John Stuart to Thomas Pennant: descriptions of Kintyre, Gigha, Jura and Islay

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Cantyre

This Country derives its name from ceann the head and tire (of the Country), as it projects farther into the Sea than any other land on the west of Scotland. The branch of the Sea that comes into Campbelltown is called Loch Chille-Ciarain i.e. the Loch of Kil-kerran, taking it's name from the old burying place and chapel built near it, and dedicated to S.^{t} Kerran.^{x} [1] The Town of Campbelltown is still called in the Galic language Cean-loch-Chille-Ciarain (i.e. the End of the Loch of Kil kerran.)

By a note which I received from the Town Clerk it appears that on the 27th of June 1772. there were belonging to Campbelltown 78 Sail of Vessels from 20. to 80 tons each — Their burthen [illegible] about 3500 tons — all built for, and ⊣[]⊢ employed in the white Herring fishery — The number of Sailors when at the Buss fishery above 800. —

Soil in the neighbourhood of Campbelltown very improveable. — Land-rent at present from 15 to 20 Shil. Ster. p$^{r.}$ Acre. [] On June 28$^{th.}$

Riding across the Country of Cantyre from Camp$^{n.}$ to the open dangerous bay of Machryhanish^{x} [2] on the west coast, we saw on the way the ruins of the Chapel of Kil-chyvain.‡ [3] Within it are some old grave stones. On two of them are cut the figures of a two handed sword, and of dogs chacing Deer. —

Rode three miles along Machry-hanish sands — Dined at Barr in an inn built by Col$^{o.}$ Campbell — Visited the [illegible] Remarkable cave of Ballach-a-chychain^{x} [4] — Crossed in a boat a ferry 5 or 6 miles broad to the Vessel lying in the harbour of Cylas-giglam† [5] in the small isle of Gigha

Gigha

This island is computed to be six miles long and one broad — MacNeil of Taynish Proprietor of two thirds of it — The whole ground divided into 30 merk-lands, each of which has about 17 £ Ster. of rent, and is possessed commonly by one Farmer, together with two, four or six cottars or Sub-tenants. Upon each Merk-land about 12 bolls of Oats and 6 bolls of bear sown yearly — about 4 bolls planted of potatoes — and seventeen Cows maintained — The common return of oats that of three grains from each seed sown, of bear, five — about 150 bolls of bear exported yearly - No run-riggs — Leases mostly from 12 to 19 Years — The price of a good milk-cow from 3£ to 3£ 10 sh; of butter 10Sh p$^{r.}$ stone; of cheese 5 Sh. Ster. — Wages of Men-Servants from 30 to 40 Sh. in the half-year of women from 10 to 13 Sh. — No day labour — Young-men mostly Herring-fishers in Summer, lazy in Winter — Two families emigrated lately to America —

In Kil-chattan in this island there is a stone erected, 16 feet high and about 2 feet broad — another on Knock-a-charra^{x}—[6] The remains of a cross in Knock-a-chrosh.† —[7]

Jura

Jura is computed to be twenty four miles long & from four to eight miles broad — 15000 Acres of the island belonging to M^{c}Niel of Colonsay —

The three high Mountains deonominated the Paps of Jura naked and stony — That rising near the sound of Islay is called in Galic Beinn-a'-chaolais i.e. the Mountain of the sound; that next to it, Beinn-an-òir (i.e. the Mountain of ^the Gold)and the other, Beinn-sheunta (i.e. the hallowed Mountain) — Little arable ground — The increase of bear from [illegible] to 5 grains for each grain sown, of oats three grains ———

The Islanders living to a great age & subject to very few diseases — Hardly any fevers or agues known among them ———

Very prolifick, having twins often at a birth —

Mac-il-vuy and Mac-ràine the oldest clans in the island — The principal Quadrupeds said to be found in Jura, are Wild-cats, Weasels, rats, otters, Seals — There are no hares, rabbits, foxes or polecats — The Principal Birds are the black Cock, Grous, Tarmachan, snipe, Cuckoo, Throstle, Tit-lark, wag-tail, Eagle, [illegible]-harrier, Raven, hooded-crow, Corn$^{h.}$-c^hough*[Cornish chough]* Goosander, Teal, Curlieu, Lap-wing, Divers, shag Cormorant, Gulls —

Islay$^{x\ 8}$

No considerable Mountains in this island — The highest hill called Ben-viggart† —^{9} Next to it Aird-inisdail, Dùre-ven,$^{\ddagger\ 10}$ Sgàrv-ven$^{\#\ 11}$ Dun-voraray.$^{x\ 12}$

Upon the way from Free-bairn port to Sunderland dined at Kilarow — Bay of Sall[illegible]go near Sunderland dangerous — Visited the small island in the shallow freshwater lake near Balnaby called Loch-guirm — Saw 7 or 8 Heron nests in it and the ruins of an old tower, with four bastions, once the retreat of the Balnaby Family — Tower between the bastions 47 feet, 4 Inches, long; across the neck [illegible] one of the bastions,12 feet; S.E. bastion in Circumference 46 feet, 4 Inches — Saw at Balnaby the Female of the Red headed Goosander which was shot upon Loch-guirm, and breeds among the rocks on it's shore —

It's breadth from the point of one wing to the other [illegible] feet; length from the point of the bill to the end of the tail, one foot, ten inches —

An extraordinary Cave seen at Saneg-mor — Shots fired in it — Bag-pipe played upon — The echo very fine—

Another cave as remarkable, said to be at some distance East from this, called Sloc-a-Chùraich — The waves rolling into it cause a noise like the roaring of a Bull, from which circumstance it derives it name. — It is heard often at Kilarow, though at 7 Miles distance — But the most celebrated cave in this island is that of Ua-arnig$^{x\ 13}$ or Ua-vor.† ^{14} i.e. the great cave at the mouth of the sound of Islay —

Fourteen or 15 families

Fourteen or 15 families [illegible] as their Shealings or Summer [illegible] Three families constantly reside on it — Upon the way returning from Sunderland to F. port, saw near the head of Loch-Druinard the part where the battle of Tràii-dhruinard was fought A.D. 1598 — 1500 M^{c}Leans and 1100 M^{c}Donalds said to be killed on the field —

Thirty six square miles of lime stone computed to be in Islay— Coral sand for manure found near the bay of Lag-a-vùilin^{x} —^{15} Rack and pit marle found from Port-askaig to Kilarow— Seven or eight thousand Souls computed to live in Islay— The inhabitants not so healthy as in Jura— The Dropsy and cancer frequent among them of late ———

About 700 of the inhabitants employed as miners and fishers ———

Eight families emigrated last year to America ——— Campbell of Shaw-field principal Proprietor of Islay — Rent of the whole island 2500 £ Ster. — 500 £ the old rent, now paid as the feu duty ———

Kilchoman the best farm on Islay — Rent 500 £ — It grazes nine score of milk cows, and 40 mares, with their followers ———

Increase of oats in this island sometimes sixfold, commonly fourfold; of barley sometimes elevenfold — Milk-cows and Sadle horses, housed, and these only in winter ———

The women employed much in spinning Linnen-yarn, which is exported [illegible] to the value of 1000 £ —

Seventeen hundred head of black Cattle exported annually, valued at an average at 50 Sh Ster. each —

Meal imported every year to the value of above 1000 £ ———

Authorial Notes

[1] In Galic, Ciaran.

[2] x Machrai-shanais

[3] Cill-chaovain. —

[4] xBealach-a'-chaochain.

[5] † Caolas-gioglam

[6] xCnoc-a'-chara

[7] † Cnoc'-a'-chrois.

[8] xIle.

[9] † Beinn-a-Bhigair

[10] ‡Diur-bheinn.

[11] #Sgàrbh-bheinn

[12] xDun-Bhororaig.

[13] x Uamh-bhearnig

[14] † Uamh-mhòr.

[15] xlag-a'-mhùilinn.