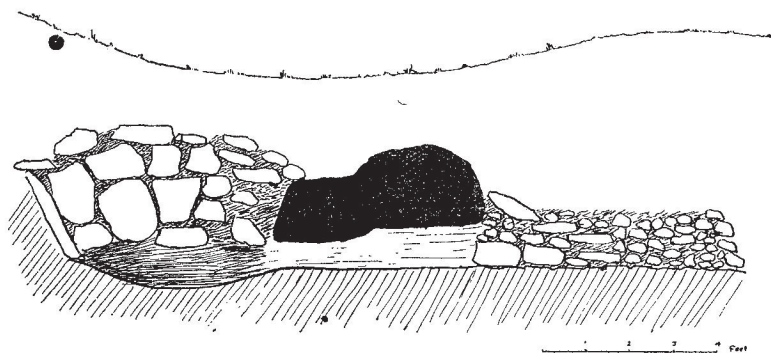


OLD KILN OF KILWHINLECK.

By J. N. MARSHALL, M.D., F.S.A. (Scot.).

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In the small wooded glen immediately to the east of Stewart Hall there is to be found a mound $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet high and 27 feet in diameter, with a rather wide hollow in the centre. Interest in this mound was increased by the fact that there were in the immediate neighbourhood three large flat stones varying a little in shape, but all measuring 57 inches long. One was set up on its edge and was earth fast. Local tradition has little to say about the place except a rather vague suggestion that there was once a burial place there. Blain, in his History of Bute, states definitely that the remains of



an old chapel were to be found in the glen, and he connotes this fact with the interpretation of the place name Kilwhinleck "cell of the long stones," this being the name of the ruined farm house in the neighbourhood, and also of the newer farm house a little farther away. Some doubt might be thrown on this interpretation if the old spelling, "Kerquhonlik," used at one place in Reid's History of Bute, is correct.

Lord Bute's attention having been drawn to the mound and stones, it was decided that, with his Lordship's co-operation and assistance, some further examination of the place by digging might be undertaken. Accordingly, during many summer evenings in the year 1934, Messrs J. & W. Hunter, with some of their men, worked enthusiastically and laboriously, digging around the mound and then through it. By this means a very definite structure was revealed. It was not however, a prehistoric burial place as we suspected it might have been, but a comparatively modern structure, viz., a kiln probably used by the farmer for drying his grain. Digging round the margin of the mound, the first thing of importance we came upon was a wall running round the lower half of its circumference. The wall was 2 to 3 feet in height, and was formed of rough stones, large and small, many of them flat and with no sign of mortar. At the lower part of the mound the direction of the wall was horizontal.

It was decided to make a section of the mound, and this was done by driving a trench 2 feet 3 inches wide, from the lower to the upper margin. At a distance of 6 feet 6 inches from the wall we came upon a massive lintel stone 3 feet long and 1 foot 4 inches in depth. A walled and paved passage led up to it, and the lintel was supported on either side by built-up stones. Beyond the lintel, and at a lower level, was another large stone of similar size and shape. Underneath both stones, and continuous with the passage above referred to, was a cavity filled with loose reddish-coloured earth, and this cavity led to a circular walled structure 5 feet 6 inches in diameter and walled to a height of 3 feet, with a well-made pavement lined with soft clay. The passage leading to and under the lintel stone and the circular cavity beyond both contained large quantities of wood ash, some burnt clay, and numerous stones injured by fire. The earth was carefully riddled, but the only things that might be called relics were a minute fragment of pottery of indefinable character, a square-shaped, square-headed nail, and the long bone of an animal, possibly a deer. There was no sign of burnt lime nor of coal cinders.

It seems likely that kilns of this character were frequently to be found among the farms three or four hundred years ago. At a later date water mills were numerous in Bute, as some of our place names indicate, and there was evidently plenty of work for them all to do in milling and drying the farmer's grain. The Mill of Greenan, with the wayside tavern beside it, was said to have been a place of great public resort in those times.

The hand mill or quern is one of the oldest artefacts in civilisation, and existed in one form or another for thousands of years before the public mill. Dr. Arthur Mitchell, in his book on "The Past in the Present," computes that there were thousands of those querns to be found in use in the Highlands of Scotland in 1880. A few of the round upper stones of the circular quern may still be seen as relics among the farm houses of Bute. The lower flat stone is not so frequently found, and it is said, with what truth I know not, that this part was broken "by order," in order to encourage the busi-



ness of the mills. An earlier saddle-shaped form of the quern has been found in some of our ancient hill forts dating from before the Christian era.

Our digging at the glen at Stewart Hall, while it has made clear the existence of a kiln, has not elucidated the significance of the large flat stones. They are quite evidently shaped by the hand of man, but for what purpose it is difficult to say. It is not impossible that they formed part of an ancient burial structure occupying either the mound before the kiln was placed there, or some other place in the neighbourhood.

It is likely that if search were made in Bute many old kilns, more or less in ruin, might be found. Lord Bute directed my attention to one at Branser Bog, where there is an old farm steading. It is in a very ruinous condition. Another is to be seen in the field immediately opposite to Ardmaleish Farm. Here there is a well-marked lintel stone with a circular hollow behind it. Near Colintrave, well up on the hill side, there stands the remains of the old farm steading of Auchnasheen, and among the ruins Miss Campbell of Arda-chuidh drew my attention to a circular structure which undoubtedly is a kiln in a fairly good state of preservation.

There were, of course, lime kilns in Bute. One at Kelspoke, Kilchattan, burned the local lime stone as well as imported stone, and supplied the farmers with what they wanted. There are two others of a more primitive type near Scalpsie Point, and these were evidently used for burning the calcareous seaweed or marl, of which there is a raised beach in the neighbourhood. This material called marl was, either in its native state or burned, a valuable addition to the soil, and is often referred to in old histories of Bute. Deposits of it are to be found on the West Coast of Inchmarnock, and also in St. Ninian's Bay below low water mark, and are especially noted as places from which thousands of cartloads had been taken by farmers for their fields. For some generations this practice has ceased, and it is doubtful if even the knowledge of this valuable stuff remains.