, as if its origin and associations had passed out of mind. A battle is likewise recorded¹⁰ as having been fought, between Scots of Dalriada and Britons, at a stone called Minvercc, which Skene suggests may have been Clach na Breatan, in Glen Falloch;¹¹ whether this identification is correct or not, it is likely to have been well known as a local landmark, as were also, no doubt, two stones which marked the ends of sections of a boundary.¹²

In concluding this section it may be well to remark that the words "at his stone of blood," which appear in Skene's translation¹³ of a passage from the *Prophecy of St Berchán*, are in fact totally corrupt. Professor Dillon informs me that the original Irish text simply means "lying wounded," with the result that there is no reference whatever to a memorial stone or monument.

4. *Crannogs*.—Allusions to "islands" are plentiful, but it is usually impossible to tell whether the place in question is a crannog, a fort or a

¹ *Trip. Life*, p. 125.

² *Ibid.*, p. 137.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 327, quoting Tirechan's *Collections*.

⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 107.

⁵ *The Scots Life of St Machar*, quoted in *Sources*, i. p. 41.

⁶ For illustrations, see Allen, *Early Christian Monuments of Scotland*, pt. iii, fig. 108; *P.S.A.S.*, lxxiv. pl. xv (b).

⁷ *Trip. Life*, p. clv, quoting *Book of Leinster*, pp. 213a, 214b.

⁸ Henry, *Irish Art*, pp. 6 f. and pl. 4d.

⁹ *A.U.*, s.a. 998.

¹⁰ *C.P.S.*, p. 74 (*Tighernach*).

¹¹ *Celtic Scotland*, i. 273.

¹² *C.P.S.*, p. 6 (*Pictish Chronicle*); *a lapide . . . usque ad lapidem . . .*

¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 98.

monastery. Ailén-Daingen, for example, which was built about 702 and destroyed in 713,¹ certainly sounds like the "strong island" of Anderson's translation,² and as such was almost certainly a fort; but of Ailen of Macc-Craich³ not even that much can be said, and it is further impossible to judge whether either was in Scotland or Ireland. However, that real crannogs or artificial islands—as distinct from islets fortified by a wall at the waterline—were commonly built in Ireland in the period reflected by the *Tripartite Life* is shown by their tacit inclusion among *habitacula* in a prophecy pronounced by St Patrick against a person called Connin. To him the Saint said⁴ "that his descendants would never, to eternity, be able to equip their dwellings or fields in an adequate manner with walls or fences, for if they dug earth [for a bank] it would crack open, if they put up a fence it would soon fall down, and if [they built] islands in a swamp (*insolas in gronna*) they would never be able to stand firmly." The final clause of this prophecy contains the hint that crannogs sometimes proved cranky and awkward to build; but their commonness in both Scotland and Ireland clearly proves their utility, as does the lateness of the dates to which their use is known to have continued.⁵

5. *Earth-houses*.—Surprisingly little is forthcoming on the subject of earth-houses. A few passages show, however, that such things were known to the Vikings, e.g. in Orkney,⁶ in the Hebrides⁷ and in Ireland.⁸ Something of the same sort appears to have existed in Iceland.⁹

6. *Roads*.—The *Tripartite Life* frequently alludes to wheeled vehicles, which in turn suggest the existence, in contemporary Ireland, of roads showing at least some degree of improvement; while Cogitosus' account of road-making¹⁰ argues some considerable experience of such work at whatever the period may be to which this passage actually relates. Hogan gives numerous literary references to roads,¹¹ and Ó Lochlainn has argued the existence of an extensive system of early roads in Ireland.¹² It would not, however, be safe to base on these facts any inference about roads in Scotland, where differences arising from topography, as well as from social and political conditions in general, may or may not have made Irish evidence invalid. Adamnan, it is true, mentions a farm-road in Iona,¹³ but some other passages in which he alludes to wheeled vehicles¹⁴ all refer to Ireland; while the

¹ *A.U.*, s.a. 713.

² *Sources*, i. 206.

³ *A.U.*, s.a. 724.

⁴ *Trip. Life*, p. 212.

⁵ E.g. the one in Loch Treig, which is held to have been inhabited as late as the second half of the sixteenth century; *P.S.A.S.*, lxxvi. 69.

⁶ Storm, *Monumenta Historica Norvegiæ*, p. 88. But it is always possible that the allusion here is to chambered cairns or to the cells of ruined brochs, both very plentiful in Orkney.

⁷ *Orkneyinga Saga*, xc.

⁸ *Landnámabók*, quoted in *Sources*, i. 335.

⁹ *Saga of Gisle the Outlaw*, tr. Dasent, p. 72.

¹⁰ *Vita Sanctæ Brigidæ Virginis*, in Migne, *Patrologia Latina*, lxxxii, col. 786.

¹¹ *Onomasticon Gædelicum*, s.v. *Slige*.

¹² *Essays and Studies presented to Professor Eoin MacNeill*, pp. 465 ff.

¹³ Adamnan, iii. 24.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, i. 7 and 30; ii. 44.

bridge mentioned in the *Annals of Ulster*¹ was also presumably in that country. There is thus little evidence about Dark-Age roads in Scotland apart from a passage which records the walling-off of the banks of fords on the Forth;² and as the Forth is notoriously poor in convenient crossing-places,³ it is probable that one, at least, of the fords so blocked served whatever remained of the north-going Roman road. It will be recalled that Bede, writing of the country south of Hadrian's Wall, mentions bridges and roads as among the surviving remains that there bore witness, "*usque hodie*," to the Roman occupation.⁴ Crawford further points⁵ to the crossing-place over the Forth and the Goodie at the Fords of Frew, suggesting that a route may have been developed along this line, perhaps as early as the beginning of the Christian era, to lead from Alclyde to Strathallan and the north-east, and remarking on the significant location of the broch of Coldoch close to where such a route would have left the mosses. He notes that "an old road" can be followed from Bonhill over Cameron Muir, and by Killearn and Balfroon over Kippen Muir, towards this crossing-place.

VIII. CONCLUDING NOTE.

The material discussed in this paper does not naturally lend itself to the drawing of general conclusions, but it seems possible none the less to point to at least one lesson of a certain importance. These literary allusions, spread thinly through such records as we have for a period of about eight centuries, insistently remind us of the scope that must still exist for fresh archaeological research. Bede, for example, tells us quite enough to show that, in the "Northumbrian" area of the south-east, farms, villages and hamlets must have been common; and the prospects in this quarter can already be regarded as promising in view of our increasing knowledge of the types of structure that survive. The monuments of the western Highlands are less well known, but the Irish analogies suggest that, in addition to stone forts of Dalriadic and Viking construction which have not been differentiated from their prehistoric counterparts, the sites of wooden or wattle-built churches and houses may still await discovery; for it is hard to believe that nothing of the material culture of, say, the *Tripartite Life of St Patrick* was carried across the North Channel, even though pioneers in a "colonial" region may well have had rather lower standards than their contemporaries at home in Ireland. This is all the more likely as close contact was evidently maintained between Argyll and Ireland. There is thus no reason to take a defeatist view of the future of Dark-Age research, which should rather be pressed forward with confidence whenever opportunity offers.

¹ *S.a.*, 925.

² *C.P.S.*, p. 10 (*Pictish Chronicle*); *Cinadius autem vallavit ripas vadorum Forthin.*

³ Crawford, *Topography of Roman Scotland*, pp. 18-21.

⁴ *Ecl. Hist.*, i. 11.

⁵ *Loc. cit.*

ABBREVIATED REFERENCES.

- A.U.* *Annals of Ulster*, ed. Hennessy, H.M. Stationery Office, 1887.
- Abbots* Bede, *Vita Beatorum Abbatum*, in *Venerabilis Bædæ Opera Historica*, ed. Plummer, 1896. (Refs. to §§.)
- Adamnan* Adamnan, *Life of St Columba*, ed. Reeves, 1874.
- Bruts* From the Welsh *Bruts*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 120 ff.
- C.P.S.* *Chronicles of the Picts, Chronicles of the Scots, and other Early Memorials of Scottish History*, ed. Skene, 1867.
- C.S.P.* *Chronicles of the Scots and Picts*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 148 ff.
- Celtic Scotland* Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, 1887.
- Chronicle* *Chronicle of the Picts and Scots*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 171 ff.
- Cuthbert* *Vita Sancti Cuthberti, auctore anonymo*, in *Venerabilis Bædæ Opera Historica*, ed. Stevenson, 1841, ii. 259 ff. (Refs. to §§.)
- Description* *Description of Britain*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 153 ff.
- Duan Albanach* *The Duan Albanach*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 57 ff.
- Eccl. Hist.* Bede, *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*, in *Venerabilis Bædæ Opera Historica*, ed. Plummer, 1896. (Refs. to bk. and ch.)
- H.T.S.C.* *Historia Translationis Sancti Cuthberti*, in *Venerabilis Bædæ Opera Historica*, ed. Stevenson, 1841, ii. 285 ff. (Refs. to §§.)
- Hist. Brit.* Nennius, *Historia Brittonum*, ed. Gunn, 1819.
- I. and P. Additions* *Irish and Pictish Additions to the Historia Britonum*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 23 ff.
- Irish Annals* From Fragments of Irish Annals, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 401 ff.
- J.R.S.* *Journal of Roman Studies*.
- Manners and Customs* O'Curry, *Manners and Customs of the Early Irish*.
- Old Irish Life* *Old Irish Life of St Columba*, tr. Hennessy, in Skene, *Celtic Scotland*, ii. 467 ff.
- P.R.I.A.* *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*.
- P.S.A.S.* *Proceedings of the Society of Antiquaries of Scotland*.
- Pictish Chronicle* *The Pictish Chronicle*, 971-995, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 3 ff.
- Place-Names* Watson, *History of the Celtic Place-Names of Scotland*, 1926.
- R.C.A.M.* Royal Commission on the Ancient and Historical Monuments of Scotland.
- S. and W. Additions* Saxon and Welsh Additions to the *Historia Britonum*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 11 ff.
- St Berchan* *The Prophecy of St Berchan*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 79 ff.
- Sources* Anderson, *Early Sources of Scottish History*, 1922.
- Tighernach* *Annals of Tighernach*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 66 ff.
- Tract* *Tract on the Picts*, in *C.P.S.*, pp. 125 ff.
- Trip. Life* *Tripartite Life of St Patrick*, Rolls ed., 1887.
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