

**THE ANTIQUITIES OF ARRAN;  
WITH A HISTORICAL SKETCH OF  
THE ISLAND, EMBRACING AN  
ACCOUNT OF THE SUDREYJAR  
UNDER THE NORSEMEN**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649059034

The Antiquities of Arran; With a Historical Sketch of the Island, Embracing an Account of the Sudreyjar Under the Norsemen by John M'Arthur

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**JOHN M'ARTHUR**

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John Calderwood Esq. F. R. S. G. &c.  
with John M<sup>r</sup>: Arthur's  
Compliments. —  
July 1890. —

W. M. Calderwood.

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ANTIQUITIES OF ARRAN

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BY

JOHN M'ARTHUR

SECOND EDITION

*Enquire, I pray thee, of the former age, and prepare thyself to the search of their fathers :  
for we are but of yesterday.—Jon viii. 8, 9.*

*Illustrated by James Napier Jun.*

EDINBURGH  
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK

1873

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PART I.  
STONE PERIOD.

CHAPTER I.

Introduction.



THE Island of Arran\* lies at the mouth of the Firth of Clyde, and forms one of the *Sudreyjar*, or Southern Hebrides.

It is twenty-four miles in length, by ten to twelve in breadth, and is divided by a chain of heath-clad hills into the parishes of Kilbride on the east and Kilmorie on the west. Its shores are rocky and precipitous, here and there fringed to the water's edge with feathery brushwood, and indented by the Bays of Brodick, Lamlash, Whiting, Mauchrie, and Ranza.

From the summit of Ben Gnuis, or better still, from the granite brow of Ben Ghaïoul, the *coup d'œil* is magnificent in the extreme. To the north, rugged cliffs, mountain corries, and dark ravines, open beneath us. The peaks of Cior Mhor, Casdael Abhael, and Suidhe Fheargus, rise bare and grim. A light fleecy mist veils the paps of the Ciodh-

\* Glotta—Hersey—Arram—Aran—Arane—Arrane—Aren—Arran—Ar, a land; ris, sharp points.



na-oigh—Maiden's Breast. Beyond is the sweep of the eastern shore, with the waves surging on the golden sands of the Bay of Sannox. The islands of Bute and the Cumbracs sleep peacefully on the glistening waters; and stretching still northwards are the straggling lochs and lakes of Argyll and the surf-beaten Hebrides. To the east is seen the clear outline of the Ayrshire coast, with its sandy bays, busy harbours, and old castles; and in the extreme distance, the white smoke resting over the towns and hamlets of the shires of Lanark and Renfrew. Southwards are the purple ridges of the Ross and the Faerie hills; the Holy Isle guarding the Bay of Lamlash; the grey ruins of Kildonan Peel; the Craig of Ailsa looming like a spectre on the blue waves; and the dim shadowy outline of the Irish coast.

Beyond the *string* of swelling heights, which intersect the island from north to south, the wild Highland features of the eastern coast are changed for the more regular characteristics of lowland scenery. Heath-clad hills stretch in gentle undulation along the coast, whilst fields of emerald pasture and waving grain, and wastes of moorland, extend along the shore levels; with here and there a few village cots clustering around the bays and within the glens.

But Arran must be examined and studied in detail to elicit all the richness and variety of its attractions. It offers an inexhaustible treasury of material for the zoologist, the geologist, and the botanist, amongst the crannies of the rocks at low water, along the shelving cliffs of the coast, and amidst the heathery nooks and woody dingles of the glens and hills and mountain streamlets.

The rocks and the woodlands have their own peculiar charm;—the botanist may wander over the fields, the

moors, and the flowery dells, and gather, year by year, fresh laurels with which to adorn the storehouse of his science; the geologist may re-clothe the primeval world with its virgin forests, or may trace out in the old strata the foot-prints of extinct mammalia, and from a few fossil remains reconstruct their huge proportions. But a later and a higher formation "pieces on in natural sequence to the geology," which has for us a deeper interest. Buried amidst the heath, and hoary with the moss of ages, we discover the rude monumental remains of primeval man—the sole records which time has left us here of his early history.

The old grey cairns, the lichen-covered monoliths, the ruined forts and cells and castles of early times, lie scattered about in almost every dingle, glen, and moor of Arran. Many a wild and weird tradition hovers over these old monuments; but the origin and history of the cairn and monolith builders remain shrouded in the mists of the past. That they were an earlier people than the *Celtæ* is now generally admitted by ethnologists; and to distinguish them from the Indo-European tribes, whom they preceded, Dr. Prichard has applied to them the somewhat hypothetical designation of "Allophylian."\*

It would be mere idle conjecture to attempt to indicate, with any degree of certainty, the time when these rude colonists—emerging from their cradle-land in the East, and wandering over the vast forest-lands of the European Continent—landed from their fire-hollowed canoes upon the shores of the British Isles. It is more than probable, however, that long before King Chufu had commenced to build the great pyramid on the banks of the Nile, the rude Allo-

\* Dr. Prichard's *Natural History of Man*, page 186.

phylian was rearing the barrow, the cromlech, and the stone circle, around the coasts of the Hebrides and within the glens of the Scottish mainland.

But remote as these monuments are in their antiquity, the world has been now and again startled by the traces of still earlier works of man, which appear, indeed, to have existed at a period long prior to the first dawn of Adamic history. In 1797 several flint weapons were found in Suffolk, mingled with the bones of extinct mammalia, at a depth of eleven to twelve feet below the surface soil. Similar discoveries have been made in the gravel beds of Peterborough; on the coast of Ayrshire; in the Brixham Cave, Devonshire; in the caves of Sicily, and other places.

The great antiquity of man is confirmed by the discoveries made by M. Boucher de Perthes, of flint instruments, in the neighbourhood of Abbeville and Amiens, recently investigated and verified by Mr. Prestwich and other eminent geologists. These implements consist of flakes of flint, broken and chipped into the forms of knives, arrow-heads, spear or lance heads, and axes, all unquestionably of human workmanship. They have been disinterred from undisturbed beds of Drift, at an elevation of about two hundred feet above the sea level, resting beneath a layer of greyish sand—containing the shells of fresh-water mollusca—and a bed of brown brick earth, or ferruginous clay, or loam. Large quantities of these rude instruments have been found, discoloured and incrustated by their contact with ochreous matter and carbonate of lime. The bones of extinct mammalia, including the elephant, the rhinoceros, the bear, the hyena, and the tiger, have been discovered on the adjacent hills; and the entire evidence is suggestive of the