

CLACHAN ARD FORT, BUTE.

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In the Island of Bute, at a point nearly due north of Scalpsie Bay and about a mile distant, on a rocky cliff, there is a nearly circular structure with all the appearance of a hill fort (fig. 1). At the beginning of September, 1933, the wall was in a tumble down condition; only here and there was there something which could be recognised as a wall-face.

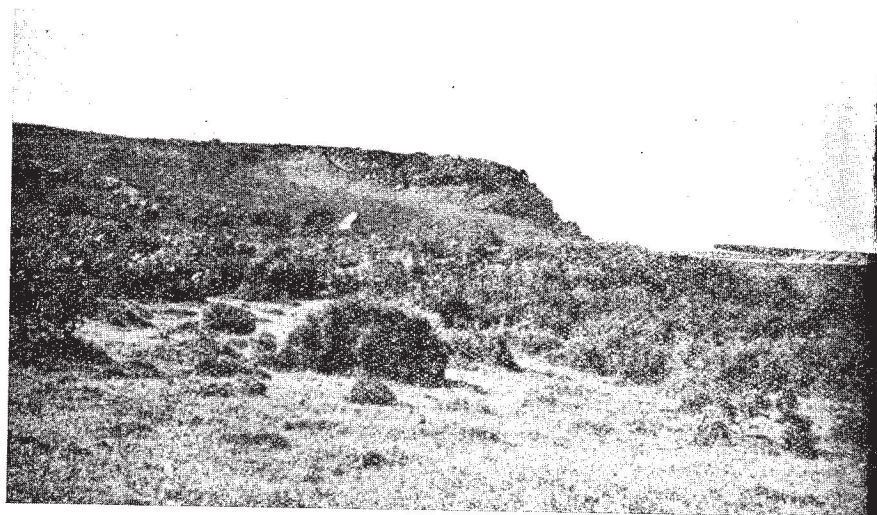


Fig. 1. Clachan Ard Fort, from the east.

A well-defined entrance could be made out at the eastern extremity, which is the part furthest from the sea and opposite which the ground falls gradually. Inside the entrance there was a distinct saucer-shaped and circular depression about four feet in diameter.

Nearly one-third of the area inside the wall consists of rocky outcrop, the rest is covered by smooth turf and bracken.

From a point north-north-east to a point north-north-west, the wall is absent, and its place is taken by the edge of the cliff, which descends precipitously to a more or less flat piece of rocky and grassy surface, extending about 50 yards to the seashore. Measurement across the area from ends of wall, 96 feet; greatest diameter from cliff to wall, 62 feet (fig. 2).

The height of the cliff is 55 to 60 feet above sea-level. The rock of which the cliff is composed is schistose grit.

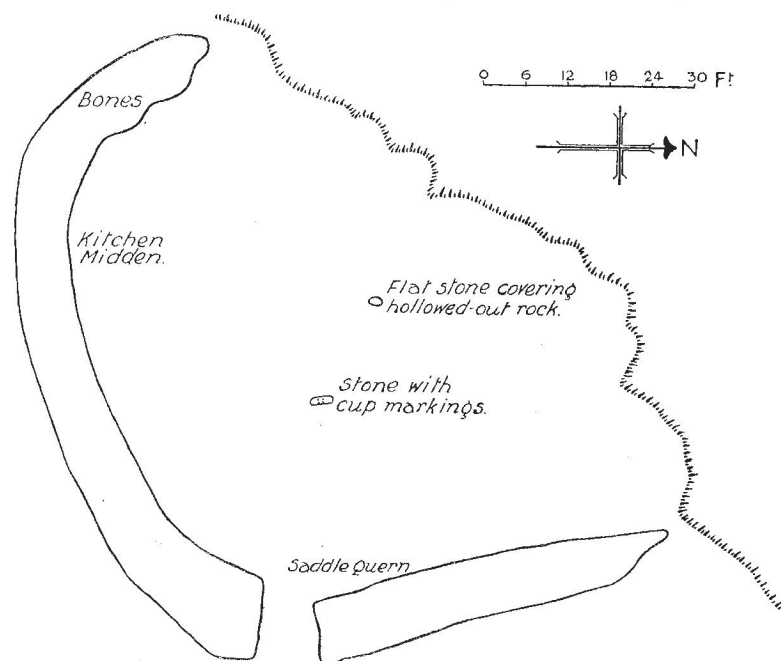


Fig. 2. Clachan Ard Fort: Plan.

Examination, and some excavation, was undertaken by Lord Bute, on 8th September, when five of the Estate workmen were employed on clearing away a number of loose stones. A fairly well-defined wall could be made out from 1 to 2 feet high, consisting for the most part of flat and rounded stones, with here and there a larger block (fig. 3). At intervals there were gaps in the wall which were evidently

accidental. At the north end of the precipice, the wall tapered away to a point; at the south end to a blunt extremity. An inside wall-face was also made out after clearing away many stones, and the width of the wall was found to be on an average 10 feet.



Fig. 3. Clachan Ard Fort: Outer Face of Wall at south-east.

A very large single stone 8 feet 8 inches long and 2 feet broad formed the greater part of the northern side of the entrance, the entrance being 10 feet long. The south side was composed of large flat stones. Between the outside and inside wall-faces the interval was filled in with small loose stones.

During the process of defining the inner wall-face, at a point near to the entrance, a saddle quern was found at a

depth of 1 foot unaccompanied by any other sign of human occupation. At another point of the inner wall-face (marked on plan) a portion of kitchen-midden was found, consisting of split bones and shells and a single smoothing stone. Here there was also some carbonaceous material, but no recognisable hearth-stone. At another point in the thickness of the wall where there was a depression, at 6 inches below the surface, there were a few large bones (ox?) not split. At another point of the area near the north-west corner there was a largish flat stone broken in two. Under this was a hollow scooped out in the rock, 12 inches deep and 19 inches in diameter, similar in shape and size to a barley stone mortar.

A trench was run through the hollow inside the entrance to the fort, but nothing but loose stones and finally solid rock was found. Another trench was run from the precipice eastward, but with similar negative results.

Near the wall a stone $2\frac{1}{2}$ feet long and $\frac{1}{2}$ foot broad was found smoothed and slightly hollowed on the surface, as if a natural stone had been used as a grinding stone.

Almost exactly in the centre of the enclosure a large flat stone was found just under the turf. On being uncovered, four saucer-shaped excavations were seen on the surface, each measured 3 inches in diameter and altogether they formed a parallelogram, with the long axis lying almost due north and south.

This fort, called Clachan Ard, is marked in the Ordnance Survey Map. It looks down on the Sound between Bute and Inchmarnock and has a little bay to the north of it. It is significant that there is what seems to be a standing stone 5 feet in height placed above the head of the bay and in a direction north-east from the fort. This stone is not noted in the Ordnance Survey Map.